

Steve Arthur, Coach, Mentor and Legend at Bagley and Chastain Parks

by Linda Arthur *Published September 30, 2006*

Opening Day activities, riding down Peachtree Road to Pharr Road in convertibles headed by the Captains of the teams and their Queens, eating hamburgers, hot dogs, asking for “mixtures” to drink, listening to the National Anthem, and being coached by a legend at the park, Mr. Steve Arthur: these are the memories that the Buckhead Baseball Boys have, those who played at Bagley and Chastain Parks.

In the late 1950s, Bagley Park accommodated Little League teams that included boys up to 12-years-old. Mike and Steven T. Arthur remember playing first for the Dixie League team when they were 10 and 11 years old.

1957 Dixie League Team



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R, 1st row: Bobby Martin, Chuck Wilson, ?, Rick Bryant, Terry Sorrells, ?;
2nd Row: ?, Ricky Blue, Mike Arthur, Bill Wilson, ?, ?, ?, Dickie Davis;
3rd Row: John Hurst, ?, Steve Hanges, Wayne Williams, Steven T. Arthur, Coach Steve Arthur, Mike Andel, Wily McCrary, Richard Pugmire, ?, ?

It was an exciting time for the boys as well as the parents. In 1958, Coach Steve Arthur was helping to ready the field for the Opening Day Activities. He, along with other parents, added on to the Bagley pressbox and grandstand, using lumber that they had gathered.



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

There was also a good deal of promotion surrounding boys' baseball at Bagley. The Arthur family was asked to do photo ops for the Atlanta Journal, (May 30, 1958) to encourage the family to become involved with Bagley sports and activities.



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

Coach Steve Arthur serves chicken to his son, Mike. Pretty Little Linda Arthur is already well into hers.



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

Steve says "HURRY IT UP. IT'S BALL TIME."
Pert and charming Mary watches Mrs. Arthur.

As young boys of 12 and 13 years of age, Mike and Steven played for the Northside Jaycees, again under the leadership of their father, Steve Arthur. It was during those days at Bagley Park that they formed friendships that would last a lifetime. And it was there that the Buckhead Baseball Boys came to respect and love Coach Steve Arthur. Bubba Wyche was coached by Mr. Arthur when he was a young boy. Bubba describes him as a "tremendous inspiration" and a man who "embodied integrity." He remembers Coach Arthur taking him to Sunday School.

As a youngster, Bubba was an incredible athlete. As pitcher, Bubba broke a world record in Little League. The Northside News applauded him in the article "Bubba Wyche Fans 18 in Six Innings to Set 'First' in Little League" (1958). Bubba went on to become an outstanding quarterback at University of Tennessee and then went on to the pros, playing for both the Canadian and World Football Leagues.

1958 Northside Jaycees, Opening Day at Bagley Park



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R, 1st Row: Ricky Blue, Rick Bryant, Mike Arthur, Starr Moore, Captain Steven T. Arthur, Wayne Williams, Wily McCrary;

2nd row: Terry Sorrells, Stewart Long, Joe McDonald, Henry Hartken, Steve Buttoph, Lewis McDonald, Mike Carmichael, Buzz Wisdom, Danny Longmire, Coach Steve Arthur

Each team had a Queen, or “sponsor.” At that time, the Queens were selected by the captains of the teams. “The Captains and Queens would ride in a convertible in front of us,” reminisces Bobby Gibson who played 2nd base for the Civitans. “The rest of us would ride in big trucks, following behind. We went past the Buckhead Theater and the Zesto and on to Bagley Park.” He recalls some of the coaches: Coach Bob Blackwell, Coach Mark Pope, Coach Copeland, and Coach Cal Thomas. “Just remembering brings back the wonderful times we had at Bagley.” Bobby went on to play baseball for Georgia Tech.

Opening Day at Bagley Park, 1958



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: Starr Moore, Sponsor, Captain Steven T. Arthur

Games were played on Saturdays at 10:00, 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, and 6:00 during the summer months, and twice a week there were night games under the lights. As the Atlanta Journal (1958) portrayed him, Steven T. Arthur was a stellar pitcher. He vividly remembers the umpires: Frankie Allen who had the field named after him, and Hoyle Dye whose death impacted all the Buckhead Baseball Boys. Steven stated that he will never forget the way Tommy Thompson called strikes. He was famous for the way he shouted, "Sti-rike One, Sti-rike Two," and on the third strike he would shout, "Batter . . .sit down!" Steven and Mike were able to name some of the coaches for other teams, in particular, Floyd Boggs of the North DeKalb Kiwanis, Dub Whitlow who coached a team called the 50 Club and Bill Gibson, Bill Krebs, and Howell Copeland, all who went from Bagley to Chastain Park.

Coach Steve Arthur continued to support Buckhead Baseball. In 1959 he not only coached the Northside Jaycees but also coached the 1959 Nationals All-Stars alongside Coach Dub Whitlow. A photo of the All-Stars can be found on the Buckhead Baseball web site.

1959 Northside Jaycees Little League Team



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: 1st row: Bill Wilson, ?, ?, Rick Bryant, Mike Carmichael, Overton Winston, Chip Wisdom, ?;
2nd row: Steven T. Arthur, coach's assistant, Billy Trammell, ?, Stewart Long, Captain Mike Arthur, Lane Milner, sponsor, Terry Sorrells, Lee Rayburn, Buzz Wisdom, Coach Steve Arthur

When he was 13, Steven T. Arthur moved up to the Babe Ruth League at Bagley and clearly remembers how hard it was to run the bases. You see, at Bagley Park, the base-to-base lengths were 60 feet for Little League but 90 feet for Babe Ruth League. This extra length was indeed difficult for 13-year olds to run, and it was perhaps this dilemma that gave Coach Steve Arthur the impetus to build the fields at Chastain Park.

Memories of Chastain Park: 1960-1980

Referring to Coach Arthur as “The Reverend” (but not to his face!), praying before every game and then stealing away to the Witches Cave across the street from the fields after every game, playing under the lights, placing the numbers on the scoreboard, and cutting the grass to perfection: these are the memories of the Buckhead Baseball Boys when they remember Chastain Park.

In 1960, along with permission from the Parks and Recreation Department who donated the land, Mr. Steve Arthur, began construction on the baseball diamonds that are at Chastain Park. Unlike Bagley Park, Mr. Steve Arthur had the idea to build a park at Chastain with base-to-base lengths of 75’ for 13-14 year olds for Pony Leaguers (thus, much easier for that age group to run) and base-to-base lengths of 90’ for 15-16-year-olds for Colt Leaguers. There was even an American Legion comprised of youth aged 17 and 18. Mr. Arthur worked incessantly on the grounds, supplying a labor force of his own brick masons and carpenters. He, himself, dug a foundation, preparing it with gravel layered with clay and fabric so that the fields would approximate the way in which major league baseball diamonds were constructed.

1960, Buckhead/Chastain Pony League All-Star Team

Participated in the Georgia State Pony Baseball Tournament in Macon, Georgia



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: 1st row: Jimmy Ardis, Bobby Tyler, Fred Dendy, Bobby Kable, Al Barge, Tim Woodall, Terry Sorrells; 2nd row: Coach Bill Gibson, Billy Thurman, Bobby Gibson, Bubba Wyche, Johnny Merritt, Steven T. Arthur, Bobby Kramer, Coach Steve Arthur

Johnny Merritt (pictured above), currently a coach in the East Cobb Baseball League who has won 7 national championships, played for Coaches Arthur and Gibson. When asked about his success as a coach, Johnny responded: “I believe I have a coaching style that reflects my own ideas but also integrates what excellent coaches like Mr. Arthur and Mr. Gibson taught me. I can truly say that I respect and honor how they treated us as young men and young players.”

Coach Arthur built not only the dugouts (which are still in use today) but also the Concession Stand. Mrs. Arthur (better known as “Tootsie” Arthur) worked for 20 years in the Concession Stands at both Bagley and Chastain Parks. Mrs. Arthur worked every game, whether or not her sons were playing. She worked alongside many other mothers: Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Krebs, Mrs. Wisdom, and Mrs. Elliot. When she needed extra help, Mrs. Arthur enlisted the girls who came to watch the games. “I remember working with my mom,” Linda Arthur says. “We were always busy. It was hard work, and it was really hot. Our best selling item was greasy french fries.” In 1967 Mrs. Arthur was awarded a trophy during on-field ceremonies for all her hard work. The trophy reads: Lillie Arthur, in appreciation from the Ladies Auxiliary, Boys’ Baseball of Buckhead, 1967. Tootsie Arthur went on to work in the Concession Stand long after her sons had gone to college, and in 1976 she became one of the five female Officers of Boys’ Baseball of Buckhead.

In 1961, Steve Arthur, then 43 years old, coached the Yankees—again Bubba Wyche and Bobby Gibson were under his instruction. (Bubba had recently returned from playing for the Havatlanda All-Star Team that went to Havana, Cuba to play in the tournament. Bobby Kramer, also shown in the photo below, had played in that tournament as well.) Mike Arthur says with a good deal of reverence that, “when I was young, Dad was not the kind of father I wanted to have when I was around my friends (that is, moral, religious, and a bit strict). But when I grew up I realized how lucky I was to have such a father, and I realized how much my friends admired him.”

1961 Chastain Park Colt League Yankees



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: 1st row: Bobby Tyler, Billy Bowdoin, David Brodner, Virlyn Moore, ?;
2nd row: Coach Steve Arthur, Bobby Kramer, Bill Dyer, Tim Woodall, Bubba Wyche, Steven T. Arthur, Bobby Gibson.

In 1962 Steven made the All-Star Team in the North Fulton Colt League.

1962 North Fulton Colt League All-Star Team



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: 1st row: ?, ? Randy Prindle, Steven T. Arthur, Robert Zelski, Bobby Kramer, Ricky Jarrell, Buddy Copeland;

2nd row: Coach Billy Gibson, ?, Jimmy Gooch, ?, Virlyn Moore, ?, Kris Krebs, ?, Coach ?

In the mid 1960s, the Arthur brothers were still playing baseball, and their father was still coaching. Moving up to the American Legion teams (aged 17-18), Mike and Steven were being prepared to play college baseball. It was in this year that Coach Harry Lloyd of Westminster Schools helped Steve Arthur with the team. Coach Lloyd has depicted Steve Arthur as “an excellent coach,” someone who was interested in the fundamentals of the game of baseball. (AJC, 9/18/2006)

1964, Chastain Park’s American Legion Post 1 Team



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: 1st row: Mike Pittard, Bobby Kramer, Bob Wheeler, Steven T. Arthur, Randy Prindle;

2nd Row: Coach Steve Arthur, Dickie Davis, Chip Kays, ?, ?, Coach Harry Lloyd.

His last year in the American Legion (1965) Mike played for the American Legion Post 1 Braves, and the team sponsor was Mr. Tabor of Tabor Pontiac in Atlanta. Mike was still playing with some of his friends from Bagley days.

1965 Chastain Park American Legion Post 1 Braves



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

L-R: 1st row: ?, ?, Bobby Gibson, Mike Arthur, Chip Kays, Bob O'Callahan;
2nd row: Mr. Tabor (team sponsor), Whitey Whiten, ?, Buddy Copeland, ?, ?, ?, Coach Bob Elliott

After his sons left for college, Steve Arthur stayed involved with Boys Baseball of Buckhead at Chastain Park, coaching American Legion teams and then became instrumental in the operational business of the organization.

1966 Chastain Park American Legion Atlanta Post 1



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia

1967 Chastain Park American Legion Atlanta Post 1



Photo Courtesy of the Steve Arthur Family of Atlanta, Georgia
Center back of Photo: Coach Steve Arthur

In 1976 Mr. Arthur was elected Chairman of the Commissioners of Boys Baseball of Buckhead (The North Side News, March 9, 1976). Steve Arthur continued working diligently for the Chastain program until 1980, twenty years after he had first become involved at Bagley Park.

Standing at the Peachtree Road United Methodist Church pulpit, the Reverend Kelly Barge, composing himself, began speaking of the legendary coach he so loved. He spoke of the influence Steve Arthur had on him as a boy and how he relished his days at Bagley Park. Later, lifting the casket from the hearse at Arlington Cemetery, the Buckhead Baseball Boys carried their Coach, Steve Arthur, to the graveside to lay him to rest. Alongside his wife, Mrs. Lillie Arthur, his daughters, Linda Lillie and Mary Catherine, his sons, Mike and Steven T. Arthur, and his dear friend, Coach Harry Lloyd (pall bearer), many of Mr. Arthur's players were in attendance at the funeral:

Reverend Kelly Barge
John Barge
Fred Black
Luke Curtis
Bobby Elliott
Bobby Gibson (pall bearer)
Clifton Hawley
Dr. John Hurst
Brad Hayes
Paul Jolly
Kris Krebs
Brad Lloyd

Pat Lloyd
Bruce Logue
Stuart Long
Johnny Merritt (pall bearer)
Richard Pugmire
Jerry Thompson
Bubba Wyche (pall bearer)

and those Buckhead Baseball Boys who were out of town sent their condolences:

Ricky Blue
Rick Bryant
Randy Carroll
Buddy Copeland
Danny Fry
Jack Morse
Steve Woodall

For his dedication and many years of work with Atlanta youth baseball Steve Arthur received the following awards:

The Metro Atlanta Dugout Club presents to Steve Arthur, Charter Member, in recognition for 20 years service to the Atlanta Youth Baseball, 1980

Metro Atlanta Dugout Club, Pop Adair Service Award, Steve Arthur, 1977

The Atlanta Braves and the Atlanta Dugout Club, All Star Baseball Team, Steve Arthur in recognition of his outstanding performance during the 1976 baseball season Signed, Harvey Cochran, President and Bill Kennedy, Secretary

In appreciation to Steve Arthur, Chairman, Commissioner, Boys' Baseball of Buckhead, 1976

Coach Steve Arthur
American Legion, Atlanta, Post 1, 1970

Steve Arthur, President
Atlanta Dugout Club, 1966

Written In Loving Memory of my Dad, Steve Arthur
Linda Lillie Arthur
September 30, 2006

Special Thanks to the Buckhead Baseball Boys, to Mrs. Tootsie Arthur, and to Harriet Arthur for their support in the writing of this article.

Special Note: If, in the writing of this article, I have omitted anyone or misrepresented any information, please accept my apologies. You may contact me at arthurkm@georgia.southern.edu to be included or to make corrections.

Linda L. Arthur

In Memoriam
BOBBY WHEELER
d. March, 2006
Catcher for the Little League 50 Club and for the American Legion Post 1 "A" team

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