

Jim Taylor

EDMONTON — The soon-to-be-millionaire hunches over in the front passenger seat, feeling like two cents Confederate. "A cold tablet," he sniffs. "Some sleep and a cold tablet, or I'm gonna die."

It is 3:30 Friday afternoon, and in two and a half hours he has to nurse his flu and failing voice through another banquet, sign more autographs while trying to take his first food in 12 hours, smile in the right places through interminable speeches, then lurch to the microphone and say how happy he is to be in ... in ... wherever the hell he is.

On Tuesday night he was doing the same thing in Halifax. Wednesday night it was

'He's the best young catcher in National League of a game gone money-mad.'

Thunder Bay. Thursday night Toronto, and now it was Ardrossan, 30 kilometres out of Edmonton, for a guest shot at a fund-raiser. "Life in the big leagues," croaks Gary Carter. "When I get home, I am gonna crawl all over my agent."

Vancouver
Sun

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The soon-to-be-millionaire has one arm braced on the head table, the other braced on his knee. The speeches are running 45 minutes late. It is 2:35 a.m. Montreal and body-clock time, and he is psyching himself up to speak. At the far end of the table, Terry Puhl, the kid from Melville, Sask. who went 10-for-19 for Houston Astros in the playoff against Philadelphia, glances at Carter and shakes his head.

Banquet circuit rates being what they are, Carter likely will gross \$7,000 or so for the four nights' work. He doesn't need the money. He says the \$300,000 estimates of his current salary are high, but he doesn't have to brown bag it to work. So why bother?

Part of the reason is that Carter, the 26-year-old from Fullerton, Calif., is now a naturalized Canadian in love with his adopted country. More than anything, there is a finely-tuned recognition of how much the game of baseball has done for him, and how much the country has fallen in behind the Expos in their abortive drives for the pennant. "Next year we space them out," he groans. "But the people — y'-know, they want to see us and talk to us, and they're the ones that make it all happen. So what can you do. . .?"

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If anything it is even colder on the drive back to Edmonton. Carter and Puhl have been a smash, the dinner a success.

The soon-to-be-millionaire staggers into the hotel, laces himself with cold tablets and nasal spray, and flops on to the bed. His dreams are of sun and heat and Florida, and training camp just three weeks away.

Terry Jones



IT WAS JUST prior to the National League championship series in Philadelphia last fall.

Terry Puhl arrived at the park early and was the second member of the Houston Astros to emerge from the clubhouse and take to the field for batting practice.

On the field, a media mob waited for the opportunity to discuss the series with any Astro player.

A Philadelphia writer read the name "Puhl" on the back of the player's uniform and turned to another writer and asked, "What's his claim to fame?"

"He's a Canadian," said the other.

They both decided to wait for the next Astro to emerge from the clubhouse.

All of a sudden, in Game Four, Howard Cosell made the "discovery." Suggesting that it was an item never before revealed, Cosell announced that Puhl was a Canadian.

Reporters who were asking, "What's his claim to fame?" by that point, were scrambling to find out about T. Puhl.

"That series definitely put my name on the map," Puhl said as he digested a cheeseburger at the Four Seasons Hotel.

Until this winter, Terry Puhl now admits, he hasn't felt very Canadian at all. Other than the odd interviewer from Canada on a road trip and the occasional visit by a friend from Melville, Sask., "when I'm down there I hear nothing about being a Canadian."

NOW . . . "NOW, IT'S kind of neat,"

"People want to meet me now," he says. "I'm getting banquet offers and things I've never had before."

Puhl, second to Wayne Gretzky in the balloting for Canadian Press athlete of the year, is on something of a cross-Canada speaking tour and has already made appearances in Vancouver and London, Ont. He has arrived in Edmonton to promote and attend the first Fultonvale Fastball Club Sportsman's Dinner Friday at the Ardrossan Recreation Complex.

Like pitcher Ferguson Jenkins before him, he has been more than a "token" Canadian in the major leagues. He's been a star. It's just that it took his exposure in the NL championship series for everybody to realize it.

He's played in the 1979 all-star game. He led the NL in hitting for three weeks in mid-season 1978. He has more than 100 stolen bases. He's led the Astros in home runs. His lifetime batting average is 12 points shy of .300. At 24, if he continues his pace, he'll have 600 hits in the major leagues by June.

"I was a typical Houston Astro," he said. "We hadn't been a very much publicized team until the playoffs this year. When we used to roll into town, we were ignored. This year, it's going to be different. The Astros are in town."

What happened in the playoffs last year was that the Houston Astros arrived. They were only an inning away from going to the World Series. And Terry Puhl was the star of the show.

HIS NAME IS now in the NL Championship Series record book in six places. His ten hits in 19 official at-bats, set a series record and a record for a five-game series. His .526 batting average was a record for a five-game series. Six-at-bats in one game, four singles in one game and eight singles in a five-game series tied him for series records.

One of the "neat" things about this winter, he says, is that he's getting to meet all his childhood idols on the banquet tour. He talks about riding in a car with Jean Beliveau for 45 minutes and meeting Bobby Hull. He's a Canadian sports star, but until this winter, he's never met any other Canadian sports stars.

"I'm not complaining about it not happening before," he said. "To be totally truthful, I'm glad it's been the way it's been. I'm fortunate I didn't belong to the Expos or the Blue Jays. I didn't have to be a Canadian, if you know what I mean, in Houston. I really felt sorry for Dave McKay in Toronto. He had to play two games at once. He had to try to keep his head above water as a ball player and also be on stage as The Canadian. I wouldn't have wanted that."

Puhl says he's one player who is loyal. He has no plans to play out his option with Houston, even though he knows he could command bigger dollars with a Canadian team.

"But," he said, "I have a feeling that toward the end of my career, I'll probably end up with a Canadian team."

Talking in my car as we went to the airport to pick up his Vancouver-born wife, he conceded that if Vancouver ever received a big league team "that might change things a bit."

Edmonton
Journal

Sportsman's dinner given

'A' rate

Sherwood Park
News

The location was the Ardrossan Recreation Complex. The occasion was the Fultonvale Fastball Club's Sportsman's Dinner.

And Friday night 400 people experienced an evening that will not likely be forgotten for a long time. Under the magnificent organizational work of Ron Liepert, the fastball club put on a dinner that has to be given an 'A' rating all the way.

The head table equalled any. While sports names like Montreal Expos Gary Carter, Houston Astro Terry Puhl and Edmonton Eskimo Dan Kepley lived up to their expectations, proving they possibly have a future in speaking when their sports careers are over, there were surprises.

The man who no one knew in this area and who received many good-natured jibs because of it, Ray Kingsmith from Calgary, stole the show with his multi-wit. Kingsmith, a former Calgary sportsman of the year, and well known in curling circles, turned the dinner into a roast of other head table members.

Kingsmith glibly pointed out the difference in major league contracts for the benefit of Carter, when he stated that "if some second-rate first baseman is worth \$800,000, I'd sure as hell like to negotiate your contract."

Many of the comments, not surprisingly, can't be repeated in a family newspaper. But it wasn't all fun and games.

Kepley took time out to pay tribute to former Eskimo Don Warrington, who was killed in a car accident late last year. Kepley noted that Warrington "lived his life the way he wanted too," serving as an example to all people.

"Stop talking about it and do it, no matter what it is," said Kepley. "Time is very short for you, we don't have any guarantee how long we're going to be here."

Carter, who last year won the National Baseball League Golden Glove award, also spent time speaking of dedication, when talking about Terry Fox.

"Here's a guy who really inspires me. What he's done expounds courage. Nothing exemplifies a national hero like Terry Fox."

TERRY GARTH

Sports Editor



And Carter had a message for all Expos fans. "The Edmonton Eskimos can keep on winning Grey Cups, Montreal Expos will hopefully win a championship. We finished close twice, 1981 will be a banner year for the Montreal Expos."

Former federal sports minister Iona Campagnolo got in a shot for women's lib when talking about political difficulties between the federal and provincial governments, nothing they "can always go to the almighty, she's always impartial."

Alberta Games Chairman Max Gibb also had a message to go along with his countless jokes. "There's nothing the matter with being knocked down. It's when you don't get up and go on to win, that something is wrong."

And Vancouver sports columnist Jim Taylor had more good news for Edmonton area fans, when talking about the many players that have been cut from British Columbia Lions only to end up starring in Edmonton.

"I haven't checked the B.C. Lions roster yet but I'm sure there's someone there who we'll send out, who will only play here for about 10 years," he quipped.

This year's dinner was more or less an experiment for the Fultonvale club, to start an annual event and to aid the team's coffers. Hopefully the tremendous response and success of the evening will spur the team on to make the initial experience a yearly happening.

It could be a date that all county sports fans will annually mark in red ink, as a date that can't be missed.