

Recognition for a lifetime dedication to baseball



By Sam Smith - Arrow Lakes News
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Nakusp resident, respected broadcast reporter and baseball expert Jay-Dell Mah is going to be inducted into the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame next month.

Mah is being inducted for his contribution to the game of baseball and his practice to keep the baseball history in Canada alive, mainly through his website (www.attheplate.com) which started up 15 years ago. Another part of his acceptance comes from his recently released book which he co-authored entitled *Black Baseball Players in Canada, a Biographical Dictionary, 1881-1960* – a book which can be found in both the Canadian and American Baseball Halls of Fame.

All pleasantries aside, Mah was ecstatic to talk about his induction to the Arrow Lakes News.

“I think what’s happened is they’ve run out of candidates,” Mah says jokingly on the phone. “But truly, it’s a thrill. It’s a real thrill. To get the word and be there at the induction next month ... I’m just excited for next month!”

The official induction is going to take place on Saturday, August 21 in Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Yet, in order for someone such as Mah to go through all the trouble of finding, recording and immortalizing thousands of records, photographs and stories, there has to be an underlying passion driving him forward. But where does that come from?

“Back in the mid ‘50s I was the bat boy for the Lloydminster Meridians,” Mah says, speaking of his hometown in Saskatchewan.

It was during this time that Mah fell in love with the sport. It was also during this time he was slowly progressing up in his own world of baseball. He went from bat boy to writing scores, from writing scores to recording the whole game and before he knew it, he was writing down everything that happened and getting published in the local newspaper.

And because of his affiliation with the team, he carried a box with him everywhere he went and started collecting items from players and the like. Whether it be a glove, baseball, photographs or autographs, he kept on gathering these things.

But as life would have it, he ended up moving on past his life in Lloydminster and heading on out to Calgary.

“From Calgary to Kitchener and then to Toronto. I carried this box wherever I went,” Mah says. “Suddenly it’s the mid ‘90s and I’m about to retire from the CBC. I look over and I see that box entitled *Western Baseball*.”

Opening it up, Mah found all the things he had gathered still in tact.

“This is like 1996 at this point. More than 40 years later,” he says. “So I thought ‘Wouldn’t it be interesting to see if any of these guys are still alive. But how do I check here?’”

With a lack of ideas and, being 1996 and all, he couldn’t just Google the answer. So he did the next best thing – he called the operator.

All he had was a name and an old address from nearly 40 years ago for a place in Charleston, South Carolina. Yet lo and behold, the very same man still lived there, he had merely changed his house number over that time.

“So I called him up out of the blue,” Mah says. “And it was him. He remembered me. We talked for well over an hour. He told me how he was going blind at this point from an old injury.”

And at the end of the conversation, upon catching up on each other’s lives, the man told Mah how he had not just made his day or even his week, he had made his year.

“It was from that I said, ‘I got to do this,’” he says. “So I started thinking about how. And I thought, ‘I should do a book!’”

But publishing a book, especially on the history of obscure baseball players throughout Canada could take years with no result. So he went to the next best thing – the Internet.

“The Internet is perfect,” he says, explaining that he could put stories up now and constantly update as he found more. “I started with six pages, and now there’s the equivalent for many, many hundreds. Maybe even thousands of pages by now.”

And he hasn’t stopped since then. Every day, Mah is updating the website and constantly looking for new content.

He is as happy as can be and he calls the recognition from the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame just the icing on the cake.

“What’s better than to do something you like to do and someone says you’re doing a great job?”

Mah has lived in Nakusp since 2001. He was a radio and broadcast journalist for nearly 40 years with a focus on news reporting.

To learn more about his site, visit him at www.attheplate.com.