



### **September 11, 1956 - February 10, 2014.**

At Martingrove Baseball only a few remain who knew him and thus feel the loss of his passing. Doug moved away sixteen years ago and time moves on. But the things that Doug achieved deserve remembering and the legacy he left behind was a worthy one.

Some 28 years ago (the memory blurs) I think I met Doug McClure at a baseball try out... for 8 year olds. Some all star thing Martingrove was trying to get going for Teeballers. Knowing what followed, it seems appropriate that it was that way. Our sons Matthew and Kevin were in the process of trying out. It was a very hot day in 1986 and we fathers got to talking about the level of knowledge or lack thereof of the coach. Rather ungracious of us I know but it resonated with me that this fellow with whom I was sharing a shaded spot of grass seemed to really know the game and was very assured of his opinions. I tried my best to keep up in that department but came away feeling out matched.

Jump ahead almost a year and at the beginning of the new season's first practice I hear my name being called out and I was congratulated for volunteering as a coach. Imagine my surprise as I had not uttered a word! It seems Doug having jumped in to help, saw to it that I shared in whatever fate was to befall him. And so began a seven year run of coaching with (and learning from) Doug.

And a great time was had by all! From that friendly push we went on together to become strongly involved over the ensuing years in team building, skill development and doling out life instruction to the kids who came onto and off our teams. Along the way I think I learned a lot about the game of ball from Doug and what huge influences coaches can have on the lives of our youth.

Doug was vibrant, dedicated and a compulsive force to deal with. Taking lessons from his Shop Stewart days Doug was no shrinking violet and dealt with the challenges on and off the field in running a successful team. But throughout it all I do not recall a sharp harangue or put down of any player he coached. He believed strongly in instruction and our practices were rigorous and focused on correcting the mistakes. Game time was for the kids. Doug excelled at strategy and when given a choice to advance or play it safe Doug clearly found it better to go for it. This led to many exhilarating moments and a few 'agony of defeat' situations along the way. There were not too many dull moments around Doug. But his way had a very positive effect on the team and under his watch he took a core group of players and

melded a worthy team winning one TBA title and two runner ups. We also managed to win several OBA tournaments most notably Cambridge at Mosquito and Cobourg at Peewee.

Doug also served on the Executive first in his capacity of VP, TeeBall (now Junior Baseball) and then as VP, Senior Ball and GM –Rep. As good as Doug was as a coach he was in my opinion even better at setting a path for his dearly beloved Rep teams. Doug was a visionary and a tireless worker not comfortable in the boardrooms but at home on the field. He believed that the environment was right to build strong winning teams at Martingrove no matter how stacked the other leagues were. To put some numbers to it we grew in size at our heyday to just under 1200 players while in Brampton they had over 5000. A typical try out for peewee rep at Martingrove was about 12-15. At Brampton they created 3 teams of about equal talent from try outs that were in the hundreds.

Doug put in place a process methodically, and dare I say at times furtively, seeking out knowledgeable coaches, getting better fields and thereby drawing talented players to Martingrove. Wherever Doug went his “Bible” went with him. He had a 3-ring binder that grew and grew in size. Literally I came to know that I could ask him anything relating to baseball - our teams, the competitions, contact lists, OBA tournaments, hidden talent assessments and he would call upon his prodigious memory or dive into that binder and pull out what I needed. He had a capability to take in all that was going on and create advantages. Many were the nights I got a late call to discuss some issue or strategy.

He dreamed big. Though I never heard him say it I think ‘dream big or go home’ was his motto. He contacted the Florida Marlins and got their approval (and a very lukewarm letter of financial support) to wear their colours. Doug began planning for the change and was disappointed when his idea got over turned. Our league began winning championships and kept on doing so for a long time. Winning became second nature for all our teams. Our EBA record was outstanding, so much so that rules were voted in, some say unfairly, to stem our success (locally known as “Martingrove” rule). Our success did become our Achilles heel. Leaders failed to look at root causes for the imbalance and focused on the wrong aspects of the problem. Doug understandably found it hard to be the lightning rod. He saw that a time for reorganization was at hand and made calls for a new approach to Rep play.

I and many others after Doug’s departure came to accept the need and iron out a new approach. Today through the EBA we have Regional play under the Etobicoke Rangers banner, as one of the five regions across the TBA.

A person who guided by strong convictions will often attract and indeed create controversy. His tutelage yielded unheard of success for Martingrove. In 1996 a talented team of Peewees having won the Provincials in 1995 went on to win the Ontario Eliminations and were crowned National Champions going 62-1 that year. Up to that point no other TBA team had won a National Championship. One would think a team with such an outstanding record would be a shoo-in to continue on in the same vein at Bantam. But no team is without its politics and Doug became embroiled in them and ultimately this led to the break up of the team and much acrimony. While the years thereafter were not as kind to Martingrove the system of what it takes to build a champion was indeed learned and hopefully passed on. Doug built an enduring legacy for Mighty, Mighty Martingrove.

Submitted by Jim Horton, Coach and Life Member