

Carmen Bush Signature Club

2011 Inductee

DAVE LAUZON



Dave (centre) with his sons Joseph (left) and Dylan.

DURING THE FINAL MONTHS of Dave Lauzon's life, as he battled in the end stages of cancer, he often sought comfort in a song written and performed by Van Morrison called *Philosopher's Stone*:

Up in the morning, up in the morning
Out on the job
Well you've got me searching for
Searching for, the philosopher's stone
Even my best friends, even my best friends they don't know
That my job is turning lead into gold
When you hear that engine, when you hear that engine drone
I'm on the road again and I'm searching for the philosopher's stone

In the legend of the philosopher's stone, the alchemist works his secret arts on lead, transforming the base metal into gold. In the spirit of this metaphor, we pay homage to Dave, this year's inductee into the Club he co-founded in 2002 to honour Toronto Baseball's greats.

'The time will come when we must inevitably pass the game on to the next generation of volunteers,' relates Etobicoke Baseball President, Tony Di Rollo, 'and our hope is that we've left baseball in better shape than when we started. With his dedication, perseverance and commitment, over 23 years, Dave was a man who did just that. I am very proud and privileged to have undertaken some of this journey with him.'

Dave was a modern day alchemist, with one key difference: his methods were not secret. With his unique mix of spirited toughness and genuine kindness, as a coach, he inspired ballplayers to work toward their goals. As an executive, Dave used these same traits in his role as a facilitator and consensus-builder while promoting many local and city-wide initiatives.

'In the years that I served with Dave,' writes former TBA Vice-President Mark Chiasson, 'he proved to be a terrific leader and a great administrator. While he had many qualities that made him a natural leader, it was the balance that he managed to achieve between enthusiasm and patience that really made him special. Not only was he blessed with a huge amount of both, he also had the ability to know when to apply either to the maximum benefit.'

Dave began coaching in Bloordale's house league in 1989, a few years after he and his wife Gloria, with their two sons, Dylan and Joseph, relocated from Parkdale to Etobicoke. 'I needed baseball because I missed the city,' recalled Dave in a 2004

interview. 'I missed the theatre and the movies, music and sports. The suburbs [seemed] void of life and coaching baseball was my resurrection.'

Predominantly playing out of Millwood Park at the corner of Bloor Street West and Millwood Road in west-end Etobicoke, his sons, and many other young men who were lucky enough to play for the house league and rep teams Dave fielded during the ensuing two decades, will remember his traits. He would run pre-game infield



Back row from left: L.Robinson, B.Buchberger, T.Loran, A.Bradley, R.Hurst, ???, Dave Lauzon. Front left: Dylan Lauzon, J.Robinson, M.Gilbert, R.Kulp.

on witnessing other coaches yelling instructions to players during play and would ask something like: 'Maybe that first-baseman would have had a better chance at the grounder if he was looking at the ball instead of the coach?' He wasn't the yelling kind, and rarely lost his cool (except for that one time, which his wife Gloria never quite let him forget, when he tossed his hat high into the air during an exceptionally frustrating game).

Dave religiously attended the annual Best Ever Coaches' Clinics and enjoyed implementing the tools and techniques he picked-up there. He also learned a great deal about teaching skills to kids from former pro ballplayer, instructor and fellow Signature Club inductee (2003), Nick Rico. Both men shared an appreciation for teaching fundamentals. But perhaps they struck an even deeper chord with their passion for volunteer-operated community baseball, and the emphasis on character building. Rico loves to recount how Carmen Bush taught life through baseball, and Dave continued that tradition.

If you ask Lauzon's players about him, it doesn't take long for some key themes to emerge. Passionate. Great instructor. Dave believed in us. Transformational.

with a bat in his right hand, baseball glove in his left, and launch long flies to his outfielders, then pepper infielders with grounders—perhaps to keep his catcher free to warm-up the pitcher in the bullpen. During games he would invariably be heard encouraging his players from the dugout or third base coach's box: 'Let's see your Sunday best! Sunday best!'

Dave would often comment

Knowledgeable. Generous. Confidence-builder. Quick-witted. Fun. Meaningful rewards. Integrity.

'When you stepped on the field under Dave's leadership,' recalls former Bloordale house league player and coach Robert Hurst, 'you became a better player. It was almost magical, really, the way he could transform average players into stars. Dave was a great instructor, but this only accounted for a small part of his success. More importantly, Dave instilled confidence in all his players. He believed in us, and helped us to believe in ourselves. Dave's wonderful passion for the game of baseball rubbed off on all his players. When you played for Dave you couldn't help coming to the diamond excited, confident, and ready to give it your best. We wanted nothing more than to play with the same passion on the field as Dave showed from the dugout. He helped create a love for the game of baseball in me that will never die.'



Nick Rico, holding his Signature Club induction plaque, and Dave Lauzon at the 2003 TBA Annual General Meeting in Etobicoke. Dave later presented a signed copy of this photo to Nick. His inscription reads: 'To my mentor.'

After his beginnings at Bloordale, Dave went on to coach at Martingrove and for the Etobicoke Titans and Rangers programs. In 2010, what proved to be his final season, he shared the dugout with his sons, coaching the Rangers minor bantams.

Lauzon's volunteer work as an executive also began at Bloordale. After serving as their rep convenor in 1998, Dave was elected President of the Etobicoke Baseball Association the following season. A story Dave told about his university days gives us some insight into his ability to voice and stand up for causes he cared about: 'There was a strike going on ...and the students planned a one-day strike in support. My politics professor knowingly scheduled a test on the same day ...I stood up in front of the class and questioned the professor. Everyone was in shock. I was disputing the fact that this was a class on communism and socialism and that we were having a test (and class for that matter) when folks were striking on university grounds ...[however], I've changed in my old age ...I now like being a facilitator.'

As President of the EBA from 1999 to 2001, Dave amalgamated the five triple-A-aspiring member leagues of Bloordale, Kingsway (now Royal York), Martingrove,

Queensway and Rexdale under a new banner called the Etobicoke Titans (now Etobicoke Rangers). In his view, it wasn't fair that Etobicoke's five leagues had to compete among themselves before gaining entry into the Toronto playoffs. He also felt that, having been relieved of the pressure for each association to produce a triple-A squad, leagues could bring their focus back to where it should be: to the grassroots level of the house leagues, which Dave felt was the lifeblood of any sustainable community baseball program. Dave was also proud of launching the website and publishing the association's player and coaches' handbooks during his tenure as EBA chief.

In 2002, with the guidance of long-time Secretary-Treasurer and Life Member, Howie Birnie, Dave Lauzon was elected the 12th President of the Toronto Baseball Association. And during his six years at the helm he continued his envisioned reorganization which began in Etobicoke. The TBA website was officially launched on November 4, 2003. In an email dated August 3, 2005, Dave wrote: 'It definitely looks like our site is being used—especially the schedules and standings.' Indeed, total site hits at that time stood at 32,932, including nearly 19,000 visits to the schedule page and over 16,000 for standings.

By the end of Dave's presidency in 2007, he had realized the reorganization of Toronto's baseball community into five strong triple-A regions representing over 20 local associations. He was proud of his initiatives to implement online registration and scheduling. A good number of baseball people may still be enjoying their morning coffee with Dave's TBA mugs. He was also pleased to publish and distribute his annual TBA coaches' manuals to every rep coach in the city. The manuals contained the updated Constitution, Dave's custom-made maps to every Toronto ball field, as well as contact info for executives, local associations and coaches. They also contained perhaps his proudest showcase: an article featuring the

year's inductee into the Carmen Bush Signature Club.

Presidents of the TBA

W. J. Smith	1913 (founder)
Hank Sinclair	
Bert Holman	
Jack Pullman	1964 – 1968
Frank Cornack	1969 – 1971
Roy Fleming	1972 – 1973
Jerry Loeb	1974 – 1977
Howie Birnie	1977 – 1985
Tom Carter	1986
Tom Lawson	1987 – 1996
Wayne Peters	1997 – 2001
Dave Lauzon	2002 – 2007
Dave Black	2008 – present

After stepping down as President, Lauzon continued to devote his time to coaching.

'Dave's second love, after his family, was coaching,' relates Tony Di Rollo.

'While Dave was the finest president we could ask for,' writes Mark Chiasson, 'his happiest times were on the baseball field. I believe he saw himself as a coach first and an administrator

or executive second.'

'It's my job,' Dave might sing, 'being a philosopher, getting out and working, and doing my very best; I'm turning lead into gold.'

Toronto Baseball is proud to honour our late coach, Past-President, and friend: Dave Lauzon, the 2011 Carmen Bush Signature Club inductee.



The 2010 Etobicoke Rangers minor bantams. Dave is pictured in the back row, fourth from the right. His sons, Dylan and Joseph are back row, first and second from the left.



David and Gloria Lauzon.

A TOAST TO DAVE

A branch has fallen from the tree in late summer.
Sunday's best has turned the page,
But lingers
As if I'd seen him yesterday.

An open door,
An open heart,
Loving,
Rising above it all.

All the good he's done for me,
Each gift a living proverb,
To pass along in time.
And with the finest wine,
Served now through our lives,
His legacy we honour.

For David Lauzon (May 24, 1952 – September 7, 2011)



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