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I first became aware of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame when I saw an article, and I don't remember whether it was in the *Globe and Mail* or whether it was in the *Toronto Star*, that the Baseball Hall of Fame had been split away from the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in Toronto, and had been moved out to the island there, off Ontario Place. And that after being there for whatever period of time, they found that it wasn't working. There were too many things out there for free, and they were the only ones charging money to enter the Baseball Hall of Fame, and so on. A lot of collection work had been done, so the article said, and it was a shame to have these things stored in a garage in Toronto. So I thought, "Oh, golly", I thought to myself "Wouldn't that be great to have something like that here?"

But almost coincidentally with that, and maybe a few weeks afterwards, I had a call from Lorne Eedy, who was then the publisher of the *Journal-Argus*, and owner of the *Journal-Argus*. He said that he had been talking to a friend of his [Bob Latham] that knew Bob Barney quite well. They were talking about the origins of baseball, the recorded part of it anyway, that had taken place in Beachville. He wanted to bring Bob to St. Marys, and he was phoning a group of people that he thought might be interested in the baseball aspect. And of course, having been on council in St. Marys and so on, he included me as well.

So anyway, we met over at the restaurant across the street from here, Sir Joe's Restaurant, in the back. There were quite a good number of people there. So Bob informed us about the Beachville project, and so on. That's where it started. Now what do we do with that information? We decided that since Lorne is the fellow that did the calling that he should continue to bring the group together. We gathered many, many times to see how we would approach the idea. Well, was it a good idea to try to bring something like that into St. Marys in the first place? At that point we thought "Golly, we have all these lovely stone buildings here in St. Marys, and, you know, wouldn't it be great to have the Hall of Fame in one of those?" We weren't thinking of baseball fields, and the kind of

operation that we're now pursuing. So on that basis we tried to make contact with the people in Toronto. We weren't very successful at getting anybody's ear down there, but we persisted, and sent them many letters.

Dave Langford was at that time the Sports Editor of the *Globe and Mail* (I got to know Dave from my many years of going to spring training; we often stayed at the same place). I contacted Dave, but let me back up. Over time we had developed the idea to the point where we now had changed our minds from just having a Museum in the downtown. We had heard that the Hall of Fame Board decided that it wasn't going anywhere that didn't have a well-developed baseball program in their community. Which turned out not to be so, but that's the word that we heard. So we started looking for property around town on which we could make sure that baseball was being played properly, and so on. We only had a little place over here called The Flats at that time, now Milt Dunnell Park, just an outdoor couple of small ball diamonds. But there were no organized baseball teams in this area. So we decided we were going to have to do something about that.

The first thing we would need would be land. We looked at three or four properties. We then decided on the property on which it now sits, then owned by the Cement Plant. The Cement Plant was a local plant at the time, or had been, owned by the Linds. So we went to John Lind Jr. and talked to him about the possibility of the piece of property that was just being used as barrier between the blasting at the Cement Plant and the town. And said you know, it'd make a great place to do something like that. Eventually he pushed enough buttons that that's what happened. So that was the sort of general path that we took on the way to developing something there.

We had thought that there had to be a developed baseball program as one of the strings attached to the thing, and that's why we needed the land. But they denied that they had ever said that. They didn't know where that came from. The Board in Toronto. But that's what we had heard, and that's why we decided to move into a more complex idea than just having a Museum downtown.

But we were never invited to do anything. There was no invitation, no RFP that went out, and to which we responded. We continued to write to the Board in Toronto, without response, really. And it wasn't until, I mentioned David

Langford, and talking to him many times in spring training...I had Adam Stephens, who is now the chair of the Board, working for me here as a teenage boy in high school. Adam was all excited about this idea. Then we had had Art Lierman in London, who had drawn up some general ideas of how we might develop that land. I had the drawings upstairs here over the store, and I was telling Adam about it. "Where are they?" So he went up with me and he took some pictures of these things. And it was Adam's idea; he said "Why don't you take these to spring training with you, and talk to your friend Dave Langford, and see if you can't get a piece written in the ***Globe and Mail*** about this?" So that's what happened. I went down; Dave said "I think this looks really good. I hear that Guelph also is interested in having the Baseball Hall of Fame coming to their place." So Dave said, "I'll get Stephen Brunt to write up something on that." Well, many months went by, and nothing was happening, so I called Langford one day, and said "What's happening?" and he said "Yes, he's interested, but he seems to be balking a little bit. I think I'll put Larry Millson on this." So eventually Larry wrote a very nice story in the ***Globe and Mail***. And I remember his starting a line when he said "You could take the entire population of St. Marys, put it in the SkyDome, and it [SkyDome] would still be empty." That was a great opening line, you know.

So that's what opened the meeting with Toronto. When they saw that in the ***Globe and Mail***, they called us and said "We'd like to hear your plans." But we were very much proactive. We were not responding to anything from Toronto. We were taking the initiative, and trying to sell ourselves to Toronto. From the beginning. We hadn't been getting any response. There was no RFP, not in my recollection, anyway.

So we finally got an audience with them. I don't remember how the initial meeting came about. We had several meetings with them. They said "When you have your plans developed, we'll have you come." And they were hearing, as I understand it, proposals from Welland and other places, so it was kind of our turn. That's the way I remember it. And scheduled on that day were both Guelph and St. Marys. Now I have no doubt that we probably never would have been heard of, or heard from at least, had they not seen that article in the ***Globe and Mail*** that Larry had written. So that was a real key to getting in there.

So by then yes, we had developed here (and Lorne was a very good Chair) we had developed into various committees. I was the Communication guy, and I had a good group. We met very often at the Westover Inn, who gave us the space without charge. So we'd met, golly, a couple of years or so before we were really ready to go to Toronto. [*The second meeting was in November of 1992, and the successful bid was made in August of 1994.*] You have to remember that this had nothing to do with the official Town of St. Marys. This was just a group of people in St. Marys that were trying to do this. We weren't representing the Town. Just going on our own, saying "Could we do this?"

So we eventually had our meeting in town [*Toronto*]. I remember going up Bay Street. We knew that we were going to be meeting at Citadel Assurance in their office. Bill Gleed was on the committee there at the time. Might have been Chair; I'm not sure. Anyway, that's where we were to meet. And I thought that before we go to Toronto we should go to the Town Council, and talk to them. Tell them what we were trying to do, and what our approach was going to be. In order to do that, we wanted to have a presentation on film. The town already had a promotional piece that had to do with bringing business to St. Marys. We asked if we could have a copy of that so we could edit it for this purpose, which they allowed us to do. We put enough money together to do that.

Our Communication Committee got together to decide how we would approach the Board, what we were going to emphasize, and so on. So we got all that together. And we decided that five different people were going to take part in the presentation. Bob, of course, would be key among those. They already knew the story of Beachville, through Bob, so that wasn't new. But anyway, he thought St. Marys would be ideal. So we had a number of different people speak, and we asked, even though the Town had not been officially involved, we did ask Mayor Jamie Hahn if he would go down with us. And he would emphasize that in Toronto you have many, many places of entertainment and interest; in St. Marys this would be our number one. So Jamie went along. We didn't know at that point that that gave them the impression that this WAS the Town; this was the official Town that was coming and asking. They didn't know till much later that this was a private group.

Anyway, we went down there. One of the stories about that is going up looking for where Citadel Assurance was. We had a street number, but if you drive up most of the streets of Toronto you're not going to find numbers on the buildings. Where is this place? Finally, we saw the sign Citadel Assurance, so we went up. Our instructions had been "Go to the corner." (And they didn't name the side street.) "Go to the corner. Turn to your right, and there's parking right in behind the Assurance building." So we go up there looking for it, and we come to the corner, and I'll be damned if the side street isn't St. Marys! An omen! We said "My God, we're in!" We got up there, and here's St. Marys and Bay. So we turned around Bay Street and parked there.

Now, as I mentioned, we had gone to Council before we made this trip down there, and told them how we were going to communicate with these people, what the plan was. And one of the members of Town Council, Midge Jewison (this of course predates computers and that sort of thing, so all we had was our slide presentation), said to us "There's a lot of people, if they're not familiar with how to present slides, that just get in the way of the program. Make sure that whoever is going to be pointing out there has a pointer, stands off to the side, faces the audience, and points out these things." Thank you, Midge. Also she said "I would suggest that when you arrive you go up to the building, find your way to where you're going to make your presentation; go in and sit there for a while, so you're just comfortable with the room. Make sure that the tape that you're going to play is in the...turn it on, see that it's working right. Get everything set up. Sit around for a little while and then go have yourself a sandwich or something before you come back and make the presentation." And we did that. And I think to some degree it made us comfortable with the room. Anyway, we went around, and just down the street, St. Marys Street, there was a little pub. So we went in to have a beer and a sandwich, and looked up on the wall, and there was a sign: "Sleeman's Ale, Guelph. The Only Choice." Here they were coming right behind us to make their presentation as soon as we were done. Anyway, we went up, and we made our presentation. They had ordered in sandwiches. They said "Excuse us. We're going in the office for a bit." And they came out, and simply said "Well, we're going to St. Marys." So it was that simple in the end.

All five of us got a chance to say something. I chaired the thing. We went in the order we had planned. Everybody did their job very well. And that was that.

They said “We’ll have to have a few meetings to see how this is going to work. We’ll need to appoint some members of St. Marys, add them on to the Board.” We had a joint Board that we formed, several of their people and ours.

We had some nice material for the presentation. I mentioned Art Lierman. He did the drawings. He was brought to us by Bob Barney. I think Bob had known him through another matter. We actually were in touch with a firm in Toronto, DW2 was their name, and they were intrigued by this idea. We had a lot of meetings with them about how to approach this. Nothing really came of it because we were going to have to raise quite a bit of money. We also contacted the architectural firm in Stratford (who did the planning on what we’re doing up there now) [*Marklevitz Architects*]. We had done those things. You know, we spent a long time on all this planning, and many times we thought “This isn’t going to happen.” It may look as though it all came together in some kind of a neat, orderly way, but we were in fits and starts. We didn’t have a lot of cash, and so on.

One of the key things, I think, about getting us going was John Harlton. We had regular meetings, I mentioned, at the Westover, and we invited John, whom many of us knew through the Rotary Club. There were 4 or 5 of us that were Rotarians that were on this thing. Oh yes, we’d also gone to the Rotary Club and told them our plans, and asked for a \$10,000 line of credit so we could do some things. Which we were granted, and which we used. We were still operating as a private group entirely. There was no local funding to help, no provincial funding; just us. The Rotary Club was really our banker. And \$10,000 doesn’t sound like a lot today, but back then it was. All those things that were needed, like the architect, you don’t just have those guys do things for nothing.

So eventually arrangements had to be made for the shipping of all the artifacts from Toronto to here. We had to have space ready at this end before that could get going. The things came from Doug Kelcher’s wife’s property. She had an abandoned building or something that she owned. But there wasn’t a lot of material at that point. It came from there. Charley Hammond owned a building up here in the west end, and material went in there for storage until we were ready to really do something with it. We told them of course in our presentation that we had the 100-year-old home that was sitting there that would be a good

start for a Museum. We had drawings of the land. And I remember I said to the fellow "We have this acreage of property. We have this century-old home that's there that can be used. Our plans are, we want to have the largest outdoor swimming pool in Canada, right adjacent to this property. We want to have tennis courts across the street, and a nice little park sitting there beside it. All these things would be put together. How much do you think that would cost? Are we talking here 10 million dollars? 12 million? Even up to 20 maybe to do this?" And then you could just see their eyes rolling, you know, because we had heard that they had presentations where people were dependent on a lot of government funding, where their ideas were pie in the sky as far as cost was concerned; and here we are telling them about this magnificent place we want to build. And you could see their eyes roll. So we said "Well, the fact of the matter is, gentlemen, that the swimming pool is already there. It's right here. That the tennis courts are already there. That the park is right there. And this is all going to be one package." So I think that was an effective way to put it all together.

I mentioned that we went to the Town to fill them in on what our approach was going to be, and what we were up to. When we did, we didn't hear any negative conversation from them. They weren't in for any money; they weren't really backing us. We did take some encouragement from one of the councillors giving us hints on how to approach it, and nobody saying "Well, I don't know fellas, you're getting into something pretty deep here." But when we went to Toronto, when they said "We're coming to St. Marys", of course that's just a statement; nothing had really happened at that point, except the thought that this was maybe going to work. So when we came back we decided we should have a town meeting. We called for a town meeting just to explain what we were trying to do. There were 80 people from the town that showed up, upstairs at the Town Hall. We showed them. We went through the presentation just as we would have done in Toronto, and when we were finished we said "They're interested in coming to St. Marys. What do you think? Do you think we should pursue this?" We got a standing ovation. I don't think there was a person in their seat. I think everybody stood up.

Nonetheless, even though that happened, there were a number of people that were maybe afraid of this, that we were biting off something the town would have to get involved in, and we'd end up with egg on our face and a lot of money

owed. So there was that fear. There were other people, and I would say many of them merchants among them, who didn't see this as a good thing for St. Marys. They said "We don't want our windows filled with bats and balls and so on." So there was that. There were other people that thought "This is too big for our town, and it's going to require a lot of fundraising, and the fundraising is going to detract from other causes in town. A lot of money will be siphoned out of that area." And I would think, though no poll has ever been taken, but I would think that the town was about 50-50 that way. Had its naysayers, and those that cheered. Many, many people in St. Marys have never been up to that property, have never been to the Induction ceremony (which usually is what persuades them that it's a good idea, once they go there).

I think we've moved a bit. I would think that we may be 60-40 now instead of 50-50. But there's still that fear that "Oh my God, one of these days...", you know. We'll be like Cooperstown's main street. And there's a lot of people in Cooperstown, as many years as it's been there, residents that don't like it being there. It's not their interest.

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I mentioned that Lorne Eedy was our Committee Chair. Lorne is a good guy. He's a doer. He's not just thinking about things. Lorne is one of the rare people that knows his own weaknesses. He doesn't admit them, but he knows them enough that if he doesn't know enough about something he's going to hire somebody to do it for him. He's been very successful because of that. Lorne was an excellent Chairman in the first place because once people were appointed to their particular jobs there wouldn't be more than two weeks would go by before Lorne would be calling and saying "How are you making out?" Then if you just had general stuff to say, "Well, I haven't seen this thing yet, or that, or I haven't done this", then Lorne would be saying "Well, I think the most important step in what you're doing now will be this. And I'm going to call a meeting pretty soon. Do you think you could have that ready for me by Wednesday?" He's that kind of Chair that really moves things along. He was good that way.

When we got to the point where we had the joint Board, we had several meetings, one in St. Marys then one in Toronto, then we started to meet in Kitchener (part way for both). It came time for us to have a Chair, so Charley

[*Hammond*] was our first Chair. He did a good job. Chris [*West*] went to the first meeting; he's a guy that will do things that you appreciate. You're no doubt aware that the St. Marys Bat Company, the wood company, became Cooper and so on [*the St. Marys Woodworking Specialty Company*]; Chris went to Irwin Toy, who were still handling the Cooper business at that time (they've since sold it to somebody in the States), and he got bats made for all of the members of the Committee, with your name on the bat. It had the three coloured rings on the Cooper bat, so they were genuine stuff. That was through Chris's involvement.

I mentioned John Harlton earlier. There was a point where we weren't going ahead very much, and then we invited John to come to a meeting at the Westover. It surprised me how interested he was right from the beginning. John shortly afterwards became, he called himself the President, but anyway the Chief Operating Officer. John is basically a farmer. He's also successful in business in other ways, and has lots of people with trucks and so on. John's the guy that really got those diamonds developed. Practically for free, just for the cost of the pipes, he got all the drainage done, the underground work. He brought in all those companies. He brought in guys with trucks that could haul gravel, or bring some in, all that sort of thing. So he was very valuable. And John I think was the guy that arranged to get some seats out of the old Stadium [*Exhibition Stadium*], get the trucking for those; it didn't cost us anything. He was a key person.