



Bill Glead



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BG: A quick comment before we start. I had the pleasure and distinct privilege one year way, way back when I was a teenager. I was playing senior ball in Toronto and a team from Kansas City in the Negro League was touring. We had two exhibition games with them in one weekend, on a Saturday and a Sunday. They were great, marvellous ball players. The interesting thing was this was just before Jackie went in to the major leagues or signed with Montreal. He wasn't with them but Satchel Paige pitched the first game. I can't remember [*how I did*]. I think I was so spellbound to be standing there. I can't tell you whether I hit it out of the infield, whether I hit it past the pitcher. I don't know.

Believe it or not, they came to Toronto to Miller Memorial Stadium; that's where it took place, Broadview and Danforth, right where our senior team was. We played against Belleville, Peterborough, Oshawa, Oakville and there was another Toronto team, Dependable Caterers; the winner of that played off against West Toronto. And how Oakville got into our group I don't know. But we would play against West Toronto. We won the series.

I signed with the St. Louis Cardinals and played two years in their system: Sanford, Florida and Hazlehurst-Baxley in the Georgia State League. The fellow who actually got me involved with the Hall of Fame concept initially was a fellow I played ball with. His brother was a very early Canadian who turned professional and played shortstop for the Cleveland Indians [*minor league system*], and that's Bobby Prentice. A wonderful, wonderful athlete. Don went to school and played on the same football team in high school with Bob, so he can tell you more about him. I was just a few years behind them at the same school.

So I played ball with Bob's brother Bruce. We chatted over lunch one day and he invited me to join with him in this building of the Baseball Hall of Fame

in Toronto. With the introduction of the Blue Jays playing at Exhibition Stadium, the “provisional stadium” as it was called at that time, it was decided to get a pod at Ontario Place, which was about 100 yards’ walk from Exhibition Stadium across the bridge. A very, very lovely environment and a beautiful, picturesque place. Inside one of the pods was devoted to the Baseball Hall of Fame, and in that there were many artifacts and things that had been donated, accumulated. One of the exciting things in that pod in the Hall was the car of Babe Ruth: Babe Ruth’s open Zephyr 4-door convertible. It sat in the Hall, it was loaned to the Hall, and it was quite an attraction for people, naturally, to come and see. And that was in commemoration of him hitting his first professional home run at Hanlan’s Point, just down the lake a little bit.

At any rate, Bruce’s original request of me was, would we, the company I was President of at the time, would we sponsor a demonstration part of the Hall that was interactive with people, and had all the sorts of history of baseball in Canada. After discussion with my associates we decided that we would do that. We had a gorgeous, gorgeous display in there and people could come in and by computer they could insert and find information and have it printed so they could take it home with them. We found that the young people really gravitated to that; they were hungry for information and that went over very well.

This would have been around 1983 or ’84. At that time Citadel [*Insurance*] was also sponsoring the radio broadcast for the Blue Jays home games and away games, and that was a good experience for everybody in our company coast to coast. Through the course of all of that I became deeper and deeper and deeper involved, to say nothing of more and more interested in what was happening, where we came from, where we were going, and most important how we were going to get there. Then along came the building of the ‘Dome. So the Blue Jays were moving from Exhibition in to the ‘Dome in Toronto. Immediately Allan Lamport, former mayor of Toronto, suggested strongly that we should move the Hall of Fame from Exhibition Place and Ontario Place into the ‘Dome. Well to be specific, it sounds like a bit of a negative, but it’s a realistic assumption and understanding, they wanted \$65 a square foot. We didn’t have that, and we couldn’t put up the display as large, and we definitely couldn’t put Babe Ruth’s car. So that idea kind of got pushed aside.

It was then after much discussion amongst the Board at that time that perhaps the best thing to do would be to put out requests for proposals to any city or town in Ontario to make a presentation (picturesque, both verbal and written presentation) to the Board for consideration: they present themselves to the Board. So we set this program up, and these interviews were held in my corporate boardroom and proved to be very, very interesting. We had requests from Niagara Falls, we had a request from, a very strong request from Brampton and that was backed by then parliamentarian Greg Sorbara, who wasn't Finance Minister at that time, but he was very strong on putting the Hall of Fame in Brampton. Today one can look and say yes we can see why Brampton would be interested in doing that. Another one came in from Mississauga, another one from Belleville, and from Brockville. Some of the other areas in the province we thought might suggest or show interest didn't really express that much interest. Certainly Niagara Falls, Brampton and St. Marys were the three front runners. After the first presentation from St. Marys, I must say I became very, very keenly interested. While they were making the presentation I kept focusing on the city of St. Marys and to me I could see the Cooperstown of Canada, quite frankly. Even today as we drive into the town I can't help but think of Cooperstown, how wonderful a place this is for all of Canada to enjoy, and see the history and the development of baseball in Canada. So if folks from St. Marys want to compliment themselves, pat themselves on the back, then I believe this looks like Cooperstown. It's a great place.

Anyway, I must say, it was a real, I'm not going to say tough fight, but it was a real challenge amongst some members of the Board at that time, including former Mayor Lamport, who was really reluctant that this should leave Toronto. However, he finally acceded to the fact that as time goes on change occurs, so I guess I have to cast my vote in favor, and he did. We then turned it over to the group from St. Marys headed at that time by Mayor Hahn and a number of other people who without question are strong baseball supporters and town supporters; they love their town and the city of St. Marys. So that brought us up to "OK, here we go". There was actually a gap in between, between approval and beginning where you could show the artifacts. There was a little house on the property that was given by St. Marys Cement, a lovely piece of property and it was decided by the Board of St. Marys that this

would be where they would temporarily house the artifacts. The artifacts in possession of the Hall were far too many to be housed in one locality like that. So they were packaged up and today there are still those artifacts, the extra if you want to call it that, the surplus artifacts, housed in Toronto. It does belong to St. Marys and the Hall, definitely. [*Others do not share this recollection; to the best of their knowledge, everything was moved at once.*]

So then we started with the big field and we were excited to see the big field taking place, the infield, the practice infield and the smaller field. However, I must say that it's been with great anxiety and great concern that the big part in the front that was proposed for the front entrance way, I'm trying to remember what they were naming it, it's where you could drive in and drop people off for the game, go and park your car and music would be playing as you entered with stands on either side down first base and down third base. Seems to me we don't have that even yet.

But the entire bid concept, and the eventual move to St. Marys, was not the plan at first. When the Blue Jays moved from Exhibition Stadium to SkyDome, the original idea was that we would go in to SkyDome as well. Well not the original idea, but the original request. We really didn't have any home to go to and we couldn't stay in Ontario Place because we had lost the attraction. We had to leave Ontario Place.

DH: There was a Liberal member named Starr, Patti Starr, and she was given the responsibility for Ontario Place. She introduced what was really lease breaking. She broke all the leases, restaurants and the Hall. We couldn't recover; therefore we were without a house. And at the same time there was another major issue, which is how I got involved. Bob Prentice called me up and we knew each other very well, went to high school together and all that stuff. He said, my brother's in trouble. There is some problem with money. Bob was not a financial guy and he knew I was a so-called business guy. So I went in and I found that they were selling two sets of tickets, one ticket for the Hall and another ticket for the guy who was managing the Hall [*the Treasurer*], whose name I can't remember. He was a former lacrosse guy that had actually been recognized as being quite an athlete. He took tens of thousands of dollars by virtue of admission prices that never got there. And there was nothing [*left*]. Well, there was something: Lampy wanted to take this guy down to Cherry

Beach and dunk him in the water. You know: "Where's the money?" His house was in Parkdale, which is not a high value area. There was no equity whatsoever. There was a double mortgage as I remember; there was no money, so that exacerbated the problem.

Now there are a few points, if I may Bill, just for clarification. I think Guelph was one of the bid contenders. Sleeman was a ball fan and they were very, very interested, and I think of all of them perhaps they would have the resources that perhaps made them a serious contender. The other thing is, the artifacts, I don't know where they are. They're in a warehouse in East York and I don't remember who the director was...

BG: Dougie Kelcher. His wife is, was involved in a business there, and that's how we managed to get them housed in that location, so she would know where they are.

DH: London was not one of the bidders, despite its deep baseball history. I think I could explain that. I think from a Labatt point of view, they didn't want to get in over their heads. They had the ballpark there which is named Labatt [Park]. I think that they think of St. Marys sort of as a rural connection with London. It's a nice village down the road, and if they want to go and build something we can help them. We can even go to their games, we can be involved, and I think there were a number of Londoners that were happy to see it go to St. Marys. They had enough on their plate. At that time Labatts was starting to go through a lot of pressure by virtue of these companies that they bought that weren't performing. They were taken over by Brascan, and the guy who took over for Brascan is the toughest nut in Canada. This accountant from South Africa. They only look at balance sheets, so they were distracted I think a great deal. And also, I think [Peter] Widdrington, who was always a supporter, said I have too many other things, they had the Blue Jays to be concerned with, and I think that they really didn't feel that it was a big deal for them.

BG: And I'm not sure that we would have, at that time, we would have thought any differently, we would have agreed with them a hundred percent that look, your concentration is on making sure this team [*the Blue Jays*] takes off, because professional baseball in this part of town and in Western Canada

was not really known other than looking at the sports page and taking a trip to the States for a weekend. And I think they, well they ultimately agreed with our choice, and very definitely agreed with our choice that St. Marys was a great place to have it located.

DH: The guy who sold us on St. Marys was [Bob] Barney. When Barney stepped in, this Boston professor, he had the history of 1838, and he made the case. Because he captivated us. Here he is with this enormous background in sports, and he made the connection to Cooperstown. He mirrored exactly what Bill was saying about the idyllic kind of atmosphere. Barney was the key guy in my opinion.

BG: We were very excited to get Tom Valcke to come in and take over and run the Hall. That was a major undertaking, to get the approval of the Board here that having a full time Executive Director, if you want to call it that, of the Hall was necessary. We needed someone to organize programs in the Hall and of course everyone was busy with their business, so we went on a search and found that our timing was perfect. Tom had just taken the Little League team to the playoffs overseas and played against Japan and I believe China. *[Tom had been running the World Children's Baseball Fair for Canada. The Fair did take place in Japan. He operated out of Regina.]* At any rate, he had this Little League commitment in Regina, where he was from *[Tom is from Windsor]*, and we had to move him from Regina to St. Marys. To me, Tom did an outstanding job of organizing the programs. I do have to say that Tom's ambitions and his perception of the Hall and its ultimate fate and ultimate finish probably was too fast, too advanced. However, I must say that we in Toronto have fully agreed with many of the steps that he initially took.

Tom was a very effective public face for the Hall. He was great on his feet and of course, he many times was on the broadcast of the Blue Jays and did play-by-play a few times.

DH: The announcer Tom Cheek and Jerry Howarth were also very helpful. And the guy who was the symbol of course was the pitcher from Chatham. Fergie Jenkins. He created a certain kind of connection with the players in other parts of the major leagues. He gave it a certain credibility. He was the

poster guy for Canadian baseball because of his record which was very, very helpful.

I think you [Bill] should get credit on the Valcke deal, how you arranged the financing, because if you hadn't done it, it wouldn't have happened.

BG: Well I'll tell you exactly what happened. (If you tell the truth you never have to remember what you said!) I was part of the selection group that interviewed Tom and went over a number of the situations, the cost of moving his family down, selling him. I had to sell him quite frankly in many ways about coming to St. Marys. It was a big change from where he was, a huge change. He got cold feet a couple of times as it was nearing the end, the time to make the move. He said, about living accommodation. He said I want to buy a house and coming from Regina I don't get easy approval for financing. Everybody turned around and said there's nothing we can do about that. I said yeah, I think there is. The paper, the guy who owned the paper. Lorne Eedy. I looked across the table at Lorne and I said "Lorne, why don't you give him a mortgage and help him buy the house?"

Well I did put him on the spot; I put him right on the fire not just the spot. And poor Lorne, I don't know if he's ever forgiven me. At any rate, he did step in and graciously arranged all the financing. Tom bought the house he and his wife wanted, and they moved the children in, and off they went. He had a very aggressive, keen mind to financing and what had to be done. But his picture of the stadium is what intrigued me and fascinated me to no end. He knew what it was that everybody wanted to build and he was determined to see it through. I don't know what transpired after that.

I gather that they just came to a parting of the ways. That the Board didn't buy his vision and he was tired of banging his head against the wall. I don't blame him from that perspective. I guess it's hard for any of us to have that vision and faith in the original group that they would comply with what they said they would do. Yeah, I guess all of us have banged our heads, and it may as well be known publicly that a lot of us banged our heads.

DH: When I visit the Hall of Fame now, well, I always have sort of a cynical feeling. I never felt comfortable that the people involved were strong enough to complete the vision we talked about. This guy who went for the mortgage

was a little spooky. The most solid guy was Charlie [*Hammond*]. A really fine, fine man, and I just thought he was super. In behind there was always this feeling that somebody was going to press a button and everything was going to be OK. We had a lot of thoughts but money talks. I won't complete the sentence but if you're on Bay Street, you know: "Big hat, no cattle". All these guys had big hats; a few of them had lots of cattle, but I didn't know to what degree. I tell a story. They had to raise money for something as part of getting the Hall here. Was it \$400,000, or something of that nature? They had to come up with some money; they didn't just get it [*the right to move the Hall*]. Somewhere in there there's got to be recognition that some money was put on the table to get the ball rolling.

When we made the decision that St. Marys was to win the bid, they had to come up with some seed money. I don't know how much it was but the story used to be that a couple of guys were sitting in Tim Horton's when they hear from the town that if they're going to get this, they're going to provide some seed money. One of these crackers came up and said well I've got so much money, and another fellow next to him says well I got more money than you, and the other two guys they pitched in, and all of a sudden there was money that could be contributed to get it off the ground. Local people should know what that is.

So that's what they had to do. So as far as the vision is concerned, I share the vision that it should happen. Perhaps I come from a more negative side of the coin having raised money. You really have got to get it all together. There has to be a solid, solid proposition that attracts the kinds of people we've been talking about. I don't think it's going to happen here, and I don't think it's going to happen with Labatts, which is no longer a Canadian company. Twenty-five years ago, it could have been Labatts, and the fact that it wasn't wouldn't be because they didn't try. But I think they lost control of what they wanted to do. The Bronfmans had a cousin by the name of Charlie. Charles Bronfman was the greatest supporter of baseball in Canada in Montreal. He's the guy that was behind the Expos. Big time. That's the kind of guy you need. [*Charles Bronfman has been one of the Hall of Fame's biggest supporters.*]

BG: While it was at Ontario Place the Hall was it holding its own financially. It was making money. It was doing well until the theft. It was a viable operation. If the Jays hadn't moved from Exhibition Stadium the Hall could have stayed there; it would have stayed there. And probably done well if not for the theft.