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SPORTS



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FROM OCREGISTER.COM/ANGELS



MARCIA C. SMITH
REGISTER COLUMNIST

Carew continues to offer help off field

ANAHEIM • It was more than 40 years ago when Hall of Famer Rod Carew was a young Minnesota Twins All-Star standing in a hallway of a Minneapolis hospital, crying and waiting for the screams to end.

"Drop by and say, 'Hi,'" the Twins public-relations department had asked him. "Try to cheer him up."

Carew, fearless in front of any pitcher, didn't know what to do when he arrived at the room of his young fan, a boy about 11 or 12 years old who had been burned in a fire.



FOR THE REGISTER

Ex-Angel player Rod Carew was honored as a Pink Tie Guy last week.

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the street to talk to them," said Carew, 65, the former Angel who has been named a 2011 Pink Tie Guy by Susan G. Komen for the Cure Orange County for bringing issues about breast cancer into the business world.

At the Pink Tie Ball this past Saturday at Angel Stadium, the pink-tied Carew happily shared stories with strangers, mostly hilarious and heroic tales from his playing days stretching from his April 11, 1967 debut with the Twins to his 19th and final season as an Angel in 1985.

The emotional story of the boy in the hospital that changed the way he walked in life didn't make the sunset chatter over champagne and cocktails. But that's one of the powerful memories that drive Carew's generosity, tireless advocacy and continuing push to fight cancer to everything he does.

The boy, bawling as the doctors and nurses treated him, saw Carew in the doorway and whimpered, "Mr. Carew, please don't look at me. It hurts. I can't stand the pain."

Brushed back, Carew retreated into the hallway, crying through the boy's echoing wails. He thought: *This kid has been through hell with these burns and he's concerned about what I think of him.*

"From that day on, I promised myself that I would do everything I can to help people, even if it's just to put a smile on their faces or stop in

Carew's retirement days are far from shuffleboard. With 2008-09 Pink Tie Guy and Angels chairman Dennis Kuhl, he co-hosted last fall's "Light the Night" event at Angel Stadium to benefit the Leukemia Lymphoma Society. He shook hands with runners as they crossed the finish line at the 2010 All-Star Fun Run benefiting the Angels Baseball Foundation.

An MLB ambassador, he has traveled to academies in Italy, Australia, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua and Panama, showing kids how to hit a baseball like the greatest hitter of all time. A spring training instructor with the Twins, he warmed up hitting 150 balls off a tee and taking soft-toss batting practice so that he can show current players the mechanics of his swing that can still put the ball in play.

At every stop, Carew is coaching baseball and life and death. He says, "We all need to step up to the plate and take a swing at this dreadful disease."

In his Coto de Caza home, it's the 1977 Roberto Clemente Award for his contributions to the community that he prizes most in a memorabilia collection that includes his 18 piece set of All-Star hardware, the 1967 AL Rookie of the Year and 1977 AL MVP trophies and that arsenal of commemorative bats for winning seven AL batting titles.

Being honored as Pink Tie Guy "is so much more rewarding than winning any MVP award or getting a base hit," said Carew, who batted .328 in his career and had 3,053 hits in his 2,469 games.

Graying at the temples and sporting wire-rimmed glasses rather, Carew offers gentle smiles, tender handshakes, a unselfish heart and a message about cancer that doesn't care about gender, race, money or batting average when it strikes.

"I know how important this is for everyone, not just for the people who have cancer but for their families, friends and supporters," said Carew, whose youngest daughter, Michelle, died of leukemia in 1996.

"We're all touched by it in some way. We can all help."

And Carew, who promised to help more than 40 years ago, does.