

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BASEBALL IN PENNSYLVANIA

1. Student's Name Margaret Brass
2. Subject's Name Richard Lenhart
3. Subject's Background Softball player in a town league.
 - a. date and place of birth Oct. 8, 1973 New Eagle, PA
 - b. Present address [REDACTED]
 - c. Present Occupation Student at Slippery Rock Univ.
4. Date of Interview November 18, 1994
5. General Comments:

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

Date: November 18, 1994
Interviewer: Margaret Brass
Subject: Richard Lenhart

Q: Are you involved in baseball or softball Richard?

A: Yes, I am involved in softball.

Q: How exactly involved in softball?

A: About two years ago I joined a men's softball team back home for the summer. It is a traveling team. We travel around Pittsburgh.

Q: So you're involved around Pittsburgh?

A: Pittsburgh area, suburbs, South Park, Upper St. Clair, and Baldwin.

Q: What position did you play?

A: Mostly played right field, center, and switch off and on with second base.

Q: What first got you interested in playing softball?

A: About three years ago a lot of my friends were involved in it. I was out of sports from high school and I wanted to continue athletics. It sounded like a good idea.

Q: Did you have any type of role model from baseball or did anyone in your family influence you?

A: No, pretty much just my idea to continue athletics. I played baseball in the past when I was younger.

Q: So, this was a form of recreation where you did not need to make any strong commitments?

A: It was recreation, but as a team we were prompt and we took it serious because of competition.

Q: Did you think that was a popular activity in your neighborhood, did it have a large impact on the community?

A: No, not really. There were other leagues in the South Park community. I belonged to the Greater Pittsburgh Men's Athletic Softball League, or something like that.

Q: Did playing softball and practicing take up a lot of your time?

A: No, not really. We usually practiced on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Most people were free at that time. There were only about two or three games a week. Each game was a double header.

Q: What type of people were on your team, were they professionals, young, old?

A: We didn't have any professionals. Our team specifically was a lot of younger kids. We all knew each other before we played. A lot of the other teams in our league

had older guys, they were under business sponsors. We sponsored our own team.

Q: Did you think that people from all walks of life, people who made good money and people who didn't, did they all pretty much get involved in softball?

A: I guess so. I don't know everyone's status, but I'm sure everyone enjoyed the competition and winning.

Q: Do you think that playing softball has influenced you in any way?

A: No, not really. I have been involved in sports. It continued discipline that I had learned earlier.

Q: You said your team traveled around the Pittsburgh area, did you have championships?

A. The first year I played we won the playoff. We finished third in our division. We received a little money for that. The final playoff the team received a trophy. We had everyone sign our softballs as a remembrance for everyone.

Q: Did you play softball anywhere else other than with just the league?

A: I played one year here at Slippery Rock intermurals. I plan on playing again here this year.

Q: Did it seem to you that a lot of people came to your softball games, did you get a lot of support?

A: Yes, I was surprised, a lot of parents and our friends came to support us. It was nice to see people rooting for us.

Q: Do you know if any of the businesses took an active part in promoting membership for the team?

A: No, I don't know. Businesses gave money for uniforms and equipment.

Q: Did you have to raise any money, in sales or did the business pretty much take care of that?

A: For us we sponsored ourselves, we paid for anything in addition. We all went together and bought a real nice button down shirt. We held a raffle for a daily number to raise money to get everyone jackets at the end of the year. We were able to do that. Everyone got a nice windbreaker.

Q: Can you tell me the type of things you did do for practice?

A: We would all individually have batting practice. If they were having trouble we would try to help them. We took fielding practice.

Q: What exactly is fielding practice?

A: Someone would hit balls to the infielders from the batters box. They would practice double plays.

Q: What is a double play?

A: Double play is, for instance, a batter is on first base and the next batter up hits the ball into the infield a ground ball to the short stop, the short stop would want to throw the ball to the second base to get the first runner out. Then the second baseman would throw the ball to first base to get the most recent batter out. That would be a double play. The outfielders would get fly balls hit to them. We would try to perfect our playing. When we did practice we went at it to better ourselves.

Q: How long did your season last?

A: We would start practicing and scrimmaging at the end of April and play until July. The playoffs started immediately and lasted about two weeks.

Q: Did you get any type of trophy or medal from that?

A: Last year we didn't do to good. My first year we did win. We received a trophy which went to the manager. We also received money that helped with the next year's supplies, balls and umpire fees.

Q: Who sponsored the money for the trophy and the cash award, was that a collective effort from all the teams?

A: I believe that league's organization took care of that. They may have used the fees we payed for joining.

Q: You pay dues to that association?

A: You pay an entry fee to get on a team. I believe that it is fifty dollars. that pretty much all you pay to organization.

Q: Who were the umpires, was it an off side job or volunteer?

A: Most off the umpires it was an off side job. They were all certified by the Umpire League. They were pretty much professionals.

Q: Who were your managers, did they volunteer or were they elected?

A: We had one main manager. He had played previously, he took over for the previous one after he left. He was asked and offered the responsibility. If he couldn't make it to a game there was someone to take his place.

Q: Did you have coaches or did you coach yourselves?

A: No, we didn't have coaches. A lot of people had previous experience with baseball.

Q: Did you play on high school fields or were there specific recreational fields?

A: They weren't high school fields, they were recreational

fields, like fair grounds. Our field was at our fair-grounds, there were stables, place for exercise.

Q: Who scheduled your games? Was that done by the manager or the association?

A: The association made a schedule at the beginning of the season then okay it with the managers.

Q: Do you think that playing softball was a way for people to relieve stress and become involved in their community?

A: It definitely helped people relieve stress. One of my teammates in particular. He really got into the game. It helped me relieve stress.

Q: Baseball and softball seem to be the two sports that every community has a league for. Why do you think that America has such a fascination with baseball?

A: That's a tough question. Baseball has always been America's favorite past time. It involves a lot of team work. That's hard to answer.

Q: Why do you enjoy playing it or watching it?

A: You can sit back and watch it. It is great to sit back and relax. It is nice to watch a team play to check out the competition, you can also see everything going on in the game that you can't see while you are playing.

Q: Are there any other comments you would like to make about playing softball? Would you encourage other people to play?

A: I would definitely encourage other people to play. It is a lot of fun, make new friends, meet new people. It is great exercise and it helps you take your mind off things. I would recommend it to other people. Try it out if you never had before.

Q: You said your friends organized the team. Was there a form or application to be filled out?

A: I don't really know. The team was already formed one or two years before I joined. I guess they had to call the organization and see if there was room for team. Then they would pay their entry fee.

Q: Did each team pick a specific name for themselves?

A: Yes, our team was called the Shockers. There are other teams, Hurricanes, Live Bait, a fishing and tackle store who sponsored that team. I don't know where ours came from.

Q: Did you have your own colors too?

A: Our shirts were white with black and red lettering. We tried to wear black bottoms and the same shoes to look like a team.

Q: Do you wear regular shoes to play softball?

A: We are not allowed to wear steel spikes. Some people wear tennis shoes, but most wear rubber spikes.

Q: Is there a difference between a softball and a baseball glove?

A: I believe a softball glove is a little larger. There are differences between infielder and outfielder gloves.

Q: Did you notice a big difference in the league organization between baseball and softball?

A: The baseball league was within the community. Now we go outside the community to play other communities.

End of the interview