

Cricket a journey that I enjoyed – Holding

Former Jamaica and West Indies fast bowler, Michael Holding, responding to his induction into the Cricket Hall of Fame in ceremonies held at the Hartford/Marriott Hotel, Windsor, Connecticut, Saturday, October 2, said his cricketing career is a great journey that he enjoyed and one that he would do all over again.

“It was a long, happy journey in which I met many people and got a lot of advice from friends and family, which provided me with opportunities in my life that I am still thankful for,” he said.

Prior to the induction, patrons attending the very exciting ceremony described by many as unique, got the opportunity to view a five-minute video presentation of Holding and Chappell in action during the highlights of their careers.

Another highlight of the evening was a tribute by Master of Ceremonies Rudolph Cohen to former West Indies spin legend Alfred Valentine, one of the first inductees into the Hall of Fame. Cohen, who played under Valentine’s captaincy on the Jamaican team said that Valentine was exceptionally dedicated, gaining strength to strength. He helped me with my career, Cohen said. He was a special player and will be a segment that will be written in the history of West Indies’ cricket. At the conclusion of his remarks the famous song “Those Little Pals of Mine, Ramadhin and Valentine” which immortalized the pair, was played.

However, one of the most moving moments of the program was the introduction of Leo “Jingles” Magnus, who was inducted posthumously. Magnus spent a lifetime making contributions to the sport he loved, cricket. Two of Magnus’ grandchildren who traveled all the way from California for the ceremony, spoke glowingly of their grandfather, whom they said did not only make his mark in the sport in California but through his counseling played a big role in shaping their lives and that of many others.

Magnus passed away shortly after his nomination was accepted. Because of his love for the sport, they decided to hold his memorial service on a cricket field. To their surprise more than 400 people showed up and the entire evening was spent paying glowing tributes to a man, who is not only responsible for laying down the first turf wicket in California, but who took a group of homeless kids off the street, taught them the game, mold them in to respectable young men, then took them on tours to England and other countries. Work is already in progress in the city to name a cricket field after him, his grandson revealed.

Holding who has blossomed into becoming a very respected commentator of the game said that the sport took him all over the world and made him a better person. “It is responsible for making me the person that I am,” he stated.

Inducted along with former Australian captain and star batsman Greg Chappell (in absentia), and four other individuals, who were honored for their outstanding

contributions to the game, Holding said that he was very humble to be associated with the people who do the work in the background. Yes, it is nice for people like myself and Chappell, who are constantly out there in the limelight, on the field of play, on television or written about in the media to be recognized, but it is those people in the background who deserve the praise. They are the unsung heroes of the game, he said, they are the ones who do the hard work to keep the game alive.

Commending the members of the Cricket Hall of Fame for including women in their organization, Holding took a poke at the male chauvinism that is evident in game throughout the world. He said that while the bastion has been broken at the male dominated Marylebourne Cricket Club (MCC) in London, England, the headquarters of the sport in his hometown in Kingston, Jamaica, the Kingston Cricket Club, has not as yet allowed women to enter into their main pavilion at Sabina Park.

A member of the world famous West Indian team, which dominated the sport for more than a decade, Holding said that that team will be forever remembered. "The longer you are retired the greater you become. It was a great team . . . great players lift you, he said. I am really appreciative of the guys that I played with."

Chappell, who was not able to make it to Windsor because of illness, through a conference call conducted through the satellite system, expressed his regret for being absent and promised that he will make an effort to come to Hartford sometime in the near future and hopefully the Hall of Fame will be able to put on a reception so that he will be able to meet fans in this area.

He spoke of his friendship with Holding and the wonderful people that he met because of the game and ran through a long list of other great players who he had the opportunity to meet, play against and start acquaintances with which he has cherished throughout his career.

Before his introduction which was done by P. K. Guha, a good friend and cricket enthusiast who resides in Michigan and who accepted his plaque on his behalf, a citation from the Australian Consul General in New York, which outlined the glowing accomplishment of the star cricketer was read to the audience.

Uriel Whyte, of Canada, another inductee thanked the Hall of Fame for placing him in an exclusive company. It is an award that I will cherish most of all and represents something that I have been involved in for many years. He spoke of the challenges that he faced while introducing the game in the schools in Toronto and said that he has committed himself to spreading the word and to continue to sell the game so that it will remain vibrant throughout the world.

Describing Julius Spiegel, another inductee, as one of the greatest commissioners in Brooklyn, Roy Sweeney, president of the Cricket Promoters Association, said he was responsible for the building of the first cricket field in Brooklyn. Spiegel responded that it was not an easy task and promised that another one is in the making. He urged them to

stay focus and to get the young people involved so that they will be able to learn their heritage and to keep it alive. “Don’t let petty jealousies and rivalries kill your sport,” he urged stating that the building of the field represents the highlight of his career as a public servant.