Larry Bodashefsky - HoF - 1997

It's now been almost ten years since I was inducted into the I.S.C. Hall of Fame in Victoria in 1997. Before my memory fades I better write something down. I am not comfortable writing about myself but nobody else stepped up to the plate.

I started playing fast pitch softball at age 11 in an Oshawa Park League and immediately fell in love with the game. I soon figured out that speed was my game. Bunting and base running were how I could best contribute offensively. As a "lefty" you are somewhat limited to defensive positions. After playing first base and catcher it became obvious that I was an outfielder. By the time I was playing junior fastball I was a fulltime outfielder and I thoroughly enjoyed the challenges of the position. Unfortunately in my mid teens I fell equally in love with golf and therefore split my energy between two sports.

In 1977, after completing my junior career I began to realize I had potential. The Oshawa Tonys Senior "A" Fastball Team that I idolized wanted to sign me in 1978. I was unsure about joining such an elite ball club and elected to gain more experience by playing a year of senior "B" fastball for Oshawa. In hindsight this decision was critical in my development and confidence. Our "RH Cabinets" team won the provincial title.

Oshawa was a fastball hub (the City & District Fastball League still exists today) and I grew up watching powerful fastball teams like the Oshawa Tonys & Gale Lumber, perennial senior "B" champions. My idol was and still is Pete Landers ("hook"). The big left-handed pitcher from South Porcupine Ontario is one of only three softball players in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame. In my first senior "A" year I joined the Oshawa Motor Carriers (formerly Oshawa Tonys) and had the honour of playing with Pete Landers for three years. "Hook" was as great a person & team player as he was a pitcher and today still gives back to the game.

Playing Senior "A" Fastball in the Ontario Fastball League meant one thing, commitment to league first. A 40-60 game schedule on weeknights was the norm. Later in my career when playing for Owen Sound it took me over 3 hours to get to a home game. As a ball player I had the opportunity to play for three of the most solid franchises in Ontario fastball history. They were Oshawa, Newmarket, and Owen Sound. Each team had a great left-handed pitcher, Pete Landers, Bill Lunney, and Brad Underwood respectively. I believe I am the only ball player fortunate enough

to have played on a club team with these three great Ontario lefties. As we all know without pitching & great ball organizations it is impossible to be successful. To be successful in anything you need timing and a little luck and I have certainly had my share of it.

In 1977, the Oshawa Tonys featuring Pete Landers represented the O.F.L. in the I.S.C. Tournament in Phoenix Arizona finishing third. I remember hearing stories of this tremendous tournament in the United States around the ballpark in Oshawa. I believe the Oshawa Tonys high finish that year started the drive for an Ontario team to win the I.S.C. Tournament. In my era (1978-1990) ball teams continued to pursue the I.S.C. dream. I believe Ontario teams had three third and one second place finish before the Toronto Gators captured the 1993 & 1995 I.S.C. World Tournament.

Nobody wanted to win and promote the I.S.C. World Tournament more than Glen Verge of Newmarket and Bill Simpson of Owen Sound. I owe so much to Glen Verge. He coached and or managed me in Newmarket, Oshawa, and Owen Sound. He created an atmosphere that demanded a commitment to excellence. He led by example with his hard work and love for the game. Glen drove and maintained our bus in Newmarket, recruited and signed players, raised money, donated money. You name it he did it. I wanted to win more for Glen than for myself. Once I asked Glen if I could miss a tournament to be my brother's best man in his wedding. Glen replied, "Death in the family is the only acceptable reason". My wife still reminds me of a few weddings I missed.

I played in my first I.S.C. Tournament in 1979 in Bakersfield California for the Oshawa Motor Carriers. From that point on I had only two goals in mind, going back to the I.S.C. World Tournament as many times as possible and of course a Canadian Fastball Championship. In Ontario however, a return trip was never a guarantee. An example of the strong parity in Ontario fastball was that from 1978-1987 (a 10 year span) eight different teams were Ontario champions. Another route to the I.S.C. Tournament was through a qualifying tournament, but there was always Brad Underwood to go through. So I learned to cherish every trip to the tournament.

Fortunately for me Owen Sound picked me up in 1983, 1984, and 1987 while I was playing for a different club team. By 1988 Brad Underwood in Owen Sound was the "ticket" and players mysteriously gravitated to the shores of Georgian Bay. Dynasties like Owen Sound and the Toronto Gators developed in search of I.S.C. glory. Good or bad for softball? You decide. Anyway, I was very blessed throughout my career and played in a total of seven I.S.C. Tournaments. In 1990, while

playing for Owen Sound, we captured the Canadian Fastball Championship. For the record, I'd like to recognize a teammate from Cobourg Ontario whom I played a number of years with. Al Burnham ("iceman") stayed under the radar wherever he played but was by far the best R.B.I.-man I've had the pleasure of competing with.

My last at bat in the I.S.C. Tournament was in 1990 in Victoria against Michael White & his Aurora Coors Silver Bullets from Aurora Illinois. After whining about a 3-1 pitch at my shoulders, I hit my patented two-hopper to second for an infield single. Career over.

I played as hard as I could for as long as I could at the level I demanded of myself. I am proud that I played for the love of the game. But looking back, what I really enjoyed was the "journey". Traveling, meeting people, competing, and the life long bonds and friendships that developed that only a ball player could understand.

Fast pitch softball survives solely because of people who never step on the field. The executives, managers, sponsors, fund-raisers, fans, and anyone else behind the scenes that unselfishly promote our game are the real hall of famers. I took from the game; these people give to the game.

Note: Larry Bodashefsky was the first Canadian player to be inducted into the ISC Hall of Fame. He was named ISC All-World 4 times in 1979, 1984, 1987 and 1988.