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It goes back a long way, in all probability I guess to Seneca College. When my brother Bobby was at that time Director of Player Development for the Blue Jays, I helped him put together the baseball program in Scarborough, and that became the first high school baseball program in Canada, believe it or not. The Americans coming up here always said, "How come there is no high school baseball up here?" They couldn't believe it. So brother Bobby got that started. What happened from there was, I said to brother Bobby, "There's no such thing as college baseball either." He said, "Yeah, how about that?" So I said, "Let me go start the college baseball program."

So I contacted Seneca College, and they said, "What an idea." So what we did, we put together the first college baseball program in Canada. Then people were saying, "Where are you going to play baseball and when?" There was no place to play baseball in around spring, but in the U.S. the Americans used to play in April. So we said, "Up here we'll play in April."

We had to find a field. But there wasn't a field. The city wouldn't let us on their fields, on the playground to use the parks. We had to use the park. So I looked at the Blue Jays and their ballpark and if you looked at that infield they had the bases cut out. Up at Seneca College there was a football field. So from there, I said "We're going to cut out the bases in the football field." And that's what we did. We had the mound and the four bases and that's how we started playing baseball. We also put up snow fence around the outside of the field. That became the outfield fence.

Why was Seneca College part of this? We had to pay for the baseball. The school needed funds, so from there we put together a baseball camp in order to raise funds for the baseball project. In looking at putting the baseball camp together, who were going to be the instructors? So, I started looking into the history of baseball, really deep. What players are around Toronto area that I can use as guest instructors? I got hold of Goody Rosen, 1945 All-Star major leaguer, center fielder for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Goody was in Toronto. I got hold of Ron Taylor and said would you fellows come out and teach the kids, help me instruct. They said yeah, they'd love to do that. So they came out to the school and started doing some instructing for me. And my mind started going "Wait a minute. How

many other Canadians are there that actually played baseball in the major leagues, or had a long career?" And I said to myself that these players and people in baseball should be honoured in some way.

My son David remembers it clearly. He came home from school one day and here I'm sitting on a loveseat we had, blue and white polka dots, with papers strewn all over. He said, "Dad what are you doing?" and I said, "Well I think I'm creating the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame". And he said, "Well, good for you!"

So I sat down and wrote the constitution, the selection criteria and all that needed to get going. This was in 1978. From there, I said now that I have this idea, I want to talk to somebody about this. So I got hold of Neil MacCarl, the premier sports writer and baseball guy at the *Toronto Star*. I went for lunch with him, sat down and told him what I wanted to do. He said, "Well there's nothing left; there's no stats, no numbers, there's nothing up in anybody's attic and besides, who cares?" I said, "Really!" He said, "Yeah, who really cares?"

What Neil did is he went back to his office, called my brother Bob and Bob called me later. "What did you do to Neil MacCarl?" I said, "Why? We had lunch, talking about the baseball Hall of Fame." He said, "He thinks you're nuts." I said, "Really." "He thinks you're crazy. Who wants the Baseball Hall of Fame in Canada?" I said, "What do you think?" "Well, it's not a bad idea." And I said, "Oh, OK." That was in the summertime. And I dropped it. I thought OK, Neil MacCarl doesn't like it.

That Christmas at a family gathering I was sitting with my brother and the rest of our family. Dave, my older brother, said, "What ever happened to that Baseball Hall of Fame idea?" "I talked to Neil MacCarl at lunchtime. He thinks I'm nuts." And Dave looked at me and said, "Who the hell is Neil MacCarl? Do you believe in the idea?" "Absolutely!" He said, "I think it's a great idea; go for it! Do it!" After Christmas I picked up the phone and called Fergie Olver. He said, "Bruce, that's a hell of an idea. I'm with you. Let's go do it." So that was the creation of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.

From there we gathered together some people: Randy Echlin, Dave Crichton and a few other people to get this started. We put together a Board of Directors and started thinking about who were we going to elect and when, who was going to pay for all of this. We got hold of Labatts (they were sponsoring the Blue Jays). They said, "Hey, that's not a bad idea."

It took a long time to get it going, to get people to believe in what we were doing, because believe it or not, nobody cared. Nobody really cared, except when

I was talking with Randy, Dave and other people because they were baseball guys. They really cared. So who are we going to put in first, who are we going to elect first? We had the first induction ceremony down at Exhibition Stadium, before the ball game. The Blue Jays said, "Great!" Labatts said, "Great!" And we inducted our first people in 1983. I don't remember who was on the Board of Directors, it was so long ago, but the selecting was done primarily by Randy, Dave and me. I knew of Phil Marchildon and Goody Rosen, Lester Pearson of course, so you know who went in in 1983. [*Goody Rosen was not inducted until the next year.*] We held it down there at the Stadium.

At that point we didn't have a home. That wasn't the idea. The idea of having a home would come later. The idea was to get it going, get it started, because once you get it started, people now start looking at you. When you have a home, then what happens? You have to have a home somewhere, you have to outfit it and you have to start gathering artifacts. That all costs money. And the idea is, was, that this is a non-profit organization, all the way through.

The earlier days were difficult. There's nobody believed what was happening. We thought maybe we had a home; I have a piece of story from one of the newspapers. Down on Front Street there was a building sitting there. A real estate guy that we had known said "Come on over here. They want something [*to put in the unoccupied property*]." So we went down to the Front Street property, and went in, and the owner was there, and he said "Oh, this is great. Come on in. We want you to be here: the Hall of Fame. This is perfect." He said "Down on the lower level, there's space. You can have that. It'd be a great attraction for the area here, and we would like you here." Oh, really? "Yeah; there's the space. Go ahead and do with it what you want." I said, "That's great. Thank you. Are you sure?" He said "Yeah. Go ahead. It's yours."

So the space was there. What I did was, my son Graham liked doing woodwork. He was good at it. So we started getting some lumber, donated to us because of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, and Graham started building the different walls, putting up all the pillars. Then one day in comes the real estate guy; he says "Bruce, we have to talk to you." OK. What? The owner came over and said "Well, we need some money. We can't just give it to you." I said "Well, you did. You said you gave it to us. Matter of fact, I'm waiting for a piece of paper." "Oh, no. We can't do that. We're looking at everything, and all the numbers, and I'm sorry, but we need some money. You've probably got some sponsors that'll help you pay for it." I said "We don't have any sponsors." He said

“Well, we can’t let you have it unless you come up with some money.” So I tell my son “Tear it down!” And this was the article saying that we were there. We had it, and they reneged on us. I said “OK, that’s fine. Thank you.” This was before Ontario Place.

But we had that first induction event. Then from there, I think in ‘84, we put in George Selkirk (that’s a story unto itself). We put in George Selkirk and Phil Marchildon. He wasn’t ‘83; he was with Selkirk. [*Yes, Marchildon was with Selkirk, but in 1983.*] That was a great day with George Selkirk, New York Yankee. Nobody knew about George Selkirk; who was George Selkirk? From Huntsville Ontario. Yes, he left here when he was about 6 or 7, moved to Rochester with his family, played ball and met up with the Yankees. George Selkirk you know (hopefully you do) George Selkirk took over right field from Babe Ruth and wore his number 3, believe it or not, until Babe Ruth’s number was finally retired in 1948. But George had a great career, and George was a Canadian. He had a passport and when they travelled -- they went to Japan one time on a tour, the Yankees -- he needed the Canadian passport and they always called him a Canadian. George Selkirk.

Anyway, for the induction event, Randy and I picked up George Selkirk at the airport. Randy always had a huge briefcase he carried with him; it wasn’t a normal briefcase. We picked up George, took him back to his hotel, Hotel Toronto at that time, and George said, “Oh. Hey, guys. Would you like to have a drink?” I said, “Sure!” So we went up onto the balcony, on the deck, overlooking Toronto. It was the Hotel Toronto. Sat down. Waitress came over; we ordered our drinks. The waitress had not brought back the beverages yet. Randy put his briefcase on the table and unzipped it. Baseballs rolled out onto the table, baseball cards, photographs of George Selkirk. And Randy had his pen. George looked and said, “What’s all this going on?” “Oh this is for the Hall of Fame, going to the Hall of Fame, some great stuff.” George said, “I’ll do all of that.” He signed baseballs, he signed photographs, baseball cards. And I dare you to go up to St. Marys and find one George Selkirk autograph. Not one! It all went into Randy’s files. That’s a little bit of a hurt for that one.

As an aside, when Randy passed away, quite a few of the Blue Jays were at the funeral: Howie Starkman, and I think even Pat Gillick was there. At that time, the President of the Canadian Baseball of Hall of Fame was Tom Valcke. So Tom got up to do the eulogy, and during that eulogy, he mentioned, “Bruce, we know the story and I’m going to tell the story (hope you don’t mind) about the Randy Echlin/George Selkirk story and picking up at the airport and the fact that there’s

nothing left of the George Selkirk autographs. Wonder where they are, Randy?" He was looking down at Randy and I thought, "Whoa." He told the story. It's a true story though.

But back to the Selkirk induction. Then we went to the ballpark. We had the induction ceremonies up at the CNE. It was the Queen Elizabeth Building up on the second floor. That's where we had the induction event. It was marvellous! We went back down to the field and sat there. The Yankees were in town, which was great. It was all timed to be with the Yankees. From there we went down into the box. It was right next to the field and George and I were sitting there. And Billy Martin from the dugout, from the Yankees, spotted George and came running over. "Oh, congratulations, George! Great to see you." Introduced me. "Meet Bruce Prentice." So that was great, meeting Billy Martin. Then Billy Martin had said after the game, "Come on, come on; meet me outside, we'll go to the hotel." Yeah, OK, fine.

We did go the hotel, in the middle of the bar. And Billy Martin had two bodyguards because he used to get a little hammered. So we sat with Billy Martin, we had a couple of libations and I said, "OK. I've gotta get ready to go." The two bodyguards said to George and me, "You'd better leave now; it's about time." We did. That was Billy Martin. He was hammered. They were great days.

Our next step was to look for a place to put this Baseball Hall of Fame. We talked to some people from the CNE. There was a place called the Hockey Hall of Fame that used to be down there. There was a building built by Connie Smythe. In one half of the building they put the Hockey Hall of Fame. The other half was empty so they said to us, "Why don't you take the other half?" So we did. We had half of that building to put in the Baseball Hall of Fame. We didn't pay any rent because we didn't have any money. How do we pay rent? We're still volunteer; nobody's making any money. We're spending money as a matter of fact.

Then from there, the Exhibition, and Ontario Place. Let's expand ourselves. We contacted the people running Ontario Place at the time. It was a lady. "Love to talk to you. Come on over on this particular day." So I went over, and walked in. "Be right with you Mr. Prentice. Go into the board room." I said, OK. I'm standing, wondering what's going to be happening? About six of them came in with baseball gloves, playing catch. Oh, good idea! So they loved the idea.

They gave us one of the pods, which was terrific. "Here you are." No rent. Because we were going to be the tourist attraction. I've got the first pictures here. We had a great time sitting in one of the pods. We had two floors. The first floor

we turned into a makeshift baseball field with mannequins we put up at all the different bases. We had Babe Ruth's car, a 1941 Lincoln Zephyr, given to us by a



person in the potato business. That was great. Everybody loved the Lincoln car. Upstairs we put the Hall of Fame itself, with all of the inductees and plaques of all the inductees and the pictures. It was a great, great spot. Did some interviews there, including one with some people

that came over from Buffalo TV. That was terrific. That is probably one of the best videos of the Baseball Hall of Fame that there is.

So now we were sitting in Ontario Place quite happy. We drew 400,000 visitors, more than Cooperstown at that time. And it isn't making money because we didn't charge. This was a great tourist attraction. And up on the roof in September there was an air show coming over and we used to invite VIPs and some sponsors of Ontario Place; had a nice day up there, trying to coerce some of the sponsors into spending their money. It was great. We were there for three years, then we faced two major setbacks.

The first was embezzlement of funds by our Treasurer. It's all part of the history of the Hall. What happened is at that particular time at Ontario Place, we had the people coming in and they would make donations. Down in the exhibits we also had people getting their pictures taken for a little bit of money, that kind of thing. And selling memberships. I would watch all the receipts. The Treasurer turned in a report at one of our monthly meetings; he turned in a report of income, expenses out, and so on. I looked it over, and I said to our overseer at that time, Bill Gleed (Bill Gleed was President of the [Citadel] Insurance Company), I said to Bill "Have a look at this report." And he said, "Well, I don't see anything wrong. That looks OK to me." And I said, "Well, OK Bill." But something hit me; I don't know what it was. I have no idea. So I'm sitting at home one night and I'm saying to myself "OK, the place is closed. It's going to be opening up again on Monday." This was on a Sunday. I drove down to Ontario Place and I went into

the Treasurer's office. I found he'd left his briefcase there, accidentally I guess. I said to myself "I'm going to open up his briefcase, and if I do, and he finds out, I can be charged." I said "To hell with it." I opened up the briefcase and I found forged cheques, and I found his numbers that he was putting together. So that's what happened: I opened it up, and I said to myself "Uh, uh. I got you." And I called a good friend of mine who was on the Board, Foster, Ron Foster, terrific man, he used to work with the City. I called Ron up and said "You have to get down here." He said "What are you talking about? It's 6 o'clock in the morning." I said "Well, Ron, I gotta have you down here. You've got to be here by 8 o'clock." I said "We've got something happening, and it looks like there's some money missing." Long story short, Ron did come down. And Ron looked at everything that I had, and he said "Bruce, this is bad." I said "It sure is."

The Treasurer finally came in the door. He walked into the office, and I'm sitting at my desk, with Ron Foster across from me, and he looked at me and I said "Sit down." Anyway, he did admit that he had taken, it turned out, \$75,000 out of our account. Embezzled it. It was bad news. I went to the Board, and the former mayor, Lamport, he was pounding on the table: "We gotta charge him! We gotta charge him! We gotta call the police!" And I said "No. We cannot call the police. Can't do that. The moment we do that (call the police), guess who's in trouble? We are. And also the sponsors we have: Labatts, Coca-Cola, CIBC. This will be exploding. We will not do that, Mr. Lamport. We're not going to call anybody." And the Board finally agreed to that. We kept it quiet. I had a good friend of mine who was the chief accountant for Peat Marwick. I called him, and I said to him "I need help." And he said "It sounds like you do." Peat Marwick sent over three students to go through every piece of paper. I said to my friend, "Look. I want every piece of paper. I don't want anything held out at all. Go for it, and find what happened, where every number, every cheque went." So what happened on that end of it was that Peat Marwick wrote a huge binder (I've still got it) full of reports, who did what, where. A forensic audit. I wanted to make sure that my name, being the President, was clear. I didn't want anything at all. And it came down that there was no mention of me anywhere; I was cleared and was all above anything. And I've still got the Peat Marwick binder, just in case anybody wants to still look at it. But he stole \$75,000, and it turned out we ended up getting about \$7,500 of it back. It's a long story, because he'd bought houses and something else...a long story. And that was bad.

And this is where [Don] Hillhouse comes into it. Remember he had mentioned something about some money being stolen at the door and whatever? Well, that's what it was all about: the embezzlement. This would have been around 1990, somewhere in there. We were still in Ontario Place. We'd had that big dinner with Willie, Mickey and the Duke, and the proceeds from that one were \$180,000; that was a lot of money. And that's where the Treasurer got the idea to take the money, from there. So it'd be about 1990, in around there, when we found exactly what was happening.

\$75,000 was a fair amount of money, so this was a staggering blow. Sure, we made a lot of money that particular dinner but we spent a lot of money as well. Of course we were putting on the event. Joe DiMaggio alone cost \$25,000 to bring him in. But we did make money on all the dinners, and we did make money on that one, until the Treasurer got hold of the cheques.

The second setback happened shortly after that. It was hot on the heels of the embezzlement, and it became just kind of a mish-mash of bad luck that was happening. Or bad news; I didn't want to say bad luck. But bad news.

Ontario Place had hired a lady by the name of Patti Starr. That name I will never forget. So Patti Starr came in as GM for Ontario Place and convened a meeting of all the sponsors of whatever attractions were there. She called Labatts and me to the meeting. Patti Starr stood there and said "We love the Hall of Fame but we need more money from you, and more money from Labatts. We're doubling the price of your sponsorship. We need more money." Labatts said "That's nice. We'll talk about it. See you, Miss Starr. We'll call you later."

Dick Ramsden and Coca-Cola were another sponsor. The same thing happened with Patti Starr and Coca-Cola: "We need money." Turned out she was embezzling money. She was charged, and went to jail. But we had to move out of there. We were gone. We left Ontario Place. Where did we go? Into storage.

There had been some talk of our moving into some space at SkyDome. That's a funny story. Before Ontario Place and Exhibition, we had an office. The building is still there, right across from where they were building SkyDome. I had a camera at the window and every day took a photo at 8 o'clock and 5 o'clock. We had this office which again was donated to us. When they were building the SkyDome I had a few meetings with a guy by the name of Chuck Magwood. Chuck Magwood was in real estate. He said, "OK, what we're going to do, we're going to build an extra level; one half is going to be for the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame." Marvellous idea. And the other half, you know what he did? He called up

the NHL, Bruce Norris, and he said, "Mr. Norris, we have room for you to put the Hockey Hall of Fame right in here." Bruce Norris said, "What would the Hockey Hall of Fame do on a ball field?" So that was the end of that one.

That was the end of the Baseball Hall of Fame going into SkyDome, even though right now, if you go to SkyDome, in left-center field you'll find there's 13,000 square feet still sitting there, and there's a walkway going out to Spadina through glass doors. I don't know how many times at meetings with Paul Beeston...I could never ever get the Blue Jays, or Beeston, or the hierarchy to say OK, because that's where the Hall of Fame should be. Every time I go to the ballpark I wander around and say, "Are they doing anything with that space here?"

The last time I saw Paul Beeston was at one of the events that we have [*the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame dinner*]. I mentioned it to Paul then: "Why didn't you ever put the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame there?" He said "Bruce, who would care about it?" I said, "Canadians would. American baseball people would. It's not just Canadians that nobody knows about [*as inductees*]. We're now putting in Robbie Alomar and everybody else." But no, it still sits out in St. Marys.

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We had a number of fundraising dinners. Five of them, actually. The first one we did was a Tribute to the Umpires. That was with the great umpire...he was funny; he was one of the best umpires we ever had. Ron Luciano. He came up as a guest speaker, and he was wonderful doing what he did. He was a comic. That was the first one we had, and we looked to build it from there.

Another year we did a Salute to the Managers. We invited four or five different managers; don't ask me who they were at the moment. But Billy Martin was coming; he agreed to come, which was terrific. Everyone was looking forward to Billy Martin. Gene Mauch was there, and the Baltimore guy, Earl Weaver, was there. It was a great night. What happened was that that was the Christmas that Billy Martin was in that car crash, and he died. So we're thinking, OK, what are we going to do now? So I called up and got hold of Mel Allen, and Mel Allen said "I'd love to be there". He came up. And what he did was a marvellous tribute to Billy Martin. He did a slide show and everything. He did a great tribute to Billy Martin. It was wonderful stuff.

Another one who was part of that Managers Night was Charlie Finley. Charlie was a great man; he was wonderful when he was there. He came representing the Oakland Athletics, of course. The only problem with Charlie was, we had everybody autographing and signing baseballs. So we're sitting in this big room, and Charlie was saying "What am I doing? Am I getting paid for this? Am I getting paid for this?" I said "No, you're not getting paid for this. Matter of fact, you're going to pay us when you leave." And he laughed. Anyway, he was great. The only problem was signing autographed baseballs. He didn't bring his goat with him. He was just another one of the guest speakers, a special guest.

We had a dinner in 1989. It wasn't really what you'd call an induction dinner. What we had was a fundraising event. The biggest one we had was with Willie, Mickey and the Duke: yes, Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle and Duke Snider. We had Prime Minister Brian Mulroney as our keynote speaker. Whitey Ford was there as our guest speaker. The dinner

was so big we actually had two head tables, one down below with Mulroney, Willie and me, and all the Canadian baseball people at the back. We had 1800 people at the dinner. [*The Hall's historical files from the Toronto days*



indicate that the goal was to sell 1800 tickets, but that 600 were actually sold.]

Black tie. When we were putting it together, everybody said I was crazy to have it black tie. I said, "We're going to dress this Baseball Hall of Fame up, especially with Willie and Mickey and the Duke." And the next year with Joe DiMaggio. That was it. Back then in 1989 the ticket price was \$300, a lot of money then; a lot of money now. But we had 1800 people.

We were sitting at the head table. Brian Mulroney is giving his speech. Matter of fact, Brian Mulroney had his own people come down to the Convention Centre with his own speakers and his own microphone and, of course, Brian had that wonderful voice. We're watching Brian, and Mickey's sitting beside me and he gives me an elbow. He says, "What's his name?" "Brian." "What's his last name?" "Mulroney." "What is he?" "He's the Prime Minister of Canada." "OK", and he started smiling. So that was Willie, Mickey and the Duke.

During the planning of that dinner, going after Willie, the Duke and Mickey, they all said fine, fine. And Willie said, "OK, fine. How much am I going to get?" And Duke said, "Am I going to get paid?" Duke was really a prince of a guy, he

really was. So I said, "Well, we can afford to give you \$10,000." "OK, I'm there. I'm there. Fine." Because the budget was all put together and the ticket sales, and so on. So then when I'm talking to Mantle, he said "How much am I going to get?" "Well we have \$10,000." "What are the other guys getting?" "\$10,000." "Well, uh, you know I can't be the same as them. I need a little bit more." "How much more?" "I need 5 more." "15, you want \$15,000? Don't forget what you have to do for that. You've got to sign autographs till you're blue in the face, till your fingers cramp up". "OK, OK, I'll do that." I said OK, because Mickey was the star. He was the king. I said OK, and checked the budget. OK, we're all right.

He called me back about a week later. He said, "Hi there, Bruce, is it Bruce?" I said, "Yes, Bruce. How are you doing, Mickey?" "Bruce, I'll tell you what. My agent has worked so hard, doing so much stuff for me. I have to look after my agent. Can you slide out a couple more dollars?" I said, "Mickey what are you doing? How much?" He said, "I need \$2500 for her." "For her? Is that your wife?" "My agent, my agent." I said, "Mick, is that it? No more?" "No more. That's it." "OK, you got a deal." So that dinner cost us a lot of money but we made \$180,000 that one night.

Mickey was tremendous. There was a break and everybody started charging up to the head table for autographs. Mickey was beside me and



Mulroney was beside Mickey. Mulroney sat with his pen in his hand and maybe two or three people asked for his autograph. Willie and the Duke were signing a few. Everybody charged Mickey and all he said was, "Get them away from my back. Don't let them at my back." Anyway, that was a great

dinner. Tom Cheek was the emcee. Everybody stills talks about it. The older crowd still talks about that dinner. As a matter of fact, what happened after that, the Hockey Hall of Fame...some of the hockey people came to the dinner. After that, the NHL started dressing up in black tie.

Before that dinner we had a press conference. We have it here on tape. It was good. It was real good. The media was there and so on. What they call hangers-on were there. This was right before the dinner. Mantle was being interviewed about how great this is in Canada (he loved Canada), and all the other

stuff. He remembered George Selkirk, and so on and so forth. Then it came to Willie Mays. And Willie, being very outspoken, said "Why do you people have a Hall of Fame here in Canada? You hardly have any baseball at all. You gotta have Hall of Famers to put into the Hall of Fame. I mean, who from Canada is really in this Hall of Fame? And you gotta play baseball for years like we do in the United States." He started talking about America. "Because how can you put people into a Hall of Fame, you know? I really don't think you should have a Hall of Fame until you've got some players to put in." Willie was talking purely on a major league basis. He wasn't considering the grassroots people. That's where I kind of explained to Willie "Now, wait a minute, Willie. You've got America, and we are Canada." I explained it all to him. "Well, OK." That was Willie, very outspoken. And he was bad that night; did I tell you that? He was bad. He got thoroughly inebriated. Mantle did too, but he could hold it. Willie couldn't. He was banging on the wall, and unfortunately his language was just beyond, just beyond. We had to put him up to his room. "Here, good night." He was gone. Well, that's athletes when they get into a party mood. They got \$10,000 for being there, you know.

After that came the Joe DiMaggio dinner and Joe was terrific. This one is the anniversary of 1941, so we're celebrating Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams. So we got hold of DiMaggio, of course not Joe himself but his lawyer, and his lawyer said, "OK, fine. Joe can come but he needs this much money. He needs \$25,000." I said, "\$25,000. I have to get back to you." I'm even choking on it now! I checked all the budget; it is Joe DiMaggio. So I called back the lawyer. I said "You've got the 25. We've got Ted Williams coming too." He said, "Great! Ted Williams is going to be there, Joe. It's going to be a great night." Then the lawyer started giving me all these directions: "Don't do this and don't do that, and he's not going to any press conference. You're having a press conference?" I said, "Yeah". He said, "Joe will not go to the press conference. And if anybody anywhere during the dinner starts asking about Marilyn Monroe he will stand up and walk out. Don't ever!" So I said, "Right, right."

So what happened was that I got a letter from Ted Williams and he apologized in his letter. He said, "I've got an event that I was booked into, a fishing trip in the Mediterranean and I'm obliged to go there. I've committed myself and I can't come to your dinner." But I got a letter from him and that's nice!

So, the Joe DiMaggio dinner worked out terrific. Went up to meet Joe at the airport and I had two Mounties waiting for him at the airport to come in. I got

a limousine to go and pick him up, and my son wanted to go in the limousine. Waiting at the gate for the special international flight that they had at Pearson at the time, I'm looking through the window and here's Joe at the carousel, picking up his bag, picking up his tuxedo, walking out all by himself. He came through at the gate and I said, "Mr. DiMaggio." He said, "No, no. That's my dad. Joe." "Joe, nice to meet you; thank you." He looked at the two Mounties and said, "Am I under arrest?" "No, not yet!" Got him into the limo and got him to the hotel. He said, "OK, what time is Ted coming?" I said, "I'm sorry." I had to apologize that Ted wasn't coming.

So anyway we went to the hotel and he wasn't feeling well before the event. Before the dinner I had a press conference. Paul Godfrey was there. Paul was the dinner Chairman at that time. Everybody was there. Fergie was there and Phil Marchildon was there; it was very important that Phil was there. And Joe was not to come to the press conference. So, we're starting the press conference and one of the hotel people came and said, "Bruce Prentice? Phone call for you. Out here." I go out and it was Joe DiMaggio from upstairs. "Bruce, where is the press conference?" "Press conference? You're not supposed to be at the press conference." "Who told you that?" "Your lawyer told me." "To hell with him. I'll be right down."

I went in and I told everybody, "Shh. Everyone! Joe is coming, Joe is coming through the door." The press room was crowded as it was and the thing is I told



everybody, "Don't mention Marilyn Monroe and don't say a word." So, a knock came at the door, and Joe came through. You could have heard a pin drop. It was like baseball royalty was coming. Joe walked around and came up on the step to the head table. He spotted Phil Marchildon. He said, "Phil!" He ran up and gave him a big hug and said, "This is great! This is wonderful." To make a long story short, the press conference was great, and Joe was great, and nobody mentioned Marilyn Monroe!

So, we head to dinner. Joe was marvellous; he told a couple of real jokes, baseball stories which I won't bore you with. I can't tell jokes anyway. So Joe was

terrific, the dinner was over, and he went up to his room, and I get another phone call. And Joe said, "Can you can up and see me for a minute?" I said, "Well yeah, OK. What's the problem?" "Well," he said, "I've got to leave early. I'm not feeling well. Can you change my tickets?" I said, "When do you want to go?" So, I made arrangements for his tickets, changing them for the earlier flight in the morning. I said, "I tell you what, I'll bring up the tickets when I get them for you. OK?" Somebody from the hotel went down to the lobby, got his tickets changed and gave me his tickets. I went back upstairs and knocked on his door. Joe comes to the door. He's got his black socks on. No pants, just his underwear and his tuxedo shirt hanging out. He said, "Come on in, come on in." I said, "How are you feeling?" "Well, not that well. I've got a stomach problem. Something is really happening to me, I don't know what it is." I said, "Really? You're not feeling well." "No, no." "Well, I tell you what. Here's your ticket. Everything OK?" He said, "Oh yes, that's fine, that's fine." There was probably thirty seconds of silence. I said, "You're OK?" "Yes, I'm fine." "OK. Thank you Mr. DiMaggio for being here." And I left.

To this day, I look back at that thirty seconds of silence. I could have and should have said, "Can we have a nightcap?" He probably would have said yes, because he was a lonely man, don't forget. I think in all probability he would have said, "Yeah sure, sit down and have a nightcap and talk." I missed the opportunity.

Another fundraiser for the Hall was a golf event with Jimmy Piersall. What we did, one year we went to Carrying Place. We put on the Hall of Fame dinner at Carrying Place Golf Club. We had the golf in the daytime. I got Jimmy Piersall to come up as our guest speaker. He was terrific. He did not mind talking about his problems that he had. He said he remembers seeing some pictures of him, he can't remember doing it himself, climbing up the backstop behind home plate, and the different things that he was doing. And they did lock him up. But he did come back to play, and he was fine. He was great. He was wonderful.

Generally, we had no problem selling special guests, and guest speakers, on the "Canadian" Baseball Hall of Fame aspect, even though there was no real Canadian attachment for them. Mainly because of the fact that we had a dinner. And the dinner that we would put on would be a black tie affair. And they'd be coming up for a big tribute dinner to them, and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame was kind of on the side. They knew it was for the Canadian Baseball Hall of

Fame, but the big attraction was coming up to Toronto, the big dinner, and most of them we had to pay a little bit.

Sometimes we didn't get who we were after, but had an interesting time anyway. We were looking for a guest speaker to come for one of our dinners. And we thought, OK, we had some funds, so fine, let's go to L.A., because we wanted to meet with someone there to come to Toronto for our dinner. So we got a cheap airfare, we got a cheap hotel, and we went. And we happened to get some tickets for the Dodgers ball game. My companion was with Esso, and he did kind of a baseball school sponsored by Esso. So anyway, we went, and we ended up in the press box because we were VIPs from Toronto. We're watching from the press box as it comes up to the time that Kirk Gibson was coming up to the plate. And he wasn't even supposed to play. Here he comes out of the dugout and the whole press box is saying "What's going on here? What's happening here?" Gibson comes up to the plate, and it comes to the point that it's 3-and-2 on Gibson, and he's hobbling. Dennis Eckersley is pitching. And Gibson knows exactly what Eckersley is going to throw. He knows that, because Eckersley on 3-and-2 is going to throw his curve ball, his best pitch. And Gibson knew it. And he's standing there "OK, here it comes". Well, everybody in the press box, all of the reporters and everybody, started saying "He wouldn't dare. This is not going to happen. He's not going to do this. It won't happen. This is too much. It's like Hollywood." And then Gibson, bang, hits the home run and staggers around the bases. Vin Scully said "I can't believe what I just saw". So that was a great trip, and no, we never did get who we talked to to come to the dinner. As a matter of fact, he put the Olympics on, big guy in L.A. Peter Ueberroth. He said he's let us know, and he never did. So the trip to L.A. was a failure in one sense, but it was fun. It was a terrific two or three days. It was wonderful.

I remember to start one particular dinner, I took something from *The Natural*. The part where his girlfriend comes in, he's in the hospital, and he's just getting better. He's supposed to be playing the next big game or something. He's in bed. She says to him something about "You're so good now." He said "I could have broke every record in the book." Then he fell silent. And he says "I wish my dad could have...". Break your heart. And then you start with the Hall of Fame. And then the other one was Sinatra and Gene Kelly. The start of *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*, with the two of them doing the song, and dancing. So I put that at the beginning of one of the dinners. And on comes the show. I used to love doing that stuff. It was a lot of fun. It really was. I thoroughly enjoyed it. A lot of the

guys (and women) helped out; without them it couldn't have happened, because you need people.

I have no show-biz background, but I just love show business. And I love the idea that it's baseball. Like for example people said to me when I'm going to put on a black tie dinner, at the Board meetings they said what? I said yes, we're going black tie. They said, "Well, nobody does black tie." I said, well we're going black tie. So we put on the dinners that we had, and put on these big presentations, etc. in black tie. And I remember Scotty Morrison coming through for the dinner the one night, and he said "Bruce, this is terrific. We're going to go black tie." That's how the Hockey Hall of Fame started going black tie. Because what I did was, I don't want to use the term, I took it out of the gutter (if you've ever been in the dugout, you can almost swim in the dugout with all the spit and everything), so I took it up and I lifted it up. They weren't doing that in New York either. So when Willie and everybody else came, they said "Holy cow, this is great stuff." So black tie, taking sports up into black tie, I'm kind of proud of the fact that it started in Toronto, and I had something to do with it.

And talking about the presentations: one of the biggest was Willie, Mickey and the Duke, with Tom Cheek as the emcee. We were thinking about how we were going to bring them in, how we were going to present them. Well, we can walk them down the aisle. And I said uh, uh. At the Convention Centre there were three doors coming into the ballroom, and there's 1800 people in the ballroom. And there's spotlights everywhere. I said to Tom "OK, get somebody and have the three of them, Willie, Mickey and the Duke, outside, and we'll introduce them one at a time." He said "Wow." I said "I want a spotlight on them, and you'll introduce them one at a time, and they'll walk in." So Tom did that in his magic voice: "Ladies and gentlemen...Willie Mays!" Willie came into the spotlight: standing ovation from 1800 people. "And the Duke!" We brought Mickey in last. I'm sitting there thinking this is marvellous stuff. Mulroney, he was a character. He had his people come down from Ottawa, security people, and he actually put in his own speakers, and his own microphone, because of his voice; you know he's got a wonderful voice. He was great. He told stories, and jokes, he was really terrific stuff. And then when there was a break in the dinner, which was part of it, there's Mickey here, Tom is here, and Mulroney sitting beside Mickey, and the crowd comes charging up to the head table with their pens out and programs and everything else. Poor Mr. Mulroney's sitting there, and nobody asked for his autograph. They even asked for mine.

* * * * *

It would have been right after the DiMaggio dinner, about '92, that we left Ontario Place. We got kicked out of there in '92 and then from there, where are we going to put everything? Everything went into storage. That would have been one of the saddest days of my life. Up in North York, somebody said yeah, here, take stuff there. I sat there with Tim Harkness. Tim Harkness as you know was with the L.A. Dodgers and the Mets, and he was working with me. I had him as my PR guy. We had some money and for about three years I had a salary, maybe four. Yes, I had a salary because we had raised some money. It got to a point where the money was running out. And once our material was in storage, there was no money coming in, and I had to let Tim Harkness go. It got to a choice between him and me. So I stayed. And from there we ran out of money, we ran out of space, the people wanted their space back, and then Doug Kelcher came along and said, "Bruce, I've got somebody up here on Weston Road somewhere that'll take the stuff."

So, trucks were backed up and all of this stuff that was at Ontario Place, everything, was loaded onto trucks and taken up to this storage area up on Weston Road where Doug Kelcher had a friend. OK fine. So I guess maybe about a week or two later I thought "I'm going to go back and see what happened to all this stuff." I thought maybe they'd put a barrier around it or something. I walked in, upstairs on the second floor, back in the office area, and it was wide open! At the back in the office area were all of the artifacts, all of the pictures, all of the filing cabinets; everything was sitting completely wide open. There was no wall for protection. Nothing.

Most of the material was in boxes, but some of the boxes weren't completely packed. Some were open already. The filing cabinets were there, and the pictures from Ontario Place were stacked up against the wall. Everything was put there. This was mid-'92. A partial inventory of artifacts had been done at Ontario Place by summer students before it had been packed up, but not everything in that room had been inventoried. [*Documents currently in the Hall of Fame include a 48-page inventory list, with some pages dated Jan. 15 and 16, 1993.*]

We had some wonderful items. There were thirteen baseballs that Babe Ruth had signed. They were given to us by a lady from Miami. She and her

husband were baseball people who had a flat in Ontario Place. When they heard about the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, I had a nice phone call and a lovely letter from them saying “We’ve got a wonderful autographed baseball from Babe Ruth. He hit the first home run up there.” And I said, “Well isn’t that wonderful?” She sent up a bat with it and a Babe Ruth baseball. From there, more people started sending us baseballs, Babe Ruth baseballs. At one point we had 13 autographed Ruth baseballs. [*The Hall’s inventory lists 4.*] They were given to us and they were put under glass at Ontario Place.

There’s a little funny story that went with that. There was a brand new baseball, signed by Goody Rosen and Phil Marchildon, sitting under glass. There was another donated baseball signed by the 1925 Cleveland Indians, the entire team, and Babe Ruth had also autographed that baseball. We had that under glass and it had to be probably the second week we were there, we had opened up. Two kids came in, broke open the back of the case, the glass, and grabbed the two baseballs and ran like hell. Security caught them, or saw them, running down the ramp, running like hell having grabbed the baseballs. I wasn’t there; I was at home. So what happened was there were two kids running like hell and guess what they did! They threw away a baseball, and which one do you think they threw away? The old one! And it went into the bay. They were eventually caught and the one baseball was found. Their parents gave them hell. “Are you going to charge them?” “No, no. They’re just kids” [*The St. Marys Museum has an editorial cartoon showing two Canada geese on the lake and the ball at the bottom of the lake.*]

What happened from there was that I called Neil MacCarl from the **Toronto Star**. This is going to be terrible if the ball has been stolen. “Neil?” “What?” “We’ve had this baseball stolen...” He put a red letter headline in the **Toronto Star** the next day: ‘Babe Ruth Baseball Stolen from the Hall of Fame’. That hit the news. I was called and interviewed by so many TV stations at the time. The CBC came down and said, “OK, what we want to do is have a little bit of an interview of you standing by the wharf overlooking the bay.” So that was fine. While I was standing there being interviewed I was thinking “I’ve got to find where that baseball is.” So I called the Coast Guard. They sent divers. “OK, guys, here. Go look for the ball.”

For one solid week, interviewers came from Texas, New York, all over North America. The CBC News interviewed me early in the morning, live; it was live. Where’s the baseball? And it went on and on and on, until I got a call. It was a

lady from Montreal and she said, "Is this a hoax? Is this a PR move that you're doing? If you're doing a PR move, it's great." I said, "I beg your pardon?" "Well, it could be a hoax." "It's no hoax at all. Thank you for your call." I hung up and called the divers. No luck. It's over; it's finished. For a whole week everything was on TV, newspapers, radio, everything. Did we find the baseball? Of course not. But it's a great story. And again people still remember that. [Link to related article abstract: *Divers forced to end search for Babe Ruth baseball*, **Toronto Star** May 27, 1987 <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/thestar/doc/435571854.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=May+27%2C+1987&author=Neil+MacCarl+Toronto+Star&pub=Toronto+Star&edition=&startpage=A.15&desc=Divers+forced+to+end+search+for+Babe+Ruth+baseball>]

When we started we had nothing in the way of artifacts. But people started to give us things, collectors and players; that's how the collection got off the ground. We were looking for some kind of artifacts, memorabilia of baseball in Ontario Place and some people started giving. One fellow donated the baseball of the Cleveland Indians. It was on loan and that went missing. He was really up in arms. I went to lawyers to make sure we were well-protected.

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Randy Echlin and Dave Crichton were good. They were real baseball people. Dave Crichton used to buy boxes and boxes of baseball cards. I went to his house one day and everywhere, in the kitchen, dining room, every place in the house there were baseball cards. His wife complained that on his night table there were baseball cards. Randy was a good guy; he was a lawyer, and he became very high up in legal circles. Dave Crichton was a good guy; he was part of an advertising promotion company. They looked after the Schenley Awards.

When we went to Montreal, we went to induct Fergie Jenkins and a couple of other people. We left it up to Dave Crichton to put together the video, to put music to it. We got to the point in the event where the video was to be played. There was no music. Dave was standing beside me. I said, "Dave, where is the music? It's all dry." "Oh", he said, "I forgot to do it." Every video, you've got to have music. He forgot to do it. That night in Montreal was a great night, a great night. We all went on the field. There were five Expos and we had re five inductees and all throwing baseballs together. Gary Carter was there. Great stuff.

We had decided to have an Induction ceremony in Montreal instead of at the Hall of Fame or in Toronto, a change of venue really, because we wanted to get the Expos more involved. But that involves another story, another story about Claude Brochu, bless his pea-picking heart. A little while later Claude gave me a call. He said he wanted to have more representation from the Montreal Expos. "It sounds like the Toronto Blue Jays Hall of Fame" because everything was happening in Toronto. This was after the dinner in Montreal. I said, "OK, what do you want to do about it?" "I'm going to meet you for lunch."

He came to Toronto and we went for lunch. He started talking to me about the fact that the Montreal Expos were not participating. I said, "That's your fault, not mine. We've asked you to do something. Get involved somehow or some way." We'd had the induction dinner and that had been great. He said, "We need more representation. We've got nobody on the Board from Montreal." I said, "OK. Who do you want to sit on the Board? Why don't you sit on the Board?" He said, "OK, fine, I'll do that but you've got to do something for me." "What?" "You've got to make the Hall of Fame more than just Toronto." I said, "OK."

So there was a Board meeting in about two weeks. Claude came to that meeting. That was great, that was wonderful. He only came to one. But before that meeting I did something that I had to do. I still sometimes regret what I had to do or what I did at the time. I don't think anybody really understands or what happened. I was a scout for the Blue Jays, a contact scout; I wasn't paid, but I helped out for five years. I had gone to Montreal one time and put on a Blue Jays try-out camp. So, what happened at that time, I wrote a letter to Pat Gillick and to my brother Bob, and I resigned as a scout from the Blue Jays in order to keep the Hall of Fame independent. Pat Gillick wrote me a nice letter saying thank you for your time. Brother Bob wouldn't talk to me for about a year and a half. Anyway, I resigned from the Blue Jays to keep the Hall independent. I thought that was what I had to do. Should I have done it? Was it the right thing to do? To this day, I think so, in order to keep it independent, to make sure it came across the country, and was not being looked at as the Blue Jays Hall of Fame. That was very tough to do.

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Labatts was our number one sponsor from the beginning. Don McDougall and Peter Hardy were there from the start. Peter Hardy was a great man. They

were the two that put some money up to get this thing moving, which was great, a great step. He's in the Hall of Fame. [*So is McDougall.*] Labatts was with us in our meeting with Patti Starr. As a result of that meeting they backed off and said let us know when you've got some other place to go. Also, the economy hit. And corporations began not throwing money at people just because they should. They now wanted benefits back. At one point the corporations realized they weren't getting anything back. Everything changed. So we had to find an alternative location.

There's an old saying: "If you can't go to the mountain let the mountain come to you." We were looking for a spot to put this Hall of Fame. Where do we go? The Board sent bid papers to, I can't remember exactly, maybe 20, 25 communities across Ontario. Everybody was invited for a particular day and we got our presentation room from the city, from the Government of Ontario. There were 11 cities that showed up and made a presentation -- half an hour -- as to why they should be the home of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.

They were all very good. Hamilton came, Guelph came, Barrie came, but the best one was from Brockville. Brockville came down en masse. The mayor came and even a guy named Kennedy, a contractor. He put a cheque for \$1,000,000 on the table. They wanted it so badly in Brockville. Cam Church and I had been invited down to Brockville a couple of times for a tour. They had a wonderful post office right downtown. It was empty. They had 15,000 square feet on two floors; it was beautiful! We said, "This is great, but we have to have everybody come down and make a bid. So make a bid." We wanted Brockville. Great. This is where we're going to go. At the next Board meeting, Allan Lamport, like Khrushchev, almost took his shoe off, was banging the table. "No, no, no! It's not going out of Toronto. It's going to stay in Toronto. I'll get the money, I'll get all the money we need. It's going to stay in Toronto." Randy, Dave and everybody else, said "Yeah, OK; OK, Lampy." The Board decided to stay in Toronto, so Brockville didn't get it. So that's why it wasn't picked up with. Hamilton wanted it, Barrie wanted it. They all came down. 11 communities came down and made a presentation; they had a half-hour each. They were all terrific, but of course Brockville was the best. What happened to the rest of those bids I don't know. It ended up in St. Marys and that's nice, that's wonderful, but nobody goes there.

It didn't stay in Toronto either, because Lamport didn't do a damn thing. He had lost all of his contacts. Nothing happened. We were in touch with Labatts, with the Exhibition: "Is there room?" "No, no space here." There was nowhere,

and it stayed in storage. But Brockville should have had it. Brockville's a wonderful baseball town.

I was still involved. But at one point, I believe it was 1992, I backed away. I was hurting too much. I went to a Board meeting and I sat through and announced to everybody on the Board, "I'm turning in my resignation as the President of this organization." Well, you should have heard some of them. But the relocation process continued.

Just before that, for example, Beachville was really after it. They invited us on a tour. Audrey and I went to Beachville for a tour, and they gave us all the information on Beachville. They even took us up to a corner where the home plate was. There were so many people there; the mayor was there. It was a wonderful tour we had. They took us for lunch, over to the Legion, and we had a nice lunch discussing everything about what can happen in Beachville with this Hall of Fame. And they were good. They kept at us, but at this particular time I had backed away, so the Beachville contingent was communicating with those left on the Board. It took I don't know how long before the St. Marys Cement Company came along and said, "Here, we've got this acreage for you, take it, and there's an old farmhouse. You can use it." I said to myself, "Good. There's the location anyway." And the people started thinking, "We can make our Hall of Fame like Cooperstown, out on the wilderness." I'm imagining there might be 10,000 people a year going out there. We had 400,000 people. But we had foot traffic. Even way back at the beginning again there was a guy Gord Edwards, who was with GRT Records. Gord's a good baseball guy, good friend of mine. We had a location downtown on Front Street [*recognizing the importance of foot traffic*]. The stories are in here [*pointing to his binders*]. "Here's all this space, take it." They wanted it as an attraction. Anyway, that didn't work out. There was a big picture in the ***Globe and Mail*** of Gord and me with baseball bats. "Baseball Hall of Fame finds a home". We had lots of PR way back then, but of course, that didn't work out either. They wanted too much money.

There are people out there who've helped us along the way, of course. I've mentioned a few things about Randy Echlin and Dave Crichton. Well, they were right at the beginning and they loved the idea of the Hall of Fame. The Blue Jays were absolutely outstanding as to what they did to help us along the way. There were people like Harvey Trivett, no longer here, and other members of the Board who helped along the way. You can't do something by yourself; you need help. And that help is there. And I want to thank everyone for what happened to make

the Hall of Fame really front page news. When the inductees are announced, the media grabs hold of it across Canada, which is wonderful, which is great; this is where the PR comes from. For those who helped put the Hall of Fame on the map, thank you. I truly thank you.