

THE LEGACY OF HAROLD PELHAM

Harold Pelham's involvement in baseball began about 50 years ago when he decided to start a baseball "league" in the area of Purcell's Cove/Spryfield. He wanted to provide an opportunity for youth in those areas to play the game as well as well as to keep them busy in a fun and recreational manner. He even posted statistics for the league at a store he owned in the area, something that the boys and parents quite enjoyed. Harold's son, Jim, tells of meeting a former player who had moved to Toronto 30 years after he played in the league and he was certain to offer his thanks through Jim to his dad for his efforts on the young boys' behalf. Indeed, it was a lasting impression.

Though the name Harold Pelham is most often associated with the senior baseball team that he agreed to sponsor in 1974, a team that still bears the name of Pelham Electric in his memory, his involvement in minor baseball in the Halifax area has been exemplary. He sponsored minor baseball teams (as well as hockey teams) in the Purcell's Cove area during the 60's and 70's, focusing on the bantam and midget age players, providing an enjoyable pastime for the boys in their most formative years. His sponsored teams won numerous provincial titles over the years.

These same young boys were given the opportunity to pursue their love of the game even to the senior level when Harold agreed to sponsor the senior team in 1974, resulting in one of the longest, if not the longest, associations between an individual and any sports team in the area. Harold invested considerable time, energy, and financial resources to ensure baseball was viable at the highest level over these years.

However, these were only some of the attributes evident. He provided financial support to some players, usually without the knowledge of many, provided job opportunities to some of his players, organized a fundraiser for a team volunteer worker who had fallen on hard times (see letter enclosed), mentored players and assisted them in achieving success in their chosen fields (two of these individuals are employed by Pelham Electric as electricians), and encouraged them to be involved with young people, thus resulting in some of the players becoming coaches not only with the senior team but also within the minor system.

Harold was instrumental in the improvements seen over the years at the home of senior baseball from the 1970's to the early 2000's, The Wanderer's Grounds. He fought hard to have the historic venue kept as a home for senior baseball, a

testament to his love of baseball tradition. When the decision was made to move senior baseball to the Mainland Common, he wanted the facility to be one that the Halifax Regional Municipality and the province would be proud of. He would be pleased with the vast improvements made at the field in the past year. The players have responded positively to these improvements and baseball fans are turning out for games in much greater numbers than before.

During his time with the senior team, both the Nicaraguan and Cuban national baseball teams visited Halifax to play exhibition games and Harold insisted that the coaches and players of the teams be hosted at his home after the games. The personnel of both teams were thrilled and most thankful for the hospitality extended to them during their stay in Halifax. They left with wonderful memories of their opponents, the city, and especially of Harold.

Though Harold has left us, his legacy still endures. His company name still adorns the uniforms worn by the young men who wished to pursue baseball beyond the minor level. His two sons, Jim, currently the coach, and Donnie, still ensure that the team is a competitive one and proudly represent the Pelham name, but most importantly the memory of their dad. Two of Harold's grandsons, Josh, Jim's son, and Mark, Donnie's son, are members of the current team. And he would be very proud!

Next year, 2009, is a very special year for the Pelham senior baseball team. 2009 represents the 35th anniversary of the creation of the Harold Pelham's senior team, truly a remarkable accomplishment. It seems appropriate that the team will celebrate this honour by representing the province at the 2009 Canadian Senior National Baseball Championships which will be hosted by the Dartmouth Dry. This victory came in the 10th anniversary year of Harold's death.

The top ten teams from across Canada will play games at Beazley Field in Dartmouth and at Mainland Common in Halifax. Surely, Harold will be there in spirit cheering the boys on!

In light of the unselfish involvement of Harold Pelham over so many years and the positive influence he had on some many people during this time, the committee organized to seek approval for naming the baseball field at Mainland Common in Harold's memory, respectfully asks that this matter be given very serious consideration.

Harold's love of the game and especially for the people who play it is perhaps best summed up in a quote from James Earl Jones (Field Of Dreams):

“If there is one thing that is a constant, it is baseball. People come and go but one thing that has been timeless is baseball.”

In keeping with other facilities named in honour of deserving individuals, the committee would like to suggest that the field be named:

HAROLD PELHAM MEMORIAL PARK

Or

HAROLD PELHAM MEMORIAL PARK
(AT MAINLAND COMMON)*

- the latter is suggested as a means of maintaining the connection to the overall facility which has become a source of pride for the Halifax Regional Municipality, and which will be enhanced even further when additional facilities for the Canada Games are built.

The committee wishes to express its thanks to the Chebucto Community Council for the opportunity to present to you.

The committee would also like to thank Jim and Donnie Pelham for their assistance and information and to those who have supported our presentation and request.

Respectfully,

Ralph Legere
Kevin Umlah
Paul Gallivan, Chair

To: The Chebucto Community Council

I recently was made aware that a committee was formed to approach this council about having the baseball field at Mainland Common named in honour of Harold Pelham.

I have been a volunteer with the Pelham baseball teams for a number of years working at their home games collecting at the gate and selling 50-50 tickets to help offset their expenses. I knew Harold when he involved with the team as the team owner and sponsor. I admired his love of the game and what he did for the players who played for the team over the years. However, his act of kindness on my behalf is the single most significant thing that I can speak about with regard to him.

I suffered some serious health issues a few years ago and was unable to work. When this occurred Harold organized a fundraiser for my benefit. He spent many hours contacting people and getting the players, current and former, to attend the event and spread the word to other people asking them to attend and to help me out. It resulted in a large crowd attending and a considerable amount of money being raised. I can say that the result was some financial security was provided for me for at least two years.

I am very indebted to Harold for his efforts and his kindness. Not only has he provided much for the young kids in Halifax who have played baseball, he has also done a great deal for senior baseball too. However, his generosity and thoughtfulness in my cause will always be my fondest memory of a wonderful man.

I fully support the effort being made to honour his memory by having the field named after him. It is very much deserved.

Sincerely,

Mike Martin