

(C.M) His name?

(P.W) Bernard Robbins.

0:03:33.1

(J.D) Back to Stanton and Hyle. So, do you know if sports were important to them growing up? Did they play any other sports besides baseball?

(P.W.) They played all kinds of sports.

(C.M) On the mill pond they played hockey... I'm not sure that they had hockey sticks and pucks like we do today.... In Buxton, they always played ball in the summer....Sometimes they'd gather and play cards at their mother's house.

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(J.D) Did they watch sports, or listen to sports on the radio?

(P.W) They listened to all the games... on radio.

(C.M) Especially the Detroit Tigers.

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(J.D) So do you know how they started playing with the Chatham Coloured All-Stars?

(C.M) This is just in my opinion because, I can't answer that specifically, but I know in that era ...Chatham would be playing somewhere on a park, and Buxton playing somewhere back here in the cemetery, which was not filled with graves like they are now....I imagine they might have played like families and families like they do now.... I don't know who would have had a car, at that time, where they would drive back and forth to Chatham and watch one another play and then they decided to have one big ball team, made up of all just coloured ball team.

(P.W) A lot of them didn't have cars, and they got around. [laughs]

(C.M) I always wondered, what was the real story.

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(J.D) So, do you know what positions they played?

(P.W) Well, Stanton was always the pitcher. He...was their number one pitcher. Hyle played out in the field, centre field -- I don't know which field he played in, but he played.

(J.D) Can you tell me more about what you were talking about... he was a lefty?

(P.W) Yeah, Stanton. There was a catcher that always liked to, you know, catch with him, but when he'd see that Stanton was coming to the mound, he got an extra pad and put it in his glove, 'cause he said Stanton would burn his hands up if he didn't put that pad in. [laughs]...And he would do that to his sister and them. He'd throw a ball and hit her hat off her head and she'd still be spinnin'. [laughs] ...They were always working out there and she liked to play ball with them. She said he could get that ball and he would land it on anybody that got near him. So he was good with the ball.

(J.D) Oh, so Stanton's sister...

(P.W) Oh yeah, she would play sometimes out there with them. The girls always played ball with the boys... Even my mother, she would be out there too, and she was a left hander, so she would be up there fighting too. The other brothers -- they would have a ball team of their own 'cause there was seven of them.

(J.D) So sports was very important to the family then? Very much a family affair then right? Brought the family together?

(P.W) Yeah.

(C.M) And then at the school, they were always playing ball.

(P.W) Our school is right up the street from us -- the S.S. #13 Raleigh. We had a big yard, they had a big yard, and they all played up there. That's where they got their first.

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(J.D) Do you recall any memorable events or stories about their playing?

(P.W) They got the degree and got the trophy... Uncle Hyle went on, and he lived in Detroit...They had all of the ball teams to come back because they were having something in Chatham. So, they brought him. He was injured -- he worked in an electrical place, and somehow he had a bad accident, and he fell, and he wasn't able to walk anymore. He had a walker, and he was getting around with a walker. When they had this special team to come back to Chatham, they got him and brought him back up and that's when they were given awards in Chatham...I can't remember how many was at that meeting. It was in Chatham.

(J.D) So, it was like sort of a commemoration of the team?

(P.W) Right, that's what it was.

(C.M) I bet, that was during the time of Archie Stirling¹, before he passed.

(C.M) When they played ...with the Toronto Blue Jays -- they didn't play, but they were recognized. But there were only two from the team.²

(J.D) Yeah, back in 1984³ there was a Blue Jays commemoration.

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(J.D) So can you tell me anything about the team itself? What they were like as a team?

(P.W) All, I know is they had fun. They all, they all mingled together.

(C.M) Ross Talbot, I know he was in the chicken trade. He had a farm out in Chatham Township, on the Tenth Concession...It was a hobby -- it was his hobby.

(C.M) Flat Chase... What was he? But Horace, his son.... Horace has a nephew...in Windsor who was a great sportsman ...His last name was Hall.

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(J.D) Did Stanton or Hyle talk about fans or spectators or their reactions?

¹ Archie Stirling, a local business owner and later mayor of Chatham, had been involved with the Ontario Baseball Association (OBA) in Chatham, and he had helped get the Chatham Coloured All-Stars to play in the OBA league in 1933.

² When the Toronto Blue Jays honoured the Chatham Coloured All-Stars in 2002, two of the original team were still living – Sagasta Harding and Don Tabron.

³ It was 2002.

(P.W) I don't know -- they didn't have too much to say when they came home. I never heard them say anything bad about the teams. They would come in and that would be it. They'd tell us what they did. They won. [laughs]

(C.M) The inhabitants of the village, they were always so excited.. "We won!" [laughs]... The inhabitants of Buxton.

(P.W) When they came back and when they did win, they came back into Chatham and they had a big to do with them when they got here. They had something in Chatham for them. It was a happy time -- a big, big, big thing. Buxton won. [laughs]

(J.D) A lot of pride eh?

(P.W) It was. From all people, yeah.

(C.M) Definitely.

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(J.D) So did the two gentlemen, did they talk about what they enjoyed about playing baseball?

(P.W) 'Cause they wanted to. They loved it, and my Uncle Stanton loved ball, he loved the ball, he loved to play ball. And so did Uncle Hyle, they both.. played ball all the time....They loved the sport.

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(J.D) Did they talk about any challenges?

(P.W) if they did, they didn't mention....I mean, if anybody said anything cruel to them they never came home and bragged about it. They might have gotten name calling or I don't know, they never said. They would never say nothing like that. Not to us anyway.

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(J.D) Did they ever talk about travelling with the team?

(P.W) They'd all get in cars and away they'd go. They never talked much about that.

(C.M) In my opinion, that last, that final game, they possibly talked a great deal....You know when they were tied.⁴ They called the game, because they were afraid.

(P.W) They had something to say about that one.

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(J.D) If they were part of the 1934 team, which they were both, did they talk about winning the championship?

(P.W) I guess they were excited 'cause they came home and Chatham had a big to do over when they got here.

⁴ Referring to the third game in the Ontario Baseball Association Intermediate B championship series in October, 1934. The game was stopped by officials who claimed it was getting too dark to continue. Former Chatham players later questioned that call, claiming it was still light enough to finish the game. The game was resumed the next day, and Chatham won 13-7.

(C.M) I was wondering if possibly they wouldn't publish it

[note: edited section – discussion about reports of the game appearing in the local paper at the time]

(C.M) At that time [there was] still daylight, game's ended.. why is it?⁵ And today you can see them go out there on the mound and almost battle. I think they handled it very well.

(P.W) They talked about it.

(C.M) When they came back, well their winning, showed that it was handled...They took care of that situation. What a marvelous way to take care of a situation.

(P.W) It was.

(C.M) But we don't have the cool heads in today's world.

0:25:23.0

(J.D) Okay, so next set of questions focuses on sports and life after the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. So, would you like to share anything about their life after they played with the All-Stars?

(P.W) My uncle got a lot of interviews [about the baseball team] from people who went down to see him 'cause he couldn't travel ... This is Hyle,. Someone from up here went down to interview him in Detroit.

(C.M) But he went to Detroit... he worked somewhere didn't he?

(P.W) In an electric plant.

(C.M) So he worked there until he retired?

(P.W) Well he had to retire because he fell over and he couldn't walk any more.

(C.M) At that time Stanton was dead.

(P.W) Yeah.

(C.M) He didn't last long after playing ball.

(P.W) He was sickly all of his life, but he didn't marry and he stayed here until he did pass.

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Did they encourage others in the family to get involved in sports?

(P.W) Hyle was always after his brothers about it, Uncle Raymond especially. "Pete why don't you go out there and play some ball." Pete had a cigarette in his mouth and get him a drink and he was happy.

(C.M) But he did do something.

(P.W) He did sing with the quartet -- used to go around singing. Oh he'd be out there singing. He would put it away long enough to sing. [laughs]

(C.M) He had a great voice, and a lead voice in the quartet. He sang in the quartet. Uncle Charlie had them going -- they would go different places. There were a couple concerts. They were called the Silver Tone Quartet. Art Brown, a great friend of theirs, was a member of it. They were all cousins. Together, they created their own harmony. They were super. They would sing in the surrounding area....His name was Raymond, I didn't know they called him Pete. They had nicknames for everybody. [laughs] He was an asset to the community as well as the brothers.

⁵ Referring to situation noted in previous note.

(C.M.) Her mother Alma⁶....When I was about 14 my sister and I, we went out to work to get money to go to school. During the time too, Alma and another sister June, and we would go out and pick fruit at Broadwood's Fruit Farm on the number 3 Highway near Cedar Springs. That's where I got to know Alma.

(P.W) That was my Mom.

(C.M) She was really a hard worker.

(P.W) And she died at an early age, 54...

(C.M) I worked out there right in the pears with them.

0:33:18.2

(J.D) So Back to Hyle and Stanton. Do you think sports affected their lives?

(P.W) I'm quite sure it did. 'Cause they would rather eat, I mean, go play ball than to eat.

[discussion about hockey not being as popular in the community]

(C.M) Well, you had to buy a pair of skates.

(P.W) Yeah, you had to buy a pair of skates, that's right [laughs]. And a lot of them didn't have them.

(C.M) We were around borrowing and seeing who had it. And I'm glad that I grew up in that era. We didn't have anything. You didn't have money and you had to make your own fun.... That's what we used to do a lot here in Buxton way back.

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(J.D) Do you know if sports were important in the black community when they were alive?

(C.M) They heard of these games that they were playing and said "oh, well we can do it too"You see in later years they were an incentive, those guys were an incentive to us.

(P.W) A girl's team was formed that's right. My mother, Aunt Jane, my other aunt – all of them played ball.

(C.M) You know they had a ball team 'cause I remember they wore, I called them bloomers...They had a good ball team. And then our ball team formed after that group and we played ball....During the week, it was fun, looked forward to it. Even today now they have Buxton Nationals. The Buxton Nationals is Co-Ed. They have a good team. And then we have Buxton girls play with the girls in Chatham and they play on Tuesday nights...On Labour Day we have families...playing against one another, all cousins, but we'd have a ball. Wow what a good time.

(P.W) Those two names were great around here. Robbins name and the Travis name and the Morris name.

(C.M) Devon Travis that plays for the Toronto Blue Jays? Wayne maintains he's a cousin. Who knows?

0:41:59.1

(J.D) So overall, what do you think was the impact, or the legacy of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars?

(P.W) It made way for other young ones to start playing ball, you know?... For the younger ones, 'cause they got a younger team up there and they played great baseball....Yeah, it really did.

⁶ Referring to Hyle and Stanton Robbins' sister, and Pauline Williams' mother.

(C.M) That's why they have so many teams today that are playing. Brian on Buxton Nationals, he hit, he got on first and next thing ... he had to slide into third. It was a fantastic....I call him Pete.. Pete Rose, "How did you feel the next day, at your age?" I said "Didn't your body feel a little hurt somewhere?" He said "No, that was just part of the game."

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(J.D) Have any members of your family been involved in public commemoration of the All-Stars, for example the 50th anniversary celebration is 1984, or the Blue Jays recognition of them at a game in 2002?

(P.W) There was one time in Chatham, we all went to see Uncle Hyle...They were recognized for that game.

(C.M) And then that trophy... this was individual.

(P.W) That was an individual one for Stanton for his part in the team... It got burned up and he didn't get to keep it. But he wanted us, so every body when they come into the store they could see it.

(C.M) How proud Buxton was of everything.

(J.D) And you mentioned that you were at the Blue Jays commemoration?

(C.M) Yes there was a bus load of us went down...I know Horace represented his dad, Flat [Chase]There was just a feeling of, we come a long way. They did it, they said we could do it too.

(J.D) A feeling of unity sort of?

(C.M) Unity, definitely, positive, heavenly, unity.

(J.D) That's quite a big impact for a team from just a small community like this, eh?

(C.M) Well that's right, and to show how this little community -- well we're all one, we all belong to the big community.

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(J.D) So overall, is this story, the story of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, is it one that you think more should know about?

(P.W) Sure, it should be taught.

(C.M) Definitely... In this day and age, we don't need that ...

(J.D) Negativity right?

(C.M) No, We must be positive, truthfulness. Truth, truth.

(J.D) And this story is definitely a positive one.

(C.M) Yes, definitely, I see this as a very positive one.

(P.W) I do too.

0:52:54.3

(J.D) Do you have anything else you would like to say about Hyle or Stanton or the team at all?

(C.M) Well, I'm very happy and proud to say that I'm so thankful that we had men of that calibre who went out -- I'm thinking of that last game, in times of adversity and so forth, yet they triumphed.

(P.W) Yea, they must have had some rough times though.

(J.D) But they overcame it right?

(C.M) They overcame it.

(P.W) They overcame it, yeah.

(J.D) It might seem small but it had a pretty big impact right?

(P.W) It sure did.

(C.M) Exactly.

(P.W) And especially for this little village.

(C.M) That kind of shows that it's not the bigness...

(J.D) Just for the record, Pauline Williams, you are the niece of Hyle and Stanton Robbins.

(P.W) Hyle and Stanton Robbins.

(J.D) And Cleata Morris you said you were a cousin of the family correct?

(C.M) Yeah, I am a cousin...Your mother Alma's father and Maggie, my grandma's father, were brothers.

(P.W) Yeah, Bernard Robbins. Yeah, we go back.

(C.M) Yeah, we go back. We worked together.

(J.D) Oh very nice. Well thank you two very much for sharing your memories with me, and we'll end it there.

(C.M) Thank you.