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My involvement with the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame came out of a research project, Nancy Bouchier's and my own research on the Beachville incident. She was writing a dissertation on sports in small Ontario towns in the 19th century for her dissertation for the Western History Department. Nancy was a student of mine, graduate and undergraduate, before she went to History. I started to write an article for the **Journal of the West**, I think it was, no it wasn't **Journal of the West**. I didn't know about **Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Social Policy Perspectives** yet; in fact, I don't think it had been organized.

So in about 1986 or '87, might have been '86, I was sitting in a little private room at the top of London Library, and I was writing the History of the Introduction of Professional Baseball in Canada. It has a lot to do with the Tecumsehs and their arch rivalry with the Guelph Maple Leafs and the hiring of professional players, especially from the United States, to combat Sleeman and the Guelph crowd. I was focusing in on that, and in doing that I was going back in to the 1860s to see about the development of baseball in Ontario, after the Beachville incident (which I didn't know about at the time). So I was looking at the St. Marys newspapers for instance, and the development of baseball there, the Stratford newspaper and the development of baseball there because there were images, Hamilton was playing and so on. And so I'm sitting there labouring on this and there's a little knock on the door. I look over and there's a glass panel and there's Nancy looking at me. She came in and said "What are you doing?" I told her, and she said "Oh, well I'm working on this, and I ran across this. Should we do something together? Can I help you?" And so I said "Let's do something together." She was the one that really brought me even earlier into Canadian baseball history than the 1860s and the 1870s, and there we came into contact with this Beachville incident.

The critical thing there was, Bill Humber wrote the book **Cheering for the Home Team**, and in there he had a short paragraph that was extracted from a publication; he didn't document the book, he didn't have any documentation, but it was an excerpt from the *Ingersoll Chronicle*. It had a part of Adam Ford's letter to *Sporting Life* that in effect detailed this game of

his boyhood heritage in Beachville in 1838. It was only a paragraph, and I thought to myself “Gee, that’s something” and Nancy too.

So Nancy went to Beachville and made contact with the little Beachville Museum and got a few things. There was a woman there, Shirley Riddick, who sort of ran the museum and was a pillar of community action in a little teeny town, Beachville. So Nancy and I got to talking, and I said “Well Nancy, that thing got into the *Ingersoll Chronicle*, because somebody read at that time, in 1886, somebody read *Sporting Life*.” They had a big circulation in Northeastern United States and Southern Ontario; they covered all sorts of baseball, minor leagues and so on, and some other sports but mainly baseball. I said “I wonder what the *Ingersoll Chronicle* published. Was that it? Was that the whole thing?”

So I went to Cooperstown and I knew Tom Shieber in the baseball library down there, and he sent me the microfilm of *Sporting Life*. I went into it and I found Ford’s letter from May of 1886, I think it was. And I saw that what the *Ingersoll Chronicle* had published, one paragraph of that thing, was only about a sixth, or a seventh or an eighth of the entire article. So we got the entire article and it shed all sorts of light on names, and dates and circumstances and places and so on. We set about trying to prove the validity of Ford’s reminiscence. We found the tax records, the land records, the geographical maps at the time, the tombstone evidence, military histories, whatever, and we put it all together. It was an illuminating picture and a factual one. That Ford was accurate could be documented: those people that he mentioned were there, and they were that age, and that place that he described was there on the maps, so we began to get a picture.

While we’re on that journey, of publishing that article on it for the **Journal of Sports History**, we said to ourselves, “Why don’t we go to the Ontario Curling Association Headquarters in Toronto?” Because Ford was a curler, and a noted one, and an organizer of the Ontario Curling Association. Not **the** organizer, but a player. So we went there. We got a lot about Ford and curling in that era, and then we said “Well, let’s try the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. Maybe they have archives.”

So we went cold turkey up there to Toronto, that was 1987, and the Baseball Hall of Fame was in Ontario Place. Bruce Prentice, their glorious circumstances; they had Babe Ruth’s car in there. But it was sort of sparse in

terms of the space there, looking out at the Blue Jays across the road in Exhibition Stadium. It was great and Bruce was a good emissary. He'd come out, suit on, tell us about things, their plans and a little bit about where they had come from. He said "We don't have much of an archive, not anything you would be interested in, but we do have some stuff about minor league teams in Canada playing in cross-border leagues and so on." But he really got interested in what we were doing. Actually this must have been 1988 because we were just either on the verge of publishing this article or had it published. It went through the referee status like wildfire; fast. Usually those things are held up and take a couple of years, but this took 4 or 5 months.

So while we were sitting there, must have been in the spring, he said "We're getting ready to have a big annual fundraising dinner here in Toronto at the Convention Centre for the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame." He had big plans, you know. And he said "Could you guys make up a play? A play, a dramatic play, about this Beachville incident? You could act it out before the crowd." It was crazy. I thought: a play? No. I said "Maybe we could do a film." I had in my mind getting together a group of people and dressing them up like old time players.

Well you saw the film. That's what came out. He said "You make that film and we'll play it at the banquet." They had some big-time people coming to the banquet, big-time ex-players. So we made the film. Well, the Journalism Department really did the filming; we got the players. Tom Shieber down in Cooperstown sent us some old bats that they used in town ball play. He sent us the original copy, bound, of *Sporting Life* through Customs. We had Customs bring it here so that we had some original artifacts to put in [*the film*]. I wrote the script, the dialogue, or most of it. We had Glynn Leyshon, the old wrestling coach, play the part of Adam Ford. We filmed at Eldon House down here in London, an old historic house. So we made the film, and the Journalism people, the kids (they were grad students) won the CBC award for it that year.

So it comes to the night of the banquet. I was sitting at one of the tables, not the head table but one of the tables off to the side down in front, and there must have been 600 or 700 people when you were counting the tables and how many were at each table. It was big; I think it was highly successful. Very near the opening proceedings, they said something about the film, Bruce Prentice did, and he said I'd like you to see this. He had seen it and was real

enthusiastic about it. So we showed it on the big screen, two big screens up there so people could look at it. It was very silent during the showing; it came off pretty well. So that was the first airing that anybody had seen in a public way.

Shortly thereafter the Blue Jays moved to the 'Dome, and there's the Hall in the high rent district and there weren't that many people passing through it. There were too many other distractions that could claim people's interest there. They weren't a focal point even though they had the glorious physical circumstances, so they started to go into the red, the red, the red, and in the end it closed and stopped. All the stuff went into storage and the Hall became inactive. It was sort of in dormant status, still had activation with Parliament, you know, with the Letters Patent. There was still a Board, a de facto Board (Gleed, Hillhouse, Humber, and Kelcher and some others), and that was about it. It was here that there was some issue that I don't know the innards of: indebtedness or creditors, people to whom they owed money. In the end what that Board I think attempted to do was to dissolve those debts, and in the end they were dissolved but only by a percentage of the dollar that they owed in these circumstances. But that was a quest of the Board: "How do we get out of this?"

So, the critical thing for the revitalization of the Hall was my affiliation with Beachville and Nancy. In Beachville they've got this beautiful old limestone house, and they opened a Beachville Museum. Ye olde museum we were in was in a little side cottage or side building of a church and this was a building by itself. So we go down there for the grand opening of it. Well, there were not too many people there but it was beautiful grounds. They did a lot of work there. The Riddicks, Shirley Riddick and her husband Jim, both of whom have passed away since then, were the catalyst; they did it. It was a beautiful day, beautiful grounds, beautiful house, but it was really an agricultural museum because that was what that community was built on in its infancy. I go in there and over in one corner was the Beachville episode baseball, and they had a sign outside that said "Home of the First Recorded Baseball Game". In the corner were pictures from our article, and our article and a few other things that they had.

One of the centerpieces of the display was a model, about 3 feet square, whose title was "A Baseball Park". This model was created by Arthur Lierman

as a Masters Landscape Design degree from the University of Toronto. The model was his Masters thesis project. The model had diamonds in it, but it also had walkways, and resting places, and pools. It was great. But it was not the Hall of Fame and Museum; it was A Baseball Park. In his work, Art had to locate it on a site, so he located it (theoretically) in Beachville, based on this 1988 article on the Beachville incident. He had the site to put it in, Beachville; he had the topography, how it would be landscaped, and so on. That was the finished project.

I looked at that, and I think the day before I may have read an article in the *Toronto Star*, an article by Larry Millson, about the absence of a Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. He was bemoaning the fact that it didn't exist any more. I read that article and immediately the image of that Park popped back into my mind. And I thought how about a Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum right in the middle of that Park. And then I started to think, Beachville? You can't get there by bus. You can't get there off the 401. No train. Didn't make sense. But it did make sense that such an entity as that, a Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, ought to be located in what was then the cradle of baseball history [*in Canada*]. And since then I've proved, through studying the Maritimes, that Beachville predated far in advance anything that ever happened in the Maritimes, which you'd think would have been the area of the first American exodus following the American Revolution. But it didn't happen. Cricket happened, but not baseball.

So I thought about that, and I wrote that article for the first issue of **Nine**, in 1992 I think it was: "In Search of a Canadian Cooperstown". Well, it was sort of an answer to Millson. He didn't have an answer; he just posed a rhetorical question, or he just made a statement. So, "In Search of a Canadian Cooperstown": who would read that? A few academics, maybe, and some SABR people. Bill Kirwin was the editor, out in Calgary, and in order to get the funding for that Journal he had to place the caveat on the title: **A Journal of Baseball History and Social Policy Perspectives**. As long as he had that he got some funding, from his school or wherever he got it from; baseball history wasn't going to cut it. So that's why that aspect of the Journal was in the title.

So who read it? SABR people, maybe. But it was then...[*My wife*]
Ashleigh and I had a friend, Bob Latham, who lived in St. Marys. We were close friends, their family and ours. We visited them in St. Marys; they visited us in

London. One night they were over at the house, and we were sitting around. It was right after that Journal came out. Early September, I think, in 1992. That's right in the middle of the Blue Jays success, and people were all interested in baseball. I said to Bob, "I've just written something about your town. Maybe you'd be interested in reading it." I happened to have two photocopies there at the house, and I gave him one. He took it home to St. Marys, and he must have read it. But he also took it to his next door neighbour, and his next door neighbour was Lorne Eedy.

Lorne at that time owned and published the *Journal-Argus*. He had some other newspapers as well in small Ontario towns, all of which he sold. He took that article, and he was really the initiator of a big meeting. He called me up and asked if I'd be willing to come to a meeting of people to whom he'd shown the article. They're interested in talking to you about it, about your solution, if you will. St. Marys' perspective was that it [*the relevant geographic aspect of the article*] wasn't Beachville any longer, it was St. Marys. Adam Ford had lived there; it had that connection.

So we arranged to meet at Sir Joe's restaurant. It's no longer there, but it was right across the street, practically, from Dick MacPherson's place. I arrived, and had the film with me. But I brought the wrong thing to play the film. I got in there, and I would say there were roughly 15 people there. There were long tables, and we were sitting around them. There wasn't any eating or drinking that I remember; we might have had Coke or something. Lorne presided over the meeting because he was the one that had called it. Who was there? The ones I remember the most were the two ladies from the Museum. One [*Mary Smith*] was the head of the Museum, and one [*Sharon Barnes*] was the head of the Recreation Department. There was Chris West, who owned the auto dealership. Dick MacPherson was there. Dave Cunningham was there; his wife [*June*] was active in civic affairs. A guy that helped Chris West maintain the cars that they showed out front was there. I can't remember his name [*Lou Santandrea*]. Charlie Hammond was there. The others I can't remember, but I would say that in the whole room there were about 15. The mayor, Jamie Hahn, was not there.

I remember Chris West saying two things. One was "You know, we've had many projects thrown at us, presented to Town Council. But we've never had one that everybody in the town got behind. Or very few of them. There's

always the naysayers. But we think this is something the town can really get behind!" Now remember, it's the September stretch [*in 1992*]. Actually, that meeting was in early October, maybe the first week of October. And the Jays were going to the World Series. They win it. There's fever. There's fever in St. Marys too. So the project appealed. They didn't know what it would take, but it appealed to them. And Chris West asked a prophetic question. He looked at me (and remember I didn't know him then), and he said "What's in this for you?" I could see that he was thinking from the business point of view that I wanted to be the President of the Hall of Fame, or the Curator of the Museum for a big salary, and all this business.

Fortunately for me, I had had a useful experience. I was asked to be a consultant to assess the value, for tax deduction purposes, of the donation to a Museum of the first balloon to fly the Atlantic Ocean. It was the Double Eagle II. Two friends of mine actually flew it. After an aborted flight two years previous (they were forced down because of weather near Iceland), they used the lessons of that flight to make a successful flight from Presque Isle, Maine all the way to Paris. They were feted. The Smithsonian asked for the balloon, and mounted it, mounted the lower part of it in the big Aerospace Museum there. And it occurred to the two guys that donated the balloon that they'd spent millions in this endeavour, to say nothing of the expenses attached to the first flight, which had provided the lessons, and had made the second flight possible.

So I was one of the people (not the only one) that they came to, because the IRS, the tax people in the United States, said "You've got to get a value on your donation". What's the value of history? And the two friends of mine, from when I was in Albuquerque (they're both from New Mexico), they said we need a sport historian. So they approached me about it. It sort of interested me to be involved, because very few practical things come our way. Like the Hall of Fame. Like this [*balloon*] episode. We don't really get into things where we can put our academic egghead perspectives into actual play leading to something. So that's what I said to Chris. I said, "Well, I'm not interested in myself, but for my profession, as a job, I'm interested in heritage. I'm interested in preservation, in preserving history, and the Hall of Fame and Museum are the monuments. They're the exclamation mark. So that's my interest." They all nodded their heads.

So the next order of business was to decide whether we were going to pursue it or not. The general agreement around the table was that they would pursue it with Town Council, and to air it publicly through various agencies like the Rotary Club, the Legion, Kinsmen and so on. Rotary were very active from the start, because a lot of the people there that night (Eedy, West, Latham) were part of the Rotary Club. Which brings us to another chapter in this scenario.

They said “What we need is a Chair for this Committee”. It’s got to be somebody here in St. Marys who can guide this thing. And nobody would step forward. Nobody. They first looked at Chris West, and I remember him saying “Oh, this is too big for me. I’m not used to this.” Nobody would step forward. And it almost came to the point where the meeting was going to break up without any decision having been made. But credit to Lorne. Because he had called the meeting, I guess he felt it somewhat incumbent on him to do it as a last resort. So he accepted the Chairmanship. And he donated the facilities, resources, energies of the *Journal-Argus*, and himself, financially and otherwise in kind, to carry the ball on this quest.

One of the first episodes in this quest was to approach the Rotary Club for funding. Because what they needed to do was to make a presentation to the moribund Board of the Hall to win the awarding of the Hall to their community. And remember these [*members of the Hall Board*] are all Toronto people. They had debt hanging over them, and the artifacts in storage. But there’s a legacy, too. They really wanted to, I think, bring about a reasonable solution that would absolve them of any responsibility for legal ramifications. But there were other pretenders: one of them was Guelph, one of them was St. Catharines, one of them was Orangeville, one was Brockville. And they all were interested in forming a plan.

OK, so they made a date with the Rotary Club. They made a date for me to go out to the Rotary Club and play the film. I didn’t have the film; I had slides. They had a monthly meeting, and they had these women called the Country Caterers come in and provide a buffet. It’s ham, beef; country food. They catered everything. The incentive was to come and eat, have a few drinks, listen to a guest speaker, and go home. I was going to be the guest speaker. The theme was the future of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and the quest to have it awarded to us. And how they could help.

So I arrived just after dark, parked in the parking lot, got out carrying my slide projector in one hand and the carousel with the slides in it in the other, and there's a guy standing by the doorway with a suit on. He saw me coming and opened the door, welcoming me. We did the dinner, and it came to be my turn. I got up and did my show, and this guy that had opened the door for me was sitting right down front. He was very intense; he looked at me intently through the entire presentation. He hardly ever glanced away. Very rapt, very listening. So we finished, and I'm tidying up and putting away the slide projector. This guy comes up and introduces himself. George Taylor. He says "I own the Blue Jays, and SkyDome." Well, he was President and CEO of Labatt. He had a farm outside St. Marys that he lived on. He was a good guy. He was a bean counter, an accountant. A good guy. He was the guy that opened the door for me. He said "Well, I'm interested in what you have to say. This is something that could be of benefit to Canada" and so on.

Now in the ensuing days and months and years, George Taylor never got involved too much because he was a sounding board more than anything. The leadership of Labatt changed, the names changed; they stayed on board, to some extent. But from that meeting I went out and I talked to the Kinsmen. I talked to the Legion. I made a mistake when I went to the Canadian Legion. I happened to go in the back door. I went up to the bartender and said "Is this the American Legion?" I realized my mistake right away. I had played American Legion baseball in the United States, which is really the only organized baseball for youth. I was 17; if you reached your 18th birthday you were out. So it was below 18. I played two years in American Legion. That was really the only thing; there was no Little League, no Babe Ruth, Connie Mack, anything else. That was it.

So I got by that, and I went out to a few other places, usually with someone else from the Committee, or from the Town. Meanwhile, the subject is in the newspapers, it's in the Town Council dialogue, and things like that. Finally we got to the point where I was assigned the task of finding out about the Letters Patent existent in Ottawa, which I did. I had conversations with people who were the custodians of that up in Toronto. We didn't understand everything. We didn't understand how much power even the moribund Board had over those Letters Patent. It was a foundational measure of the Hall, way

back in Bruce Prentice's day, which was still there, lodged deeply in Ottawa. Its legality was there, its *raison d'être*.

Finally all the other pretenders (Chatham was one) sort of faded away except for St. Marys and Guelph. John Sleeman was involved with the Guelph bid, and that is another story completely. My wife was in the real estate business for a while, and she went off to run an office in Etobicoke. So she lived in Toronto with her daughter and came home on weekends. Or I'd go up there. So I went up one weekend, went out early one Sunday morning, got a ***Toronto Star***, and sat with the crossword puzzle they have on Sunday. I'm leafing through, and all of a sudden there's a picture of this guy John Sleeman, with an article: "John Sleeman, brewer of beer, intends to resurrect the old formulas of his great grandfather in Guelph in the 19th century, and start a new beer called Sleeman's Beer." Well, in my research pathways here at the University, I knew of the Sleeman papers in the Library, and I've worked with them. He was a Guelph guy, and he was the manager, the general manager, the entrepreneur, of those Guelph Maple Leafs, the first Canadian champions. And the first hirer of players. He's got letters in those papers, and I've used those letters in my development of professional baseball. I had noticed in those papers two big ledger books; I thought they were the ledger books of the finances for the Silver Creek Brewery, which was the name of the brewery in the 19th century. The brewery started about the early 1850s. I opened the ledger books, and they weren't to do with finances at all. They were brewing formulas. Figure after figure after figure; it made no sense to me.

But I called up Sleeman in Guelph. I told him about his great grandfather's papers, and that he might be interested in looking at them. There were some beer brewing formulas in there, and I'd just read this article about him in the ***Toronto Star*** starting Sleeman's Beer. There was nothing on the market then like today's [*beer*]. So he said "That's great. Can I come up?" I said "Yes, come on up for lunch." He said "Can I bring my grandmother? She's still alive." George Sleeman's daughter. She lives in Ottawa, married to a Scotsman. He was great, and she was great. We went for lunch in the Peacock Room, then we went over and looked at the papers. He took some of those formulas and used them; I don't know how, but he used them. We made arrangements to photocopy the whole thing. So I can see how he might be interested in the Hall.

But to get back to the quest. They [*the Hall's Board*] finally made an appointment. They were going to have two contestants, like the finals of the modern Olympic Games. One city makes a final presentation; another city makes a final presentation. Or maybe there were three; in the old days four, even five. Then they would have the vote. I forget the exact year; it must have been '95, '96, somewhere in there. '94 maybe [*August of 1994*]. It took us that long to get our act together and make some preliminary plans. Now, I had asked Art Lierman to come on to the Committee, because his was the original model. He made graphic drawings of his vision of what the Hall would look like up there. And that model, I think was one of the most critical things in the meeting we had. But we're first. We had a two hour meeting, and Guelph was coming in right behind us. In fact, as we went down the elevator, they were in the lobby coming up. We shook hands, and went on.

We get in the meeting, and there is Gleed with the Board. As I remember, people who were still bona fide members of the Board, who were going to make a vote on this decision, were Bill Humber, Don Hillhouse, Bill Gleed, Doug Kelcher. Those are the four I remember. I didn't know any of them. I knew Humber by name. But Hillhouse seemed to be history-oriented. They had all read "In Search of a Canadian Cooperstown". Because it was historically oriented, I was the one to lead off the discussion. I had a Red Sox tie on. The Blue Jays had just won two World Series, so they were scratching their heads over that. But it introduced a very important element into the discussion, and that was levity, or humour. People were laughing, and it set a tone. So we had my presentation, why St. Marys, and so on. Then we had Art's graphic representation of his picture of the Hall. It was beautiful, as it is today. And I thought that, you know, a picture's worth a thousand words. They can listen to me all they want, and laugh and joke, but there's the picture. Then we had the financial report, or the feasibility report. I think that was Charlie, or it might have been Dave Cunningham, who presented that. That went over, as some people say in our profession, like a pregnant high jumper. These businessmen are thinking "How much money do those guys have? Here are our prerequisites: absolution of the debt, dissolution of the debt."

Anyway, we went out of there feeling pretty good at the end of two hours. And it was a convivial feeling among the St. Marys people. Kelcher was there, and Chris West had played for Kelcher as a youth in the Hamilton area.

So there were things that brought us together. So we went out, and Guelph went up. Guelph had two people there; we had seven or eight, I think. We got the word, shortly later, that we got the nod. We had a victory celebration. They had a TV announcement in Toronto, so we went up there. Lorne or Chris gave everyone on the Committee one of these bats, Louisville Slugger, with our names on it: Bob Barney, Chris West. Not all the names on one bat, but each guy had his own bat with his name on it.

There were a number of other municipalities that had been interested, all in southwestern Ontario. I do not know if they ever submitted bids or not, formal bids. But I know they were in the press as being interested. I don't know why they [*the Board*] confined their search to Ontario. I don't know if it was the Beachville incident, but there were other places they could have considered. There was a big baseball coach in Saskatchewan. Dave Shury in North Battleford. They have a Museum there and so on. That was organized, there's no doubt about that. And there were Little Leagues all across Canada. BC was real big in that. There were other pockets of interest, there's no doubt about that.

And remember, the Expos had been there since '69, so there was that culture, particularly around Montreal, and Quebec. And because there had been no other team until the Blue Jays eight years later than that the national focus had been on the Expos. But Ontario, well, Thomas Carlyle, the late 19th century British historian, said "The history of the world is written in the biographies of great men." So it's men. (Then; it's men and women now, we'd have to say.) Men would drive history. If nobody drove it it wouldn't happen. Well, that excludes cataclysmic geologic events and anything else, you know. But at any rate, there were guys [*from Ontario*]. I think I have to give Bruce Prentice credit for having the original vision, and driving it.

But Bruce Prentice was not at the bid meeting. He was *persona non grata*, practically, by then, and had retired out of the limelight, out of the focus, out of any consideration. He was not there. Now, at an induction ceremony several years later, maybe in the early 2000s, they brought him back to St. Marys, and they recognized him. I don't think people really understood [*the significance of his contributions*]. He was older, and more infirm. He stood up to be recognized and they gave him a hand, but I don't think the introduction of him gave him the credit that was due to him. Because it was his

original vision, and I think Andrew Hastings got at it as well as anybody has. Some of the early members, like Kelcher would be one, would have related to him; I'm not sure about Hillhouse and Gleed relating to Bruce Prentice, but I think Kelcher would have. Hillhouse and Gleed were friends of Bobby Prentice. But Kelcher was a good athlete, a good hockey player, good baseball player.

So now we've got the bid. Now we had to walk the walk. And so we started getting more people involved. My wife was one. My wife is a wonderful girl, God bless her, but she's very opinionated on issues. It's black, it's white. And one of her constant criticisms is that I do things wrong, whether I'm in a yard project, a carpentry project, or whatever. And of course there was a bunch of all men out there doing THIS [*the Hall of Fame preparation*] all wrong. So she started to get involved, and I'll have to say that although she rubbed some shins that she did some good stuff. For example, the greatest induction we've ever had, I think, and the most critical one, was when we had the throwing of the seeds on the site. We'd got the site from the cement people, and it was just rough forest; a gravel pit. Sand pits. Impenetrable wilderness. And that's the way the Cement Company wanted it; it was a buffer between them and the town. And it was Ashleigh's idea to have, before anything happened, to have a ritual of throwing the first grass seeds out there. And that year Terry Puhl from the Houston Astros was one of the inductees. I remember he and I had a wonderful conversation about that, because he went up there with us. He was good. He had his family there. 1995 I think [*yes, 1995*]. He had just retired, and he was in stocks and bonds, securities.

So Ashleigh orchestrated that. She also orchestrated the ceremony where all the women were the big thing [*the AAGPBL induction in 1998*]. But before we had the seeding we had to find a site. In fact, we had a Committee on site selection. There were about 5 different sites in St. Marys that were possibilities. One was out where the high school is now, and the Recreation Centre. One was over where the car wash is now, out by Chris West's place. I think Teeder Kennedy owned that property. One was the land where it is today. And one was even further north, out beyond where the big church is. So there were at least 4 sites, or possibilities. And it was the clothier, the guy who ran the clothing store on Queen Street. Ray Bennett. He was the critical person. He played tennis every Saturday morning with one of the Cement Company owners, one of the Lind family brothers. He was never on the

Committee, but he's a guy that had some capital and clout, because he had customers. And I think Jamie Hahn worked for him in the clothing store. Jamie was the mayor; he was on board for this thing.

So the conversation about that site, that Cement Company land, came up not between us and the Lind family, but between Lind and Ray Bennett, talking about it while playing tennis. He got us the interview. We went into those offices down there near the gravel pit, where they had the administrative offices. It was like walking into an old western film prop. You go in the swinging doors thinking you're going into a saloon; there's a barricade, and you swing the door out. It was antiquated. But that land: as long as it could still remain a buffer between the Cement Plant and the town, they were amenable. Now that Cement Company since has given a lot in kind. The land alone they deeded to the town for a buck, I think, or something like that. There was a proviso that it be maintained the way it is. But boy, they contributed a lot in terms of machinery and equipment, tons of cement. They helped us walk the walk, there's no doubt about that. But the Lind family and Ray Bennett...God, I'd get down on my knees and start saluting every time I saw a St. Marys Cement truck go by on the highway.

So we got that. Then more people were becoming interested. We started to gather new people. One of them was Carl McCoomb. His wife Rose became very important a little bit later. In fact, she was the Chair of the Museum Committee when that committee came into existence, because Carl started to fade away in dementia. They've since both died. His wife prematurely, actually; an attractive lady, and a nice lady. So now everything's geared towards preparing to go forward from the seeding, and trying to prepare that site for its striding onto the public stage. And they planned it around an induction. They were going to invite all the Board members. Everybody started pitching in.

The first thing was the excavation of the big site for the main field; that was the focus, that field. And the rehabilitation of the farm house, the centennial house at the top, where it is now. So I was assigned the fence around the property out there at the back, and I had grad students and visiting scholars helping me. Chris West was up there with Judy, his wife, doing fascia and soffits. We were tearing old things out, and scraping until everything inside was bare. We had people on the grounds, and people on signage. Then down

on the ball field itself we got sculpted where the berms are and everything. To actually level the field and get it all ready for seeding they hired some Mennonite kids, young teens. Young adults. And they loved those damn machines. The front-end loaders and stuff. They could make them do tricks. I can remember Charlie and someone else [*Brad Gregus*] with one of his sons on a front-end loader. We'd take turns: one would drive the front-end loader while the other two were picking up the rocks and throwing them in the loader as we made like mowing the lawn. Hot days. They took pity on me a little bit because I wasn't as old as I am now, but I was getting up there. Older than those guys.

Anyway, there were all sorts of people getting involved, spiritually and monetarily, and certainly physically. So now we went after a donation of the clay for the warning track and the base paths, the on-deck circle and so on. We got it from a firm up in Elmira [*Mar-Co Clay Products*]. So that field started to take shape, but it was dirt. Just dirt. Meanwhile, here's the date of the opening in June, and here's the state of the dirt thing, and it just wouldn't do. I don't know to this day how this ever was financed, but the idea was "We gotta have instant grass." We sodded the whole thing. How the heck that got paid for or arranged I'll never know, but it got done.

So now opening day comes, or the day before opening day. The field is sodded, there's base paths. It looks beautiful. The fence is up. There were no dugouts then. There were no seats. But by God it was a ball field! Major league size. There weren't the other fields. Then up on the hill there was grass and more landscaping stuff. This was John Harlton, I think; he became the President of the St. Marys Board. [*John became Executive Director of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.*] (The Board had begun to morph together. First of all, it was all Toronto. Then there were a couple of people from St. Marys, token gigs. But the more this project grew, the more the Board began to come together to equal representation, and now was pretty much over on the St. Marys side. Even the Toronto people felt that the Chair should be down there where the enterprise is.) And to be quite frank, when that Board came to visit, their jaws dropped when they saw that field. And of course we went to Cooperstown, and talked with the development person there who I think is now the head of the Cooperstown enterprise. But he wasn't then. The guy I got along with well because he was from Boston. He was an ex-guy from the Major

League Office in New York; a good guy, an Irishman from Boston. (What else?) They've had some since then. I met some of them, because I take my students in the American Sport History graduate course there every other year, and they do work in the archives. Just to get the idea of doing that type of archival research, they go through the history and everything.

But back to the opening. There were two separate things going on here. One side didn't know what the other side was really doing. I was out on the stadium side, or the grounds side. We were preparing the grounds. Carl McCoomb and his wife were on the inside. We didn't know what was happening. We knew we had all the stuff that had been trucked from wherever it had been stored (Brampton I think). Some of it was stored on Charlie Hammond's property out in Rannoch. But we didn't know what was going on inside that house after we had gutted it. So now comes the day before, and they're coming out to look at the stadium, and they're goggle-eyed. We're going into that house to see what had transformed, and I'll tell you, my jaw hit the floor when I saw it. It was beautiful. Can you imagine? A gutted house, and the atmosphere that's in there now, for instance. It wasn't too much different. They did a magnificent job. And Rose maintained it as history went on. So you can't give those people enough credit.

There was no audio-visual presentation. It was all there in plaques and pictures and posters and artifacts. The only audio-visual presentation was a clip of the Beachville film running. That was it. It was like at Cooperstown, Abbott and Costello running 24 hours a day, or whatever. That was the only one. But I remember how electrifying it was. My God, how could they have done this in such a short time? And they probably said the same thing about the field, because that sod was coming in, you know...It was amazing. I'm really proud of that. I had a whole contingent of Chinese come here just after Beijing was awarded the Olympic Games. They came here and I took them to St. Marys, and toured around the site. Then we were going to Bob Latham's wife's tea room, before they had the big restaurant there. It was right beside Ray Bennett's old clothing shop on the north side of Queen Street. I took them there for a lunch, and on our way back we were going by City Hall and there was Jamie Hahn. He was the mayor then. He gets them all in there to the Council Chambers, gives them all St. Marys pins. They thought they were honoured guests of the Town. It was really something to see.

Now, there were some confrontations. I noted the one that Bill Gleed raised when he took issue with Charlie Hammond's financial report, or development report. He got prickly about it, and boy, all that Charlie had done, you know, physically and monetarily, and leadership-wise. I wasn't going to take that from Bill. Or anyone else in that room from any level of society. And I know Bill was one of the Montreal Expos owners at one time, and President of Citadel Assurance. He was a bigwig. (In fact, those meetings in Toronto were in the Citadel boardroom.) Bill I think was out of sorts, but Charlie didn't deserve that, nor did the plan deserve it, and I wasn't going to let it pass. Hillhouse liked me. We did some communication together, history articles; he was interested in history, maybe more than the others. But Hillhouse said "Now, Bob, don't take offence. He's tough. He's taken one on the chin. These guys are tough. They're tough." That's one of the very few times that there was disharmony that showed. I'm glad I was there.

I'd heard that some of the stuff apparently, when it moved from Toronto up to St. Marys, might have been left behind in a warehouse somewhere. I do not know anything about that, but I'm not surprised at all. Because I myself have come into some valuable artifacts, having to do with Olympic matters, that eventually found their way into my hands that were left behind in a warehouse corner and discovered when somebody was asked to move in. They said what do we do with these? So that happens.

I understand Gleed and Hillhouse both seem to feel that the Hall needs a stable source of funding. But you know what? That stable source of funding: they were never able to do it [*as part of the Toronto Board*]. So they can criticize all they want, but...And they're right. That's what's needed. No doubt about it. They've got some contacts. That's for sure. I know that Gleed approached Claude Brochu, whom I think he lived near. Down the street or up the street or something. I think Bill has that contact in his pocket. Of course, I think the people in Montreal, the Expos people, were a little bit miffed, not only by the Blue Jays' World Series success in '92 and '93 but by the attention to baseball among Canadians being diverted away from the Expos and towards the Blue Jays. I can understand that, and their reluctance to get involved with the Hall as much as, seemingly, the Blue Jays were.

The one thing I got involved in in a personal way was becoming Chair of the Induction Committee [*now the Selection Committee*]. The Induction

Committee was chaired by Ray McNeil, a wonderful gentleman who also served with Toronto's bidding for the Olympic Games. He was part of that contingent that articulated with the City for plans to bid for the Games. They did make a bid, and they lost. But anyway, Ray McNeil served at least 6 or 7 years as the Chair of that Committee, and I became a member of the Committee almost immediately once St. Marys was in the fold. I became a member, and had a vote. They'd have a meeting, and it was all Toronto people. And myself. That was it. I take that back. There was one person, an old ball player from Montreal. But Ray did a good job. We would meet once a year at the Maple Leaf Gardens restaurant to have lunch. Maple Leaf Gardens put it on. The Blue Ribbon Club in there or something. Steak and French fries; it was a nice little lunch. We would cast our vote, and give last minute pontifications on anything we wanted to say about any candidate. In fact, I had to do that, because I had posed [George] Sleeman for the Hall. So I made the case for him, and I could see that it was going to be tough. So when they asked for any last words I made a pitch, and he barely made it. But in fairness it was the first time he had ever been posed. Not very many people make it the first time, unless you're a shooting star. His historicity came forward, and he was in, and his great grandson, the John Sleeman I'd met before, came to the induction ceremonies.

When Ray retired from that they made me the Chair, and the first thing I did was to phase out the consolidated Toronto membership and open it up across the country. So I got in touch with people to get the pulse of who the figures were in B.C., in Alberta, in Manitoba, in the Maritimes. I got Colin Powell from St. Marys University, a baseball historian and a damn good one, a wonderful sport historian. I got somebody from Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. Now we're pretty well represented. We kept the old ballplayer, who was always the last guy, and you had to prod him for his vote. He was always going to spring training because he used to be associated with the Expos. Claude Raymond. And another guy I got was the sportswriter that writes about baseball, the old-time sportswriter, the guy that writes for the Toronto paper. The guy that referred to himself as the Peter Gammons of Canada. Bob Elliott.

So that's how the geographical diversification of the Induction Committee evolved. I served there 5 years, and by that time the new President and CEO, Tom Valcke, was in place. To tell you the truth, he was wonderful for

the job. He was enthusiastic. I liked him personally. But he started to put his fingers in the business of the Induction Committee, with the posture of thinking of public relations and marketing. The draw. And I resented it, and I told him so. But he said, "Bob, it's business." I said, OK, well, you know what, I wash my hands of it. I had 10 years from when I started at that meeting at Sir Joe's to the date that I resigned as the Chair of the Committee and handed it over to the lawyer from Toronto [*Randy Echlin*]. But I left the record very meticulous, as Ray McNeil had given me a pretty good start. I reorganized it. It was all organized, each year, each vote: for any historian that would like to go into that, it would be easy pickings.

The Hall of Fame presumably still has those records. Actually, some of those records that I had to fill in came from the lawyer that was the lawyer for the Blue Jays. He was a friend of Doug Kelcher, a friend of some of the people on the Board. What the heck was his name? Very urbane person. A very nice man, and very good at conciliation, at diplomacy. Very good. He had great respect in the Toronto community, and the Blue Jay community. His office was good; they forwarded me what I wanted. Photocopies at their expense. So when I passed over the records everything was pretty well intact, and serves as somewhat of a historical item itself.

This Andrew Hastings journey was a little bit of a nostalgic thing for me because it actually got me reconnected. I spoke to Bruce Prentice on the phone twice. I hadn't spoken to him in decades. But he certainly remembered me from the old days, you know. He got me in touch with Kelcher again; I always hit it off well with Doug Kelcher. Actually Doug Kelcher came to Rose McCoomb's funeral service here. The only one from the Board. But he came to it, and his wife. I can remember he was one of the first guys to ever use 407 when it first opened. He went into rhapsody about it! Kelcher worked for Time Warner; he still has some relationship with them, I think. Some projects. Yeah, he's a good guy. They're all good guys. Humber was sort of a...he was what he was to them. He was a historian, a baseball historian. But he wasn't a big voice in there. The power structure was Gleed, Hillhouse and Kelcher, I think, in particular. That's just my take. I only saw it from one perspective. Because Bill, when it passed to St. Marys, Bill never got involved like the others did. In either governing, or recommending, or certifying, or helping the St. Marys folks.

You gotta give it [*St. Marys*] credit. Small town. You come into that town, you look at that circumstance [*the Hall of Fame complex*] up there: any town would sell its soul to have something like that, as a great recreation facility or as a heritage facility. They did it. Sweat equity. They did it. All volunteers. It's a testimony to that first enunciation by I think it was Chris West, or it might have been Dick MacPherson, who said that: "This is a project that the whole town can get behind." Of course, he said it in the fever of a pennant drive. The timing was right.

The Rotarians have been there all the way. The others, the Lions, the Legion, the Kinsmen, they were there, but not...of course, they didn't have the assets, they didn't have the membership that the Rotary has, the power brokers. That carried the day.

The balloon thing I mentioned earlier was a helpful lesson for me, as it turned out. It was five years after that epic flight in 1978 that I really became involved. There were three people who were designated consultants to provide the IRS a suggested value for the flight. One was an antique coin and stamp dealer, a friend of one of the pilots in California. One was the Chairman of the Board of the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art in New York. And then me. And guess what? The IRS threw out the coin and stamp dealer right away. Then they went into the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art, into the guy's testimony, and there was one thing in there that really rankled them. They [*the Museum*] had a formula for donations for which they give tax deduction receipts. Value in the gem market, for instance. For some of these artifacts they have another one that they seem to highlight: inspirational value. Right? Inspirational value. The IRS got all over that. How do you cost inspirational value? [*Raspberry*] Out they went.

So now they're looking at this physical educator. What the heck is a physical educator doing in here? He must be a gym teacher or something. So it was up to them to assess the credibility of me as a historian who looks at sport. OK, so the IRS bought that aspect, but now they're looking at my testimony, which was last. They're coming at it. I had made my judgement of what the tax deduction value should be based on first of all, how much was the actual cost to produce this historic event? And was it a historic event? Certainly. It was the Smithsonian that asked them [*the pilots*] for the donation! They spent a considerable amount of money bringing it back from Paris, preparing it for

mounting, then mounting it at the Aerospace Museum as the central exhibit. And they had to mount it in a stairwell because it was so tall. But they did it beautifully, in Washington DC. Then I made a point about that Aerospace Museum: I've seen most of them in the world that are the good ones, and they all pale in comparison, in terms of number of people visiting (because it's free!). Then I factored in the preliminary flight, because they wouldn't have been successful in the second flight if they hadn't learned the lessons from the first flight. And I didn't have anything about inspirational value, so they could see the parameters. But in the end they called me. No, the IRS turned the case over to their IRS agency in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Because this is where the two [*pilots*] lived. And they had both died in tragic air crashes, one a balloon accident in East Germany and one a devastating air crash in Albuquerque.

The IRS called me to Albuquerque to go with the one remaining widow to their offices to rationalize, or to defend my point of view. And we were lucky because Albuquerque is the balloon capital of the world. These guys made it that. It had a history. I'd written about balloon history way back in the early 1980s, in the American West, which is where it was really popular because of all sorts of conditions, climatic in particular. I mean, for the Albuquerque Balloon Festival in early October of every year, they had to limit participation to 750 balloons. It's quite a sight.

So we go into the office. It's like the Salt Lake City federal judge looking into the Salt Lake City scandal of the Olympics in 2002. He's a home town guy; he's in the middle of the culture. He's going to rule against it? My deduction value was that they should claim \$5 million, and that's what they claimed. That's what was being challenged. In the end, they didn't get that. They got half of it. But, they got \$2,500,000 between the two estates. But then, before this happened, the guy that died in the airplane crash became the first guy to fly a balloon across the Pacific, from Japan to California. He did it with four Japanese colleagues, entrepreneurs, guys that had money (it takes a lot of money to do this). So he asked me to do the same thing for that balloon. It was a much tougher case to make, but in effect my final judgement was \$3 million, and they got all of it. It was split up among the 5 of them. But they got all of it, and that balloon is now in a Wisconsin museum, a big Aerospace Museum. It

was lessons like that that sort of guided me through some of the St. Marys stuff, you know.

With respect to the Hall as it stands today, I thought that the original concept to have a Home Plate Plaza in back of home plate, on the ground that's in back of the backstop of the main field, would have been developed. I thought that was a good idea, where there would be a pavilion on one side which would house the Museum and the artifacts and so on. The administrative offices would be in another wing. It would all be there. But there has to be corporate sponsorship. It's the same as the Olympics. These big mega-deals, and mega-events, and mega-establishments have to be privately endorsed, because the rationale, or the public acceptance, of tax monies for things like that don't always take shape, and can't always be argued effectively in place of all the other things that money has to go towards, in an urban or even in a village situation. But I would have hoped that that would have materialized. But at the same time I never envisioned the site taking on the immensity that it has today, with those three other fields. I don't know if it was a mistake or not to have made that field up on top, where the house is now, but I can see it adds another dimension. Cooperstown, for instance, to have their offices, their Museum, buttressed by a site like that instead of those commercial elements that run outside the city, or even Doubleday Field just down the street, they'd sell their soul for something like that. It sort of atmospherizes the whole thing, you know?

But, having said that, I think the new plan is commendable. They get some money. It's not going to sit there unimproved. OK, they're stymied from doing the greater vision, but if they can put into play that vision for their offices, and the library, and the Centre for Canadian Baseball Research, and so on, then that's commendable. That's good.

I'll tell you, it would take one heck of a plan, and it would take one heck of a guaranteed future, to move that thing out of St. Marys. It'd be very, very difficult, because St. Marys capitalized on a number of advantages. The fact that it was all in the warehouse. That it was practically dead at the Board level, and that there were these accumulated debts. I mean, practically anything they [*the St. Marys Bid Committee*] put out there would be good. But it's going to take a lot to be good compared to what's there now. You know, I know the Town is...it's too bad that this issue that failed at the Town Council level last

year [December of 2016] didn't come up twenty years ago, or fifteen years ago. I think there would have been more sympathy, because generations and leadership change, and postures change. But gee whiz, an asset like that, I would think that some type....that's why I think Adam [*Board Chair Adam Stephens*] made a mistake when he was asked "Is this the last resort? If it's no now, that's it?" I think he should have left the door open, and some way, somewhere, with people needling or debating or discussing or proposing, that there could be a way for the Town to accommodate some of those costs. I hope that isn't cut off. I hope he didn't burn that bridge behind him, because he's a good smart young man.