

Baseball family a thread in the fabric of historic Peachland

By Ross McDermott
PEACHLAND SIGNAL

It could be seen as a flash of the past. Or perhaps a momentary tableaux of Peachland history that many hold dear in their hearts and minds. For some, it was a new realization, or just a friendly reminder.

The recent Municipal Awards Night recognized the achievements of its citizens in 1999. But in one category, Athlete of the Year, a tribute was paid to Peachlanders of the past: the Cousins Baseball Team, who, in the 1930s, rounded the bases and cracked the bats on a local field known today as Cousins Park.

Nine brothers: Francis, Danny, Almyer, Ervin, Harold, Gordon, Vern and Warren, formed the Cousins family baseball team who, at one point in their baseball career, were invited to play in a tournament in Cooperstown, N.Y., the home of baseball. However, financial and job responsibilities prevented their participation.

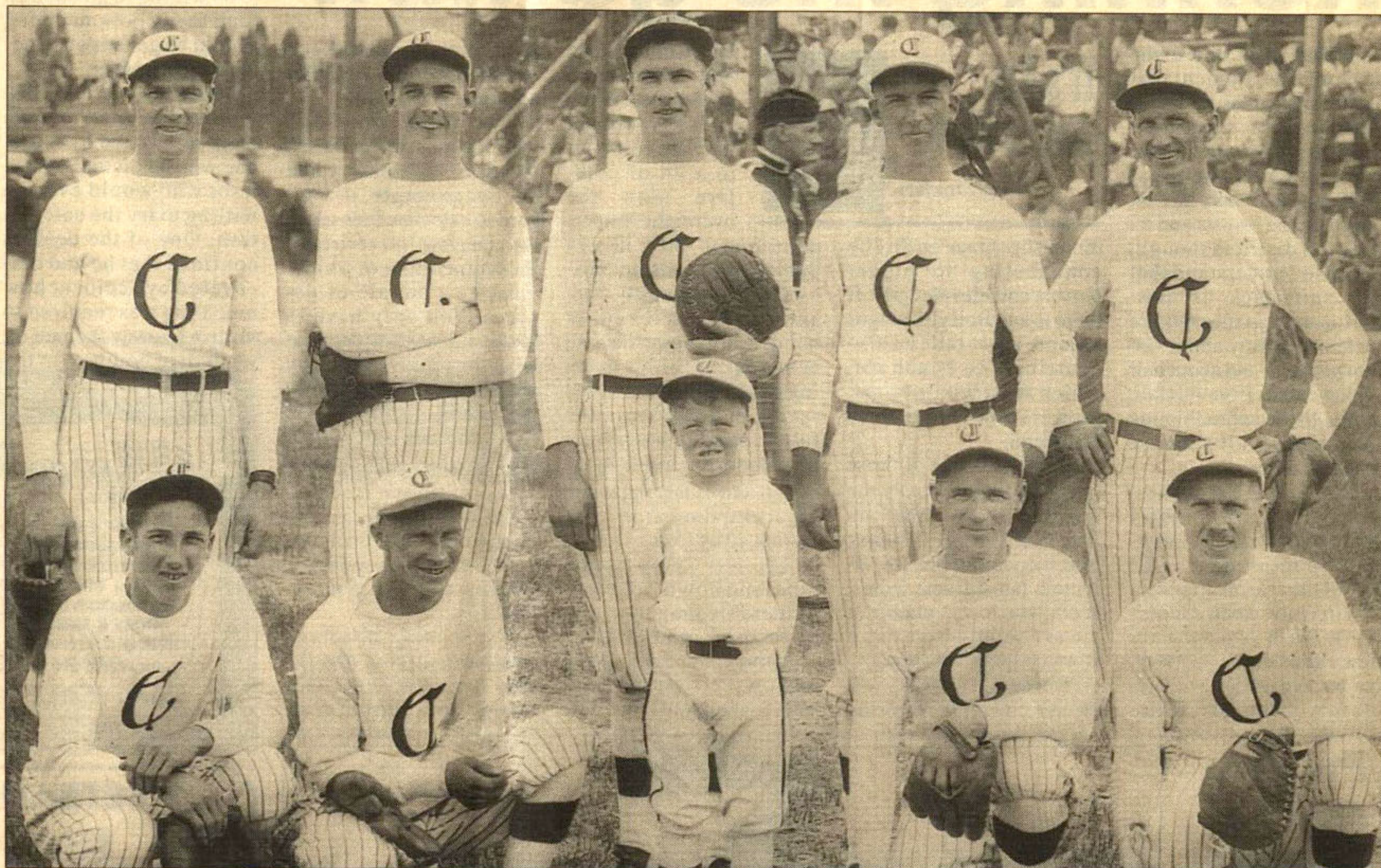
An entry in a 1930s Ripley's Believe It Or Not column stated: "there is a baseball team of all brothers who are Cousins." That team was Peachland's own.

Originally from Manitoba, the Cousins family arrived in Peachland in 1913.

At that time the family, headed by mother Mary and father Isaac, consisted of ten children, six of which were boys. The year of the family's arrival in Peachland, Verne was born. Then in 1916 Gordon was born. And completing the Cousins baseball team, Warren was born in 1918.

All the Cousins boys attended Trepanier and Peachland schools. They played baseball for various teams and for various communities, but eventually formed their own team, and played together on different occasions.

Most notably, the boys played three games against a Penticton squad, losing two, 5-3 and 9-8, but win-



BASEBALL BROTHERS: The Cousins family baseball team consisted of nine brothers: (in no particular order) Francis, Eddy, Danny, Almyer, Ervin, Harold, Gordon, Vern and Warren. Also in the photo is Eddy's son, Bob Cousins (centre), who was the teams bat boy. The boys posed for this picture in Penticton, immediately following their victory over that community's baseball team in 1938.

ning the last game in 1938 by a score of 4-2.

In 1939, WWII erupted, and young men across the country were plucked from their quiet home-town lives to join in the fighting overseas. The Cousins boys were no exception. Five answered the call of war, ending the Cousins baseball team career.

But the legacy of the Cousins Nine baseball team lived on. On June 13, 1981, in an official ceremony, the baseball park commonly known today as Cousins Park received its official designation.

"Citizens and governments have a responsibility to identify and hold safe historic sites and buildings for posterity," said then and now Peachland Mayor George Waldo, during the ceremony. "The pleasure comes when this activity can be carried out in the presence of the pioneers for

whom the site is being honoured. The dedication of this Cousins Park is such a circumstance. I am proud to be present at this dedication which acknowledges so prominent a Peachland pioneer family."

British Columbia Premier at that time, Bill Bennett, was also on hand for the dedication ceremony. He congratulated Peachland for paying tribute to "a remarkable local family."

"The baseball team and the Cousins family were well known in the Okanagan Valley and, indeed, throughout British Columbia," he said. "It is families like the Cousins who have made Peachland a particularly pleasant place to live."

Fred King, then member of parliament, said he had fond memories of his father taking him to "the ball games to see the talented

Cousins Nine take on Penticton's best. I can think of no more fitting tribute to this family than that this day we dedicate this park as the Cousins Park."

Today, surviving members of the Cousins Nine number only two: Vern lives in Chase, and Warren resides in Salmon Arm.

However, in Peachland the baseball memory is kept alive not only by the Cousins Park designation, but by relatives such as Vern's son Don, Danny's daughter Karen Martin,

and Gordon's son Wayne.

Karen Martin said she was grateful to the municipality for honouring the Cousins family baseball team at the recent awards night. And, "A very special thank you to Pelma Haffenden for bringing the history of the Cousins family forward," she said.

Haffenden, Peachland's director of recreation, said a variety of elements came together bringing the idea to honour the Cousins Nine baseball team.

The Cousins Nine were

Photo contributed by Karen Martin

instrumental in sparking the flame of popularity of baseball in Peachland, she said, and "We're a town that looks to our history. In recognizing the millennium, it was a memorial we gave to somebody who had done something significant for our town."

Haffenden said she was approached by Martin with "a lot of really interesting information" regarding the Cousins Nine, and the Athlete of the Year Award seemed to be suitable recognition.