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EARL COOK By BRUCE STAPLEY

FARMER SOWS FIELD OF DREAMS

Earl Cook managed to do what few Canadian boys have ever been able to achieve

LEMONVILLE FARMER EARL COOK sits back in the weather-beaten garden chair under the chestnut tree that stands beside his home of 76 years.

And while he speaks of life in the humble manner one might expect of an 81-year-old farmer who still helps tend the fields, if given enough time, he will begin to speak of days spent under the sun cultivating other interests, on a different type of field, years ago.

For Earl managed to do what few Canadian boys have ever been able to achieve.

A 15-year professional baseball career in the 1930s and '40s, complete with a two-inning major league stint that saw him pitch to Joe DiMaggio in Yankee Stadium in 1941, still lives in his memory. So does the day he walked up to Babe Ruth during an exhibition game and asked the legend for an autograph.

And just like Doc "Moonlight" Graham in this year's Oscar-bound film *Field of Dreams*, Earl is quite happy to leave the whole thing as a distant recollection.

In fact, he can't even remember the last time he threw a baseball. "It was with my daughter, I remember that," he says. "But I don't know when it was."

A little more prodding, though, and the right-hander they used to call "The Lemonville Farmer" digs out the old scrapbook, along with a few personal mementoes.

For all intents and purposes a career minor leaguer, Earl was once on the roster of the Cincinnati Reds, then the Detroit Tigers, training with the Ohio team in Puerto Rico one spring.

But clippings from old newspapers datelined Buffalo, Portland and even Toronto tell the story of a Triple-A league pitcher who made them all stand up and take notice.

"I was one of the last pitchers to pitch two games in one day," he recalls. "I pitched both games of a double header when I was with Buffalo of the International League. Won them both by a 2-0 shutout. Then I went back out two days later and pitched another shutout."

And sure enough, the yellowed newsprint backs up his claim.

Another clipping tells of his eight-game winning streak, while yet another relates a big playoff pitching triumph for Earl.

Then there are the write-ups of games he pitched during his first year of pro ball, when he racked up an 11-9 won-lost record with the old Toronto Maple Leafs.

And while his 15 years of Triple-A ball made him a name in places like Toronto, Syracuse and Beaumont, Texas, those living in Stouffville in the late 1920s and mid-1940s will remember Earl as a premier local pitcher.

Earl went to the provincial baseball finals on more than one occasion as a member of the old Stouffville Red Sox, a team that included another Stouffville ex-pro, Stan Miller, as well as Bob Hassard, who played hockey for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

In fact, it was while he was with the Sox that an umpire spotted him and recommended Earl to a top Toronto amateur team, which led to his being signed by the baseball Leafs.

Today, Earl says he rarely thinks about his days as a ball player. But he's a keen fan who catches his share of ball games on television.

He rates the big leaguers and he's not above being a little critical if he thinks a player isn't putting out.

"I've got the Blue Jays sized up. I know how I'd pitch to each batter," he says.

And he still has the utmost respect for the game of baseball. "It's a thinking game," he observes. "You realize that the older you get."

Earl says he's still in pretty good health, although a bad hip has restricted his mobility.

"If it weren't for that, I'd feel the same as I did 25 years ago," he notes. "I feel good."



Lemonville farmer Earl Cook remembers fondly a 15-year professional baseball career in the 1930s and '40s, complete with a two-inning major league stint that saw him pitch to Joe DiMaggio in Yankee Stadium in 1941. (Right) Cook in his heyday pitching for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Summitview fixture retiring
See C-9



PIGEON CONTROVERSY

There is a dispute in Stouffville this week over a local man who wishes to keep pigeons in his backyard. The story is in the news section of the *Tribune* today.

Other stories in the *Tribune's* A section include:

- Details of a weekend accident that killed an Uxbridge boy.
- Details of a local boy who received burns to 45 per cent of his body as the result of an incident at a gas station.

To get these stories and more, subscribe to the *Tribune*. Call our distribution department at 640-2100 to subscribe to the whole newspaper.

Horticulture group still blooming
See C-15

