

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
BASEBALL IN PENNSYLVANIA

1. Student's Name Doug Mac Gregor
2. Subject's Name Troy Mac Gregor
3. Subject's Background Magee played baseball in minor league, highschool, and some college
  - a. date and place of birth 10/15/71 Union City, Pennsylvania
  - b. Present address [REDACTED]
  - c. Present Occupation Student - majoring in sport management
4. Date of Interview 11/17/94
5. General Comments:

Troy Magee began playing baseball at eight-years of age. He played all through highschool and played some college baseball. In this interview he reveals how he felt about playing baseball, and how he felt when he stopped. He never made it big in baseball, but he shows how common people can still love the game of baseball

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SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

AN ORAL REPORT ON  
BASEBALL IN PENNSYLVANIA  
SUBMITTED TO THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

DR. DIXON

BY  
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My interview with Troy Magee was conducted on November 17, 1994. Troy Magee grew up in Oil City, Pennsylvania which is south of Erie. Magee is very knowledgeable about baseball and still plays when he has a chance.

Doug MacGregor: Where and when did you play baseball?

Troy Magee: Where? I started when I was eight playing in leagues at home, Union city Pennsylvania, continued from then on all through high school and in my first semester of college I tried out for Division one at Mississippi State and then didn't make the team, so in the spring, I transferred to Grove City where I played for a semester. Ever since, now, I'm in softball, but, started with baseball for eight 'til I was eighteen. Played every summer, every season.

MacGregor: Did you feel pressured to play by family or friends?

Magee: No, there was no pressure for me to play. I put any pressure that I got about playing was put on by myself. Because I wanted to be the best, always on a winning team, that's just it. Enjoyed it so much that I always wanted to play, I didn't need to be pressured into baseball.

MacGregor: Was it difficult to make the team or a starting position?

Magee: I didn't experience any difficulty making a team or gaining a starting position I wanted, until, my freshman year in high school, when I went to the varsity competition and originally wanted to play catcher, because I used to play catcher all through little league, but I didn't have the size that I

needed, so, that was the first time I ever got rejected for a position, and then that's when I moved from catching to the infield, to second base, into outfield. I got my share of playing time as a freshman, enough to gain a varsity letter, but I was sharing duties at second base with other team members and in the outfield.

MacGregor: What do you remember most from playing baseball?

Magee: My most memorable, would probably have to be when I was ten, in little league, my little league baseball coach was blind. And he was an extraordinary coach. He was phenomenal We had a complex, a baseball complex in my town, there was three fields and it was all enclosed with a fence, and you could drop this guy off at the front gate and he could go from there anywhere onto any of the three fields he wanted to go, without any help. He knew exactly where everything was. He used to hit us infield practice, that's when I was catching, and I'd be catching and I'd have to hand the ball to him and he'd hold up the ball in one hand, over top of the ball, then swing with the bat and hit the ball out of his hand to anywhere, any position, you know when you hit infield, you started third usually and go around the infield and then you go the outfield and he'd do it in exact order. He could tell if there was an error made, just basically he could tell if there was error made if I didn't have the ball back within a certain amount of time, there was a bad throw or the ball got through. And if he was hitting fly balls to the outfield he knew if they were caught or if they were dropped, he could listen and tell the outfielder, " You



dropped that one" or this and that. And probably one of the most extraordinary things he could do was, he stood in by the batter's box, and someone was doing pitching practice and I'd be catching and he could tell whether the pitch was a ball or strike just by the sound of where you caught the ball. If you had to stretch up and reach for a high pitch, you know he'd say that's high and obviously he could tell if it's low because sometimes it would hit the dirt, but even if it wouldn't if you had to turn your glove the other way, he could tell by the sound of the ball hitting in the glove where it was. And he probably had the biggest impact on my life for baseball. And he is just an extraordinary man

MacGregor: So, he was a good coach even though he was blind?

Magee: Yeah. I played for him for three years, ten, eleven and twelve, and every year we were in first place. He always had the best players, but he knew how to handle the players, and he was just extraordinary, everybody wanted to play for him, because he was so extraordinary, and he was an excellent coach. He knew who to play where, he knew how to split up playing time to keep everybody happy and he just knew what everybody could do. I'm sure he had a lot of help knowing who to pick from the minor league up to the little league, but once he had you, he knew where you should play and what level you should be able to play at. He just made everybody excel.

MacGregor: Do you feel that baseball is the primary sport in your area, and if not what sport do you feel is?

Magee: Yeah, I'd have to say baseball is my primary sport.

It's definitely the sport I put most of my time into. I have to say it's not the most demanding, but it's the one I enjoy the most. Of course I was wrestling when I was in third grade and I wrestled all through high school, and that's a demanding sport, but as far as pure enjoyment, in that aspect, baseball has probably had the biggest impact on my life, because it controlled all my summers all through high school. I did nothing but play baseball when I was growing up, just couldn't get enough of it. Even into when I got out of baseball, I'd be playing softball in the summers, playing in three different leagues, just because I couldn't get enough of the activity. Softball isn't baseball of course, but when you don't have baseball, you want to do something and that's the closest thing I could get. So, definitely, it's a major sport in my area.

MacGregor: And do you think that was the main sport in your area, did everyone enjoy that sport, or was there more football fans than baseball fans?

Magee: I'd have to say when I was younger, baseball was real big because we always had a good All-Star team, like the year I was ten, we sent our team to the state tournament. It kept winning the region and stuff. But, into high school, baseball became sort of a less important sport for spectators, unless of course your parents were going to come but there's not as many players on the baseball team as there is on a football team or it's not as high a spectator sport as wrestling was in my high school. But, the die-hard people were always there. You could see the same people at the games all the time and

they were, it was just like clockwork, you knew they were going to be there. A home or away game, they were just going to be there.

MacGregor: What baseball players did you admire as you were growing up, or who do you admire today?

Magee: Some of the most influential players when I was growing up would of been the Pirates, the teams in seventy-six, seventy-eight when they were real big, with Willie Stargell and Dave Parker, Kent Tekulvie, players like that stick out in my mind just because I became so familiar with them because they were the team, of course I live only two hours from Pittsburgh, so of course I grew up as a Pirates fan. But, I'd say the players now that I respect are the players who seem to play just for the love of the game, but the one that seems to stick out in my mind is obviously Nolan Ryan. He didn't want to quit. His body just couldn't handle it anymore. He didn't give in 'til he was physically unable to give in, and that just proves a love for the game that is a kind of love I had for the game but didn't have the ability to accomplish that. And the Jay Bell's in the league who are probably underpaid for their service, but he really doesn't care, he likes to play so much that he's not really concerned with all the money. Obviously there are players out there who are probably well overpaid, sure they're good but, how good is a person, is a person ever worth six million dollars because he can play baseball? I don't see it as far as an athlete goes but I guess when you look at the whole scheme, baseball is a business. If you got a player



like a Barry Bonds who's making all that money, obviously he is generating enough revenue for a team that he's worth it. It's no different than paying a top executive in a corporation that kind of money for providing a service, and that's what they're doing. But it just seems that it takes away from the fans point of view that he's just out there for the money. And obviously he's out there because he loves the game, because he's put in the time and the effort to make it to the big leagues. But all that money sort of clouds everyone's perception of why he's there.

MacGregor: Do you think that baseball influenced your life in any way?

Magee: Definitely it had an influence in my life. It taught me a great deal about life. And you work as a team, I mean, the biggest lesson was probably when I was in minor league because I was probably one of the better players on the team, but I had a coach who played everybody, no matter what. Everyone got at least two innings of play and everyone had their turn on the bench and that taught me a big lesson, that you got to work together, it's not an individualized game, it's a team game. And being a catcher also taught me a great deal about baseball, because everyone, or I shouldn't say everyone, or people who see baseball automatically think the pitcher is always in control of the game. Well that's the furthest thing, the person in control on that field, when your on defense, when your in the field is the catcher. He's got the biggest job because he's got to keep everyone together, you got to know



what's going on every play, you get the ball every play, just like the pitcher, and if your pitcher's getting riled, you're the one who's got to know about it and be able to call time out and talk to your pitcher. You got to keep his head in the game, so the whole time, you got to keep levelheaded, if something goes against you, you got to keep your cool, because there is not really anybody out there to help you regain yourself. You're sort of secluded from everybody being behind the plate, and you got to be able to control everybody and the pitcher at the same time.

MacGregor: Did anyone from your area make it beyond high school or college in baseball?

Magee: No one in my area did any better than play college ball. I played some college ball. I played a semester at Grove City. There was a player who was a pitcher for us, who graduated two years in front of me who came to Slippery Rock and played at Slippery Rock for a couple of years anyway. And as far as I know no one ever really made it big. There were players that I thought probably could of made it, but for some reason or other, they didn't want to or they didn't want to go to college, they didn't want to put in the time here. Some of the best athletes, best baseball athletes I know, just never had any drive to do anything else. They lived for the baseball game and as far as everything else, they didn't care about everything else, and they were wasted athletes. I've seen a lot of those. I grew up with a lot of kids who were probably wasted athletes just because they didn't really care. All they wanted to do

was play baseball, where as I wanted to play baseball, but I wanted to play so bad that I was willing to do, go that extra step to try to make it and I didn't And that sort of bothers me, but at least I gave it the effort.

MacGregor: Was winning the most important thing or was playing satisfaction enough?

Magee: I'd have to say when I first started playing, it was just playing. But from minor league to little league to pony league I was never on a losing team, so it became important to me to be a winner. But it wasn't the most important thing. I didn't really know how to lose until I got into high school and it was a reality check for me. It made me realize that where as I wasn't always going to be on a winning team, and as much as it bothers you, you still go out there and do it every day to play just because you love the game. So I'd have to say that winning probably wasn't the most important thing but it was just being able to play, but it was a close second.

MacGregor: Were you ever pressured to win or did your coaches just want you to play the best that you could or did they just want to win?

Magee: I'll go right up the line. Minor league, it wasn't about winning, it was about everyone getting their chance to play and when he approached us with the everyone is going to play at least two innings, I sort of had doubts that we were going to win, because I knew that we had players on our team that just weren't good. You know eight-year olds and nine-year olds

but at that time, I knew there were people who weren't as good as me or other players on the team. I'd say that coach made just playing, it didn't matter win or lose, just playing. But as you go up winning becomes more important to coaches. And I guess when I was a junior in high school it became evident to me that the baseball coach was there to win, and he really didn't care about anything else. When I was a sophomore, we had an all conference team and we entered the state tournament, and then lost. We came back the next season and the coach put all this pressure on us, the junior and senior class, who had played with the seniors the year before, my sophomore year, and were very successful. But the coach expected us to perform to the standards from the year before and we just didn't have the all around talent and he made it evident that he didn't really want to be there unless he was winning. And we had a lot of controversy that year with him walking out. He was a bigger kid about winning than any of the players on the team. He just, when things started to go bad, he'd bail out on us. And it sort of hurt because you know you think that a coach is supposed to be there through it all, but he wouldn't be. It hurt us but at the same time it made those of that were older on the team more educated into that area, we had to take control. We either had to run the practice because he'd get mad at us and walk off or wouldn't show up, a couple of days he did that to us, and we'd have to take control. And we did that because we wanted to play. We weren't winning, but we were out there practicing everyday, doing what we had to do, but we couldn't



put the season together. So, there was pressure in my later years in high school from the coach just to win. He didn't really care about just competing, he wasn't a baseball player ever, he didn't know that much about the game. I knew more about the game as a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior than he did, and that was evident. We had an assistant coach who was incredible my sophomore year who was actually the sole reason we got the state tournament like we did. But high school was a definite pressure to win.

MacGregor: Was baseball important in your community and did they show their support by attending high school and other minor league programs?

Magee: Baseball was important. It was one of the few things that the majority of kids in my area participated in in summers. We had an incredible minor league and little league and pony league programs with a great deal of support from the community. They took care of our fields, they ran the concession stands, they did this and that, and they supported us. Every Memorial Day, Every team in the little league and pony league had a game, every team. And you could go to the little league field and it was just mobbed. There were people everywhere, kids everywhere and it's an incredible thing, but then all of a sudden when you make that jump from pony league to high school, the support wasn't there. And I'm sure that has a lot to do with working parents and this and that and the other thing, but it all seems that it all fell off because we have so much success in the younger kids' programs and these teams are all incredible.



But for some reason when they reach the high school level, they either don't like the coach or they just don't want to play anymore. I don't know if it's a burnout, I suppose it's mostly coaching because when you have kids who are competing in minor leagues through pony leagues who are always winning and having these successful all-star teams at the end of the season, you think that when you turn those players over into high school players that the tradition will continue you'll have winning seasons. Maybe not great seasons, but it didn't happen and I think people lost interest because they didn't want to be losers anymore. The good players just didn't want to put in the time if they weren't going to win. So, I probably have to blame a lot of the parents for the way our program was because I was always taught that if you want to do something, no matter what, you do it. Sure I had coaches I didn't like, but they never deterred me from doing something I wanted to do, and I don't think it should. People who don't play a sport because of a coach are neglecting themselves from something they like to do, and I wouldn't ever want, I'm glad it didn't ever happen to me and I've seen it happen to players who should of played high school ball that didn't for this and that reason and it's just there's no reason good enough if you want to play, you'll play.

MacGregor: From an earlier question, I asked you what you remember most from baseball, and you listed your blind baseball coach. Do you have any other memories whether disappointing or whether from actual playing time?

Magee: Yeah, I'd have to say one of the most disappointing moments of my baseball career was, aside not making the baseball team at Mississippi State, would be when I was a sophomore when our team made it to the state playoffs, I mentioned earlier, and our seniors on the team of course, were the leaders who got us there. They were the pitching staff and we got into early June, late May, early June, when we played our first game of the state playoffs it seemed as though all of the seniors were tired of playing. They wanted to graduated and get out of high school, and the desire wasn't there. It disappointed me, for one reason, because I was there and I wanted to win and I probably performed at one of my best levels at that time. I was doing everything I could and it seemed that all our seniors who had got us there, gave up on us. And that was just a shock to me, that they didn't want it as bad as I wanted it as a sophomore and they were seniors. This was their last hurrah and they didn't want it. I have to say another disappointing moment is probably, I played at Grove City and than the following Fall I transferred into Slippery Rock, and I probably should have tried out for the team, but I gave it up and I may have given it up too soon. And that's always going to be with me because I blew the chance I had when I came to Slippery Rock by not trying out as soon as I came and then just kept putting it off and then never got around to it finally. And that sort of bothers me.

MacGregor: As you mentioned before, you wrestled in high school, did you have a priority of wrestling or baseball over one

another?

Magee: I have to say baseball was my number one priority when it came to high school sports. We weren't as successful in baseball as I was in wrestling. I mean I was as personally as successful in baseball as I was in wrestling, but wrestling is an individual sport. I mean it's an individual against an individual competing for a team, but when your on the mat it's one on one. When your on a baseball team, there's eight other guys on the field that you have to work together with at the same time. And even though we weren't as successful in baseball, I still have to say it took priority. Because wrestling season started some time in November and I'd be wrestling right up to the time baseball season started. They'd actually have started baseball practice, they were practicing a week before I could even start practicing because I'd still be wrestling, because I'd go to sections and then districts. And I'd be wrestling extra weeks past the season, and I'd get into districts and I'd feel like the whole week of practice for districts, the baseball team's practicing. And we split the gym in half and it sort of pulled me in half, half of me wanted to be with the baseball team and half wanted to be with the wrestling team, so I have to say just because of that fact, that obviously baseball was more important. I couldn't once baseball started half of me went with baseball, I wasn't totally committed to wrestling anymore by that time. So, baseball was probably the one standout.

MacGregor: So, did that week, you were distracted by that, did



that effect your performance in wrestling at all?

Magee: Um, I like to think it did. I don't think it did once I actually got on the mat. I mean I still think I performed to the best of my ability once I got on the mat finally at districts in wrestling, but, I was glad. I wasn't as upset when it came for my wrestling season to be over. When I was done wrestling, it wasn't a problem for me to jump into baseball, whereas when baseball season was over, that was it. Like my last game when I was a senior, I was just, there three of us, three seniors, there was more seniors on the team then, but, three of us started and the two other seniors were my best friends, one was a cousin and one was a best friend. And when our final game was over we were just sort of shocked. Our high school sports career was over. And I'm sure a lot of it comes from because baseball starts in the spring and when your done, your done. But, we just didn't want to leave the field. I mean we probably played one of our best games, but we just didn't want to leave the field. We couldn't pull ourselves away, just because I knew there might be a chance I might not ever play organized baseball again. It was hard to deal with.

MacGregor: From an earlier question, I asked you if you ever felt pressured to play by family or friends, and you didn't really feel pressured, but did you feel they really supported you in any way, your family?

Magee: I have to say my parents, they way they showed their support, was just by attending. Both of my parents worked while I was growing up. I never had a parent at home all through



my childhood. And it was always nice when I, . . . baseball season would always start right at the end of the school year when I was younger and me and my buddy would always walk to practice and we'd go to games. You know and I wouldn't see my parents after school and I'd get home from school and go to practice or go to a game. And I always knew that if I had a game at six o'clock that evening that at least one of my parents would show up, because my dad worked hours that were a lot of the time uncontrollable, but I knew I would always have a parent there. That was biggest support. As far as everybody else, my brothers, there probably responsible for teaching me how to play, playing catch, playing five-hundred, you know. I always looked up to them because they were always playing baseball and I just couldn't wait 'til I could finally play. So I have to say they gave me the best support they could was just by being there. They didn't really talk about the games or ask me about practices, but they just showed up. If I wanted to talk about it, then we'd talk about it. Same way with all the sports I competed in. They just always made an effort to be there and if they weren't going to be there, I knew ahead of time. But, if I didn't know that they weren't going to be there and was looking around for them, it would upset me, because I always wanted them to be there, and they did the best they could during that. But, I guess that's the ultimate support that you can get, is just from your parents being there.