

ORANGE POLICE & FIRE DEPARTMENTS CONTINUE SOFTBALL TRADITION

BY WALTER ELLIOTT

ORANGE Around 40 people more than continued a tradition by holding a friendly softball game here at Monte Irvin Orange Park Aug. 13.

Members of the city's Police and Fire departments - along with assorted officials, family and friends - went onto the park's northern diamond at about 6 p.m. for an American Softball Association-regulation seven-inning game.

Orange's Finest and Bravest, on one hand, were continuing a tradition which at least one source goes back into the late 1960s.

"The police officers and firefighters had been holding softball games between each other since I was a patrolman," said Police Director John Rappaport. "The games were usually held here except for a few years at Central Playground. The game went away for a few years and was revived."

The new-era police-fire game has an even 1-1 split going into that Friday night. The firefighters won the first round in 2008, followed by the police last year.

"This is a good opportunity for our public safety people to have a friendly game," said Orange Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. "They get to know each other and have some good competition."

The tournament has developed to where Department of Community Affairs Director Darrell Holcomb has furnished a trophy. Council members Elroy Corbitt, Edward

Marable, Jr., and Donna Williams were among those who stopped by.

There is one other development, however, when members of the late Fire Chief Martin DeMarzo's family appeared on the sidelines.

The tournament has been renamed The Third Annual Marty DeMarzo Softball Classic. Both Rappaport and newly-appointed Fire Chief Bob Manganelli agreed that the annual event be recast in DeMarzo's spirit.

The Finest drew first runs at the top of the first inning, loading the bases through singles before one of their own scored with a fly or line drive into the left-hand outfield. The police drew a 4-0 lead into the third inning.

The Bravest used the same approach to tie the game, 4-4, into the top of the third. The firefighters then capitalized on errors to take a 6-4 lead.

Police officers staged a brief comeback for their fifth run at the bottom of the fourth inning. However, the firefighters pulled away to a 22-5 final score.

"It looks like the firefighters," summed up former Monte Irvin Baseball League Commissioner Wally Boyett, "came to play tonight."

Boyett as Orange Recreation baseball coach was part-spectator and part-scout. He said that the firefighters, as winners, are to face the recreation department coaches 6 p.m. Aug. 20.