

Mumsy, as Gerry lovingly called his mother, became so incensed that she literally insisted to his father “do something with those boys to keep them off the streets and out of trouble.” That’s when Ardy Barbour came up with the idea to form a softball team. There had never been any form of .ball in town up until that point. Baseball was something that the pros played yet softball was something all together different. Gerry even went to the local library to learn about the rules and how the game was played. Word got out that there would be tryouts held for this squad taking place at the field behind St. Anne’s Catholic Church. Eventually a team was formed and that is where they played their games. .

Gerry himself was responsible for providing the name of the team by suggesting the “Lion Tamers” that he got from the Mutt and Jeff comic strip in the newspaper, where Mutt became part of a bunch of boys who had formed a club using that name. Gerry himself was considered to be too young to play so he eventually became the “can shaker” for the team, the guy who today would “pass the hat” collecting donations from the fans in helping the ball club out financially. This wasn’t Gerry’s first choice as he had his sights set on being the bat boy for the club, however Peter “Peg” Spearn had managed to scoop that job, so Gerry begrudgingly accepted the ‘can shaker’s job but they had to accept his suggestion for the team’s new name. The team bought into the name and soon sweaters were obtained with Gerry’s father as manager of the club.

The team had little equipment; the catcher was the only player who wore a hand-made glove, which was put together from leather scraps obtained from the tannery located at the north end of Fox Street next to what is now Dutchman’s Cove Marina. Eventually Gerry’s father managed to obtain a catcher’s mask because catcher Bennett Quigley was taking a beating behind the plate. Gerry’s father contacted the Slazenger Sporting Goods Company in Toronto and scraped up enough money to purchase the new mask, but other than one bat and one ball, that was it for the baseball gear. They played against various pick-up teams from town, one of them from players who lived “up-the-lines” at the north end of Church Street.

When the actual team was chosen, there was a shortfall, notably they didn’t have a decent pitcher amongst the players. They tried pretty much everyone on the team; however no

one could throw strikes consistently. They ended up recruiting a player from the “up-the-lines” club, a fellow by the name of Joe Hale. When Joe came to his first tryout, he came along with his personal coach, his grandmother. During his audition, Joe had trouble throwing strikes so his grandmother took the mound and showed him how it was done. She flung strike after strike “windmill” style, but Joe had to utilize the “slingshot” motion because he had broken his arm when he was a youngster restricting his range of motion. Once Joe’s grandmother trained and adjusted Joe’s delivery, he was off to the races.

The infield consisted of Jim Bald at first, Bob Crippin at second, Harold Crippin at shortstop and Fred Devillers playing third. The outfielders were Jack Symons, Doug Barbour and Buck McIntaggart. As mentioned before, Bennett Quigley handled the catching duties with Peter “Peg” Spearn assigned as bat boy. These young men formed the “Original 8” the Penetanguishene Lion Tamers.

The team practiced night after night and soon they became good, quite good .They eventually joined a league consisting of teams from Midland, Orillia, Hillsdale, Stayner, Minnesing and Creemore. They even did some “barnstorming” in such places as Barrie, Owen Sound, Southampton, and Kincardine. They were winning. They won a lot.

In their first year of existence they faced a strong Midland team who defeated them in the semi-finals. Not deterred, the following year they pressed on to capture the Simcoe County Softball Championship.

Here is a photograph of the “Original 8” Penetanguishene Lion Tamers Independent Softball Champions of Simcoe County taken by the noted photographer of that era, J.W. Bald.



Top Row L-R: Bob Crippin, Doug Barbour, Harold Crippin, Jim Bald Front Row L-R Jack Symons. Bruce (Buck) McIntaggart, Pete (Peg) Spearn (Bat Boy). Bennett Quigley, Fred Devillers



Part 2

The Penetanguishene Spencer Foundry Rangers

The Penetanguishene Lion Tamers were formed during the “Roaring Twenties” when things were booming around the North American continent, especially in the United States. Professional baseball was at an all-time high in popularity as the big city newspapers carried stories about the stars of the game creating idols in people’s minds that became household names. The New York Yankees led the way year after year and boasted such noted stars as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, Baseball fever reached into

Canada and particularly the small town of Penetanguishene. The popularity of the sport combined with the success of the Lion Tamers captured the attention of some well-to-do business men. They were associated with the Spencer Foundry and they came forward to sponsor the ball club providing the necessary funds to properly equip this yet unnamed team. Unfortunately it was also the end to the Penetanguishene Lion Tamers as we knew them, most of them decided to take their swings with the newly-formed baseball club. The Lion Tamers carried on but they were never the same.

The tryouts were held and things were lining up. There is a belief that A.J. Fitzgerald was the first manager of the club assisted by Ivan Flynn with Chuck Shepherd showing an avid interest. They were key figures from the foundry and thus the team moniker for the baseball team became the Penetanguishene Spencer Foundry Rangers. These gentlemen were dedicated and supportive to the club even providing transportation for the players so they could get to the out of town games, as vehicles were essentially at a premium simply due to affordability. J.T. Payette, the owner of the local race track was on board with the club. He even placed his yacht, the Vacuna, at the disposal of the club to get to a game that was arranged against Parry Sound, given the roads were nothing short of terrible making it dangerous to travel.

The team even moved to different ball diamond locations going from the St. Anne's Church site to the Beck field at the south entrance of town as more space was required to actually play the game. The diamond location thereabouts is where the Hydro One office is and the actual diamond was situated just about where they park their service vehicles today. The field actually faced south towards Penetanguishene Sand and Gravel, which was and is known as Martin's Valley. The field needed a lot of work and the players themselves along with many townsfolk actually came forward to help whip a cow pasture into a reasonable playing field. A proper entrance and ticket booth were erected together with a scoreboard. Here is a photo of the Penetanguishene Spencer Foundry Rangers in front of that home-made scoreboard at Beck's Field in 1935.



Front row standing-Mervyn Dickey (reporter/statistician) Front row sitting-Fred Devillers, Cy Richardson, Harold Crippin, Manager Jim Shaw, In front Jack Spearn(Batboy), friend of Jim Shaw, Phil Marchildon, Ivan Flynn (coach)

Back row standing-Walter Spearn, Dan McCuaig, Unknown, Gerry Barbour, Bob Crippin, Harry Hale, Jimmy Bald, Marius Bald.

The team did well. They did very well. They were a dominant force within the North Simcoe Baseball League as an Intermediate B team. They were good in those early years, during the late 1920's, and for the most always near or on top of the standings. The pitching was in good hands with the likes of Hal Crippin and Joe Hale controlling the play. The infield was stellar made up of former Lion Tamers Jim Bald at 1st, Bob Crippin manning 2nd, Hal Crippin at shortstop and Chuck Sheppard playing 3rd. The outfield consisted of Dan McCuaig, Harry Hale, Gerry Barbour and Cy Richardson. The catching duties were handled by Fred Devillers who had moved from 3rd base to behind the plate;

that adjustment began when they switched from softball to baseball. Stan Swain, Vern Murray, Marius Bald, Peg Spearn and later Bun Deschamps were added as needed.

In the early 1930's, the Foundry Rangers received an unexpected boost by the name of Phil Marchildon. Phil was still a high school student when he joined the club and had only been pitching for two years. In addition, James Shaw, a shrewd baseball man, was brought into manage the team. With Shaw's experience combined with Phil's raw talent, something special was beginning to happen. Phil or the "Babe" as he became to be known began to flourish as a pitcher with a fastball that was next to unhittable. Word soon got around that the Foundry Rangers boasted an exciting and excellent pitcher. Crowds flocked to Beck Field to watch the Babe pitch displaying his strikeout artist prowess. Newspaper articles of the time showed him striking out up to 18 batters in a nine inning ball game. He went head to head with the best pitchers in the league and was beating them on a regular basis. Guys like Smoky Smith from Collingwood, Warpy Phillips from Meaford, Ernie Kirkup from Midland battled the Babe but more often than not ended up on the losing end of things. Often the games were nothing short of an epic battle between the pitching ranks. People flocked to Beck's Field virtually shutting down the town to watch the ball games.

Part 3

1934 -The Ontario Play Downs versus the Chatham Coloured All-Stars

This was to be the best year for the Penetanguishene Spencer Foundry Rangers. They won 2 exhibition games quite handily versus Barrie and Parry Sound (this was the game they travelled to on J.T Payette's boat). They won a tournament in Orillia taking home the Stover Cup. The club went 9-3 during the regular season. They defeated Barrie in the league playoffs two games to none before downing Meaford 2 games to 1, with 2 other games ending in ties. They won the Northern Ontario Baseball Association play downs, defeating North Bay 2 games to none winning both games by a score of 1-0, just another testament of the mastery demonstrated by the Babe. This had them leading up to the Ontario finals an historical battle against a team from Chatham. This would prove to be their greatest challenge, in more ways than one.

The Chatham Coloured Stars were a story onto their own. This club was only formed 2 years prior to this climatic series and as the team name suggests, these men were all black athletes. They played exhibition games their first season, reached the Ontario Finals in 1933, then joined the Chatham City Baseball League in 1934 losing only once reinforcing just how good a club they were (this team also won the Ontario Finals in 1935). A significant item of note regarding that team was that they had a young outfielder on their roster by the name of Ferguson Jenkins, the father of the Major League Baseball Hall of Famer of the same name.

The Chatham Coloured Stars had a set of unique problems however Everywhere they went they were treated differently because of the colour of their skin. Long road trips had to be planned well in advance to ensure that the locality had a restaurant and a hotel/motel that would serve their needs. Some motels insisted that they arrive after dark so the white guests would never know they were there. There are a number of renditions of what actually occurred with the team's visit to Penetanguishene around this sensitive issue. Don Tabron, one of Chatham's star pitchers, related to sportswriter Tom Hawthorn in a special article to the Globe and Mail that the team was turned away from a hotel in Penetanguishene and had to stay at an inn in Midland. Another version by one of the Chatham players (believed to be Sagusta Harding) who was being interviewed following a ceremony honouring the Chatham squad at the Sky Dome, was that the team actually returned to Chatham the day they arrived after being shunned by a Penetanguishene hotel. Gerry Barbour was watching this particular game on television when this interview was being carried out and he became so incensed regarding this statement that he wrote an article in the Midland Free Press in an effort to right a wrong. He even received a call from Betty Beauchamp, whose family had managed the Brule Hotel at the time of that game and she verified Gerry's stance stating that "neither the Canada House nor the Brule Hotel would have turned away customers because of their skin colour." Irregardless of what actually took place, it was an issue that shouldn't have been.

The series was scheduled to be as impartial as possible with the first game to be played in Penetanguishene, the second to be played in Chatham and the third to be held on neutral ground in the city of Guelph if it was needed. And that's the way it went...sort of.

In the first contest it was Babe Marchildon starting for the Rangers and Don Taborn countering for the Coloured Stars. Phil had 19 strikeouts that day allowing 7 hits and 2 walks while Taborn struck out 7 and allowed 8 hits. The game went into extra innings with Chatham scoring twice in the top of the 10th. The headline in the local news was: “3000 Fans Pack Beck Field” Penetanguishene came out to support their team in full force but were stricken by the outcome as Chatham defeated Penetanguishene by a score of 4-2

The series moved onto Chatham. The travel distance alone posed problems for the Penetanguishene squad. The roads were “like goat paths” according to Gerry Barbour. They traveled in a Willys Overland, a Studebaker, and given number of Fords driven by A.J. Fitzgerald, Alf Cage, Ivan Flynn and Chuck Shepherd. It was approximately a 5 hour run to get to their destination that being the William Roth Hotel I Chatham. There were some fans that made the trip but not many due to the distance and the transportation availability (or lack of).

The Rangers managed to win game 2 of the series when they rallied in the ninth inning scoring 2 runs to take the lead and holding onto to win before 1600 spectators at Chatham’s Athletic Field. The news coverage was minimal at best so it’s difficult to provide details though Phil did indeed pitch game 2. This was a hard fought contest. The London Free Press reported that in the third inning “ Penetang infielder Baldy Bald (it wasn’t clear whether this was first baseman Jim or his brother, second baseman Marius Bald) successfully faked being hit by a pitched ball and was waved to first base which put the fans in a tough mood. Later in the ninth inning there was a wild argument when the umpire called Chatham’s Don Tabron safe at second base on an attempted steal, then immediately changed his mind calling him out. Fans spilled out onto the field and the Penetanguishene squad took to the safety of the dressing room. Apparently the umpire reversed his decision back to his original call of the runner being safe after much deliberation. The Penetanguishene players returned to the field only after the umpire coaxed and pleaded with manager Jim Shaw. The Rangers’ Manager did officially launch a protest however it wasn’t needed as the Rangers held on to win by a score of 10-9.

A personal anecdote that I can relate came from my father Jim Bald who told me about Game 2 when I was a youngster that while the Chatham team was taking their pre-game infield, he said to Phil Marchildon: "Recognize the shortstop?" Phil apparently replied: "Why should I know him?" My dad said to him: "You should, he carried your bags in for you yesterday at the hotel." True story!

Anyhow game three in Guelph proved to be interesting to say the least. Phil fanned 18 as well as a couple more in the 10th inning while his counterpart Earl "Flat" Chase countered with 12 strikeouts. With the Chatham squad leading 3-2 in the Rangers latter half of the eleventh inning, the umpires called the game due to chilly weather, dark skies and lack of sunlight. Chatham had scored their go-ahead run in the top of the eleventh on a squeeze play but with darkness falling fast they elected to go for more thus prolonging the game to such an extent that there was not enough light for the Rangers' to complete their half of he inning The game was called with Penetanguishene with only one out. . The score had to revert back to the previous inning, thus the game ended in a 2-2 tie.

Here is the box score of that controversial game:

The box score:

Chatham	A.	B.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
L. Harding, cf.	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
Turrell, 3b.	5	1	1	0	1	1	1
W. Harding, 1b.	4	0	1	11	0	2	2
Chase, p.	4	0	1	1	8	0	0
Talbot, 2b.	5	1	0	2	2	0	0
Washington, c.	3	0	1	12	0	1	1
Tabron, ss.	3	0	0	2	0	1	1
Robins, lf.	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
Olbey, rf.	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gouyladd, rf.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	35	2	4	30	11	5	5

Penetang	A.	B.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
J. Bald, 1b.	4	1	1	12	0	0	0
M. Bald, 2b.	5	0	0	0	4	0	0
Devilliers, c.	5	0	0	15	2	2	2
Crippen, ss.	5	0	2	0	2	0	0
Marchildon, p.	5	1	2	1	4	0	0
McCuaig, lf.	5	0	1	0	0	1	1
Spearn, rf.	5	0	1	1	0	1	1
Shephard, 3b.	3	0	0	1	1	0	0
Hale, c.	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	40	2	7	30	13	4	4

Score by innings:

Chatham	100	001	000	0-2	4	5
Penetang	001	000	010	0-2	7	4

Summary: Stolen bases—L. Harding 2, Washington, M. Bald, Crippen. Struckout—By Marchildon 18, by Chase 12. Bases on balls—Off Marchildon 6, off Chase 3. Runs batted in — Chase, Washington, Crippen. Earned runs—Chatham 1, Penetang 0. Left on bases—Chatham 9, Penetang 11. Passed ball—Washington. Umpires—Almas and Hogan. Time of game—3.09.

So, game three had to be replayed in Guelph. By now Phil Marchildon had a sore, tired arm and was worn down. He started but was hit hard and had to be replaced by Hal Crippin who was somewhat effective but the damage was done. The Rangers eventually succumbed to the Chatham Coloured All-Stars 13-7 and their long ride was over.

All in all it was a close, hard-fought series as two of the games went to extra innings and the other was won in the ninth. Those are pretty good indicators of just how thrilling this series must have been with both teams more than evenly matched

Here is the box score of that championship game:

CHATHAM						
	A.B.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
L. Harding, cf	4	3	4	2	0	1
Terrell, 3b	5	2	1	1	1	1
W. Harding, 1b	6	1	1	9	0	1
Chase, ss	6	3	3	2	0	1
Talbot, 2b	5	1	0	0	4	0
Washington, c	5	0	3	6	1	0
Tabron, p, ss	6	0	0	4	3	0
Robins, lf	3	2	0	2	0	0
Ladd, rf	5	1	3	1	0	0
Totals	45	13	15	27	9	1

PENETANG						
	A.B.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
J. Bald, 1b	4	1	2	4	1	0
M. Bald, 2b	3	1	1	3	0	0
Devlin, c	3	1	1	14	0	0
Marchildon, p, 3b	5	2	1	0	3	0
McCuaig, lf	4	0	0	0	0	0
Shppard, 3b, ss	4	0	0	1	1	0
Sparr, rf	4	0	0	2	0	0
Hale, cf	4	0	0	3	1	0
Totals	34	7	5	27	7	0

Score by innings:
Chatham 3-4-0-10-00-1-35
Penetang 4-0-0-0-2-100-7-5

Summary— Three base hit—Chase; Two base hits—Washington two. Stolen bases—L. Harding, three Terrell, Chase three, Marchildon McCuaig. Double plays—Hale to M Bald, Talbot to Tabron to W. Harding. Runs and hits—Off Tabron 2 runs and one hit in 9 innings; off Chase, five runs and four hits in nine innings, off Marchildon, six runs and nine hits in five innings.

. There was a well-deserved gala reception for the Penetanguishene Spencer Rangers on their return from Chatham. Dignitaries from the town and the County heaped praise on these young men for a job well done. The members of the ball club were each presented with leather jackets and the recognized heroes were given a royal salute.

Phil Marchildon had earned a reputation as being one of the best pitchers in the county, even the province and the country for that matter. Penetanguishene manager Jim Shaw was a good friend of Dan Howley, who happened to be the manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs baseball club of the International League. They gave the Babe a tryout as they wanted to see what he could do playing against teams of higher calibre. They even got him a job with Creighton Mines just outside of Sudbury, where he starred for the local team. He earned a second tryout with the Leafs and eventually a signed a contract with them. He was sent to Cornwall of the Canadian -American League where he

dominated and soon returned to the Maple Leafs. Phil pitched well enough in the International League that the Philadelphia A's of the American League purchased his contract and Phil was suiting up for the big league club managed & owned by the legendary Cornelius McGuillicuddy, better known as Connie Mack. Phil went on to have a most interesting and successful professional career that was interrupted and eventually ended by the Second World War. Here is a photo of the Babe in action with the A's.



Though the Penetanguishene Spencer Rangers didn't win the Ontario Championship as they had set out to do, they captured the hearts of a community with their skill and success. They played an entertaining and highly competitive brand of baseball. People still talk about that team today. I recently had a conversation with a gentleman visiting the Penetanguishene Hall of Fame and while pointing to the plaque on the wall, he talked about that team as if it was yesterday. He couldn't find enough superlatives while

commenting about the players on that team. They were indeed, and to some still today, the “Toast of the Town”.



Back Row-L-R-Jimmy Bald, Phil Marchildon, Chuck Sheppard, Harold Crippin.

Middle row-L-R-Dan McCuaig, Harry Hale, Bob Crippin, Gerry Barbour, Cy Richardson

Front Row L-R-Walter Spearn (Secretary), Fred Devillers, Manager Jim Shaw, Coach Ivan Flynn, Peg Spearn, Marius Bald

Sitting Front- Batboy Jack Spearn

I would like to thank The Chatham Sports Hall of Fame for their cooperation as they were gracious in providing some valuable information especially concerning that final series.

Certainly it goes without saying that Gerry Barbour, who incidentally is the last living member of the Penetanguishene Spencer Rangers, was instrumental with his wealth of information. He certainly was a wonderful host, and on top of being most interesting, he was more than informative one could ever imagine. It was great that Gerry took the time to sit down with me to “talk a little baseball.” I think he enjoyed our chat but not near as much as I did.

