

## *A Brief History Saskatoon Softball Umpires*

Just as we have a long history of many decorated players and organizers, the SASA has been fortunate to have a tradition of excellence with its umpires. The Saskatoon Softball Umpire Association (S.S.U.A) was formed in 1972 with the amalgamation of groups led by



**Ed Bitz and Eugene Hearne (seen on right)**. The Hearne group had been working the lower divisions of the S.A.S.A. and the Industrial League, while the Bitz's group worked the high caliber Sr. A Men's and the Special Men's divisions. They had 43 members of which about 24 were rated to do Sr. B Men's or higher. The association grew to 45 members in 1980 and 4 of those



members: **Harvey Hildebrandt, Jim Grant, Doug Schultz and Dave Moore** were selected to umpire the historic Sr. A Men's championship in Saskatoon and 3 more: **Ed Bitz, John Haider and Ed Reimer (seen at left)** were chosen UIC's for Canadians'. Doug Schultz presently is the assignor of the

SASA and has been umpiring games for more than 50 years.

The association reached a high of 64 members in 1984, dropped to 55 members in 1988 and 44 members in 1992 and this included both fastpitch and slowpitch members. The number of umpires continued to drop to 42 in 1996, 36 in 2000, 30 in 2004, 22 in 2008 and then up to 31 in 2012 but with only 12 members rated to do Sr. B Men's or above. The S.S.U.A. changed its name to Hub City Softball Umpire's Association (H.C.S.U.A.) in 1985 and to Saskatoon Bridge City Softball Umpire's Association (S.B.C.S.U.A) in 1994. Recently, for the first time ever, all fastpitch softball umpires, whether they only do minor or only adult have come moved under the umbrella Bridge City Umpire.



One has to go through a rigorous evaluation process to become level 5, the highest level in the world. During its long and illustrious history the association has produced 9 level 5 umpires who have umpired over 25 International Championships and supervised many Softball

Canada or Western Canadian tournaments. The names of the Level 5 umpires (in order of their appointments) are: **Ed Bitz, John Haider, Harv Hildebrandt (seen at left), Ed Reimer, Jim Grant, Brian Rae, Dave Moore, (seen below on right) Jimm Barr and Lyle McGowan**. Three of these



members have been inducted into the Saskatoon Sports Hall of Fame and three have been selected to the Softball Canada Hall of Fame. Some also contributed to the initial Level 1 to 4 manuals and the S.C. Casebook and all are still in use today.



Perhaps the most internationally renowned umpire from Saskatoon was **Ed Bitz (seen to the left)**. A dislocated shoulder ended his athletic days and he turned to umpiring. Ed had a distinguished 29-year career

as an umpire, starting in 1963. During this time, he was the first Softball Canada umpire-in-chief (1972-1984), served as umpire-in-chief for 33 national championships, initiated and developed the first softball officials' program in Canada. Ed conducted numerous clinics across Canada, and was responsible for national rule interpretations. On four occasions he attended umpire schools in the U.S. and was on hand at seven world championships. His knowledge of the game and his excellence in officiating took him to New Zealand, El Salvador, and China, along with many centers in the U.S. and Canada. The softball world lost Ed last summer when he passed away.