

ROBERT MISKO

Nominated as: Administrator, Organizer, Player

Nominator: Jose Rosado

References: Gary Herr & Lou Hernandez

Nominee reviewed by Trustee: Bart Waldman (HoF 2017)

Trustee comment: Bob's many achievements and his impact on the Orlando Baseball Association are fully described in the materials from his nominators. His dedication to baseball, both on and off the field, is unquestionable. He not only played at a very high level but led teams and leagues throughout his career.

He appears to be one of those guys who very quickly steps up and does the time-consuming work behind the scenes, making it possible for others to enjoy the game. It began in his Navy days, helping to start the baseball league in Guam (which is still running many years later), and continued in later life in the Orlando area. We have a well-documented record of over 40 years of service to others, as well as achievement at the highest level.

My interviews with the nominator and references confirmed the impression that Bob represents the very highest level of leadership and character. I found nothing but admiration from everyone I spoke to. "He organized everything about the league" was a common refrain. Bob grew the league from a very small four-team Sunday league to a 26-team, 4-division league.

He initiated a series of charitable programs that the league supports to this day. One program, supporting a battered women's shelter, both with food drives and donating bikes to the kids living there, has become a rallying cry for the league every year. Bob also initiated a program where the league hosts a team from the Netherlands every year.

Although Bob is nominated principally as an administrator and as a manager of teams, he was apparently one hell of a player in his day. His playing honors from his Navy days (all Navy all-star teams over many years) speak to that. References described him as one of the most feared hitters every year as a senior league player, even when playing against players 10-15 years younger.

The two references have both played on teams that Bob managed. They describe him as the ultimate leader, someone who makes sure every player gets a chance to contribute while keeping it fun and challenging for his best players. He has taken teams to the RHWS for many years and won a AAA championship in the 53+ bracket in 2015. Bob also bears the financial cost of many league and team requirements and assists players who otherwise would not be able to play. There were many examples of Bob's willingness not only to give of his time, but quietly help others financially. The words "straight-shooter," "honesty" and "integrity" kept coming up in my interviews.

To summarize, Bob has had a complete career in amateur baseball, both as a player, manager and administrator, leading at every turn. This began in the Navy and continued in senior baseball for many years in Orlando. His leadership and time commitment has made the game accessible to hundreds of players. His skills, leadership and character are all at the highest level. I found nothing at all to detract from his stellar reviews.

Achievements:

- Member of the Orlando Baseball Association Hall of Fame.
- Ex Navy seal fighter Pilot.
- Here are some of the things Bob was associated with:
 - International games with the Netherlands (3 years) To include the games, awards and after game meal
 - International games with the Canadian High School Teams to include games and meals
 - Charity games with the River Rats supporting the Safe House of Seminole, Domestic Violence Shelter as well as the Voices of Brain Cancer.
 - Charity games with the Traveling US Navy All Stars
- Upgrades to the baseball program at Winter Park High School to include: Field pest treatments, new turf in the batting cages and a cash donation to the school's Varsity Baseball Club Organization.

- Upgrades to the baseball program at Evans High School to include: Infield and pitchers mound renovation, new turf and nets for the batting cages, provided new uniforms after their field house was vandalized. Cash donation to the school's Varsity Baseball Club Organization.
- Played baseball/softball in Naples Italy, Guam, Hawaii, San Diego.
- Received the Navy Achievement Medal for the continued efforts with regard to the Guam Major League. Was consistently on TV and radio as the announcer and color host, when not actually playing. Coached teams consisting of active-duty military in the league. The only military member of the All Star team that went to the Australia Good Will games for the over 35 Olympics.
- MVP San Diego Knights Phoenix 1986
- Selected to the US Navy ALL NAVY SOFTBALL TEAM 1978/1979/1980/1983/1984/1987
- Selected to the US ALL ARMED FORCES SOFTBALL TEAM 1984/1987
- Being selected to these teams essentially means that he was one of the best 15 ball players selected for the US Navy and for the US Armed Forces Teams.
- During tours of duty where Baseball was not available, Bob made the most of playing and supporting the Navy's Softball Program.
- In 1974 a main player in the conception of the Guam Major League, both as a coach of the Military Entry into the League as well as an administrator for the League. Multiple Awards received.
- 1998, received the Navy Achievement Medal for being the Ambassador of Baseball for the Military in the Guam Major League. Numerous All-Star appearances resulting in TV and Radio appearances promoting the league.
- Selected to the GML All Star Team playing in good will tournaments against Japan, Taiwan, Philippines and China teams during his tenure on Guam.
- Hit 8 home runs in 9 games during the GML Championships in 1975.
- In an All-Star game between the Marines & Navy in 1989 held at Jack Murphy Stadium, Bob played first base and went 2 for 2 in the loss. The game was broadcast on ESPN and the announcers referred to him as the Old Goat. He was the oldest player on both teams.
- January 1990, he had the opportunity to play with the US Navy Baseball Team from San Diego against the Coors Silver Bullets in San Bernardino California. Bob pitched and the game was televised on ESPN. He also hit a ball off the top of the wall in Right Center to score the winning run.
- Bob received the Navy Commendation Medal for the following lifesaving incident he related to nominator Jose Rosado: "On 24 Sept 1995, I was scheduled to play a game in the NABA League in San Diego Ca. With a slight leg/back injury I decided that I couldn't participate and came back home. ... I was set to relax and take in a Charger Football game from the comforts of my living room when I noticed my neighbor from across the street drive up with her boyfriend.

I saw her son, 13-month y/o boy, Patrick, get out first and come around the back of the vehicle while his Mom exited and went around the front of the vehicle. The driver obviously thought that the boy was with his mom and reversed the vehicle to depart, not knowing that Patrick was behind the car. The driver backed over the boy. I could not yell fast enough to make any difference. When I ran across the street, screaming "Someone Call 911," his mom tried to pull Patrick from up/under the wheel well of the vehicle. He was stuck, motionless.

Don't know just how I did it, but I was able to lift the body of the car up enough for his mom to free Patrick. At this point I told his mother to "Give Me the Child"... she was reluctant however, now there was a crowd at the scene. They echoed "Give the Child to Bob"... She did. I immediately noticed the child turning blue. I positioned the child on the ground and took off my shirt and placed it over his ear. He sustained a laceration from the back of his scalp to his forehead to the point where the piece just "FLOPPED over." This and direct pressure controlled the bleeding. I started child CPR. I was fortunate that a week prior, I took my refresher course in adult and child CPR. By this time, I could hear the sirens getting closer.

After about 4 rounds of CPR, I was able to hear Patrick start to breath on his own and start crying. By then, the first responders had arrived. Patrick was air lifted to the Children's Hospital in San Diego. I returned home (across the street) and got another shirt, then took his mother to the emergency room."

Nominator comments

Nominator and references responded to questions. What follows are their responses to the questions or their letter of reference. (Some of this material has been edited for redundancy.)

1. Please tell us how this individual and his character affect the game of baseball and his baseball colleagues on and off the field, and why. Use CONCRETE examples. *

JOSE ROSADO: Bob is one of the best managers in all of central Florida. He has managed great teams as well as players that no one wanted on their teams. Bob has always looked out for what was best for our league.

2. What qualities and/or accomplishments make this individual special ... that they STAND APART from their peers and should be recognized through induction to the Roy Hobbs Baseball Hall of Fame? Use CONCRETE examples.

Bob ran the Orlando Baseball Association for over 10 years. He took over a small league that was in financial trouble and made it into one of the biggest and best baseball leagues in the entire state of Florida.

3. From your list of character qualities and/or your line of reasoning in support of your candidate, if you could pick only 2, which would they be and why? These should be compelling, and your stories should demonstrate how your candidate is EXCEPTIONAL.

1. Giving- Bob made the Orlando Baseball Association into a nonprofit organization whose income goes to benefit the SafeHouse of Seminole.

2. Kindhearted- Bob has sponsored plenty of players who are down on their luck.

Reference comments

References did not answer questions but rather submitted statements:

Reference, Gary Herr (current Board member, Orlando Baseball Association)

I met known Bob Misko 17 years ago when I started playing baseball again in the Orlando Baseball Association. At the time, Bob was still a player and quite frankly, even at his age of around 50, was one of the most dangerous left-handed hitters in the 38+ league at the time. Bob was also one of the leaders of the league and was on the board. After a few years the founder of the league decided to step down and the natural successor was Bob. Bob served as the judge, jury and executioner in a high character manner for 15 plus years. Under Bob's leadership the league has grown to 3 different age groups and he has secured some quality fields to play on, including Sanford Stadium in Sanford, Florida. I've been working with Bob as a member of the board and one of his managers for over 15 years and I can say with certainty that Bob's character is second to none. And, his leadership qualities developed from his 30-plus years in the US Navy are first class.

As a player-manager at home and at RHWS, he has managed to mix the desire to win with the desire to keep all players happy with playing time and has communicated with every player what he is expecting of them and what his plans are for them so there are no surprises. This leadership culminated in a 2015 undefeated 3A championship in the 53 plus division of the RHWS.

Bob has made a huge imprint on the game of adult baseball both in Central Florida and in the U.S. Navy. When based in Guam, he started a baseball league so his Navy brothers could enjoy the game he loves. As far as I know that league still exists and Bob was the founder.

Bob has put together numerous fund-raising baseball events in the area including games against teams from Holland, Canada and Naval Officers. He organized all-star games against these traveling teams which included sharing meals with them and giving them gifts. It was a great experience playing teams from other countries. He also established a charitable relationship with a local women's shelter. We've had events at the shelter where many of our players have supplied bikes and games for the kids and mothers. We've also supplied food, bed sheets and hosted parties for the kids with dunk tanks, jumping games, etc.

Reference, Lou Hernandez (current Secretary, Orlando Baseball Association)

I have known Mr. Robert "Bob" Misko for 19 years as a player, manager, league President and a major driving force in organizing charitable contributions to the Seminole County Women Shelter.

The first time I met Bob was when I was coaching a Cardinals team in Central Florida in the spring of 2002. He walked over and asked if he could be part of the team. After asking him several baseball questions, I knew he was perfect for our team. He went 5-for-5 in his first outing. In 2005, I stopped managing and left baseball for a while. I would not see Bob again till 2009. I heard he was managing a Cardinals team in another league and wanted to start

playing again. I called him and told him that I was looking for a team to play on. He told me not to worry, I was on his team.

I have attended the Roy Hobbs World Series before with other teams but, since 2009, I have played for Bob's Stoneage, Wrinkle and Freedom teams in Roy Hobbs. Bob has made The Orlando Baseball Association (OBA) a real competitive league and we have had several Championships, with Stoneage, Orlando Brewers and others making the finals. He has told many players within our league to join the players pool at Roy Hobbs and they have had great experiences and memories with the teams they joined.

Our local league is associated with the Seminole County Women Shelter thanks to Bob Misko. Every year, under Bob's leadership, we have a drive for the women and children in this shelter and we are truly proud of him and what he has accomplished. 100 bicycle were donated by the league and it's players.

Nick Brady, added a letter, here are portions:

Bob has always been and continues to be a tremendous player despite multiple knee and shoulder surgeries. But it's sometimes hard to recognize his prowess, as he tends to (as the old folks used to say) "hide his light under a bushel."

Baseball skills aside, his noteworthy attributes and contributions to the game and community came to light over time as he became better known in the central Florida area. Perhaps it's because of his infectious personality. Perhaps it's because of his natural organizational ability and leadership skills honed by 26 years of service in the U. S. Navy... Likely, it's both.

As more and more people (players and community leaders alike) recognized the talented individual the league had in its midst, Bob eventually accepted the position of President of the Orlando Senior Baseball Association.

A little background and context is necessary at this point... I started playing in the OSBA when it first formed in 1993. At that time, the league minimum age was 40, and stayed that way for many years. Consequently, we usually had very few teams (maybe 5 or 6), and were always scrambling for revenue, umpires, and fields to play on.

Once Bob took over the reins of the league, his guidance and leadership over the last 15 or so years, has allowed the Association to evolve and prosper. The name has changed to the OBA (to remove the "senior" aspect) and added multiple age groups to increase participation and associated revenue. The Association has grown from 5 or 6 teams to about 30. Bob also successfully negotiated several long-term agreements with various city and county officials to ensure there are ballfields available for his members to play on. He's also arranged agreements with umpiring associations to ensure smoothly operating league games. He also managed a team in the 45 + division for many years. He did that because he enjoys it, and it helped provide prospective on how things were going on the field of play in the Association.

The methods and practices instituted by Bob has turned the OBA into a very large, cohesive family. He recognized that a "family" of over 400 members could do some good in the community which would also strengthen the bonds within the family. To that end, Bob had the Association "adopt" The SafeHouse of Seminole (victims of domestic abuse - safehouseofseminole.org).

Finally, all the organizational and leadership efforts that Bob has contributed to the game of baseball have background issues and costs that most people don't think about.

- a) The considerable amount of time away from home and family to make sure things happen the way they're supposed to.
- b) The "adult" men who play the games and sometimes behave like temperamental 12-year-olds and make disciplinary hearings necessary.
- c) The multitude of phone calls that come day and night.
- d) And so on, Bob has handled all that and managed to maintain his love of the game (as well as his sanity). I've known Bob to reach into his own pocket to front the cost of tournament entry fees, uniforms, and equipment, trusting that his guys will pay him back...