

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

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JACK BELLEGHAM:

Friend of the Mississauga Indians
Past President — Miss. Hockey League
(’49-’51)

First Member in the MHL Hall of Fame

ME: You were born in Peterborough, Ontario, and raised on a ranch in Saskatchewan, and came here to live in 1929. What memories do you have of your childhood days?

MR. BELLEGHAM: Very pleasant ones of my 12 years in Saskatchewan. My mother died in 1918 while my father was still overseas. Just shortly before the end of the war. I had a cousin, a doctor, drowned when his ship was torpedoed 70 miles off the coast of Ireland. When my father came back from overseas, my Aunt and Uncle out west asked my father if they could look after me — kind of to take the place of my cousin. So I spent the time from when I was nine until I was 21 out there with them. I have a deep love for Saskatchewan. I’ve been out there quite a few times, and I have shown my family where I was raised and the school I went to. It’s still there — Concord School S.D. 1971 — I can still remember it. It was an 8 grade school and I taught school there for a month. I had passed my entrance and was in Grade 9. The teacher they had hired was from the East coast somewhere and she couldn’t get there right away. My uncle was on the school board and he said, “Well, Jack is the most eligible to do it.” So I taught school for a month, and that was long enough, because I went to school with all those youngsters. That was really an experience; however, I got along all right. Being on the ranch, I was thrown off many a bronco. But the only major injury I ever got in my life was a broken left ankle. I had a very fast quarter horse and I had him entered in the field day races, which was a half mile run. He was a cinch to win it, because he could run like the wind. The morning of the race, the butcher telephoned for a baby beef, so my uncle told me to go up and cut one from the herd. We had 1,800 acres fenced and I had to ride a mile and a half to get to the cattle. When I spotted them, I took off at a full pace and the horse stepped in a badger hole and somersaulted right over top of me and knocked me out. When I came to, my foot was turned right up: it had pulled all the tendons and broken all the bones in my ankle. But the

horse was standing there with the reins hanging over my head. I had spurs on and I had to cut the spur strap off because my ankle was swollen so badly. I was laid up for six months.

ME: I understand you have some tremendously interesting stories about the Mississauga Indians. Will you divulge this repertoire of information for us?

MR. BELLEGHAM: That would take simply hours, but I’ll give you a capsule version of it. My father’s family and myself have had a great deal to do with the sub tribe of the Chippewas and Ojibways, known as the Mississauga Indians. Indians. My great-grandfather came from Bellingham, Northumberland County, England, about 1847 and settled in and helped name Northumberland County in Ontario. He along with the Irish Kellys logged the whole area from Cobourg to Coboconk in the 1870s. He gave land and lumber to the Hiawatha Indians in 1870 to build a church on the north shore of Rice Lake, known as the Hiawatha Reserve. In the early days my father and Uncle Herb were pretty fair baseball pitchers and my father pitched for the Hiawathas and my uncle Herb for the Alnicks. Needless to say, they became the heroes for the games which took place every Sunday afternoon. When we used to go fishing, we always had a Mississauga Indian to guide us, and we always caught lots of fish. Chief Cowie of Hiawathas always welcomed us at his camp. Not too long ago, I walked into the Indian Craft Store in Alderville on Highway 45 and the proprietor, a Mississauga Indian, by the name of Loukes, recognized me because of my resemblance to my father. One thing I have learned is that the average Mississauga Indian is very

honorable and I am proud to have their acquaintance.

ME: Dusty Miller, Alf McCallum, yourself along with others founded the Toronto Township Hockey League in 1946, and you were the second president for a two-year term in the late ’40s. What is uppermost in your mind about those baby years of the now full grown MHL?

MR. B: Well, it was a tremendous undertaking for all of us back then. We managed to get teams organized and outdoor rinks in all the communities in the league. The ice problem was an awful headache, and Alf McCallum, the first president, traveled a lot of miles to get artificial ice in Georgetown and Toronto for playoffs. It was during this

struggle for ice that a group of enthusiastic men took the bull by the horns and formed a shareholding company and built Dixie Arena. That building will stand as the grand old matriarch of hockey in Mississauga, and I was the first president to operate in it. Due to the dedication and love for hockey, our succeeding presidents and officers have built the league into one of the finest institutions in the world. I watch and admire the progress the league is making, because of the Mississaugans I have been associated with and the satisfaction I have had out of seeing our hockey boys grow into fine citizens and also some fine hockey players in the NHL and WHA. I have loved every moment I put into it.

ME: For the past seven years, you have been timekeeper for the Dixie Beehives Junior B team. After many years of saying you were going to retire from hockey, you are finally going to take the BIG STEP. What thought was behind this decision?

MR. B: Old age mostly — no, after 27 seasons, it’s about time. But Howard Pallett says, “I’ll believe it when I see it. I’ll give you a phone call in September, Jack, you’ll be there.” I said, “Well, I’ve got news for you.” He just wouldn’t believe me. So put it down in black and white, Kathee. It’s not that I want to, but I am having trouble with my eyes, so I thought it was about time. My son-in-law, Bill Reid, has helped me for years, and he is capable of taking over for me and he loves it, too. I’ll still be around to have a look see — my hockey heart will always be in Dixie.

ME: How satisfying have your years with hockey been?

MR. B: Absolutely perfect. When I was young and first starting out in hockey and taking on the presidency, I admit, there were times I was thoroughly frightened by what I had got myself into. But it has been a great experience I wouldn’t want to have missed: I am proud of the fact that I was first to be put in the Hockey Hall of Fame, and through being president of the hockey league, I was on the Recreation Commission. It all totals up to being an enjoyable part of my life.

ME: You also coached softball in the township. When and how much involvement was there in this undertaking?

MR. B: I had a bantam team in 1948, when we first had organized sports here, and we won the Bantam B Championship that year. I was on the executive of the Cooksville Association in the Toronto Township Softball and

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