JIM CLEVELAND

Jim Cleveland thought he’d spend a year coaching baseball at Redwood Christian High, his alma mater, before following in the career footsteps of his father and grandfather by joining the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Twenty-four years and 327 victories later, Cleveland is still at Redwood and the FBI is still waiting.

Cleveland returned to Castro Valley with his new bride, Sandy, in 1994, upon graduation from Liberty University in Virginia, where he played four years of Division I baseball as an outfielder and corner infielder. In addition to coaching the Redwood Christian varsity baseball team, he was hired to teach physical education at both the elementary and high school levels, and coach middle school basketball and softball.

In his first 23 seasons as Redwood Christian’s varsity baseball coach, Cleveland has compiled an outstanding 327-208-2 record and has led the Eagles to four league championships and three North Coast Section Division 5 titles. In 2010, he was named Regional Coach of the Year by the American Baseball Coaches Association.

Cleveland coached the North All-Star team in the California North vs. South high school showcase three times – 2004, 2016 and 2017. In 2015, he was the NCS/CIF Spring Honor Coach for Baseball. Not bad for a guy who expected to be at Redwood Christian for one year.

Even with all his success, Cleveland would never agree with Vince Lombardi, that “winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.” In fact, winning isn’t even his top priority.

“It’s not about wins, but how you become a better person,” said Cleveland, who will be inducted into the Castro Valley Sports Hall of Fame on April 21. “At a Christian school you can teach character and how it all relates to the Bible. It’s an opportunity that’s unique.”

A Redwood Christian student from kindergarten through high school, Cleveland knew he wanted to attend a Christian college, but he also wanted to play Division I baseball. That limited his choices considerably, but Liberty qualified on both counts. Plus, he had family just a three-hour drive away.

Since becoming Redwood Christian’s athletic director in 2004, Cleveland has been strictly a coach and administrator. In addition to coaching varsity baseball, he runs the middle school baseball program in the fall and serves as transportation director for the school. He also has run the Redwood Christian baseball camp for the past 23 summers.

Cleveland and his wife, Sandy, currently live in Dublin.