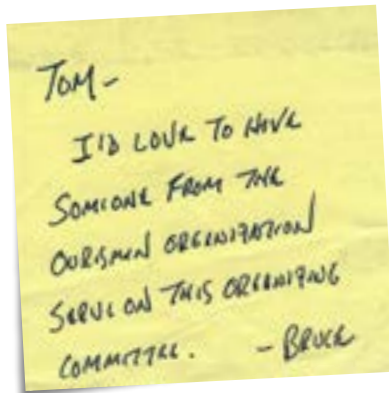


team that would raise money to improve fields for kids. John agreed to be co-founder and began to assemble an extraordinary group of founding members. To ensure that our organization was “owned” by the community and not by any individual, family, or corporation, John set limits on the amount any individual or business could donate.

I have always believed that skill is important in making things happen, but luck can often be more valuable. Over and over during the process, exactly the right person would step up at exactly the right time. I had met John Ourisman while I was working to create the Capital Crescent Trail that ran adjacent to Ourisman Honda in Bethesda. But it wasn't John I wrote to about the baseball project. I sent a note to his step-brother Tom Korengold in Tom's capacity as president of the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce asking if he would send someone from the Ourisman organization to my planning meeting. Tom could easily have tossed my note aside. Instead, he passed it on to John and that made all the difference. John brought his business management skills and his network of friends who love sports to our enterprise. Without John, we might still be sitting in my living room trying to figure out how to make this happen.



Denise Gorham had paired Phil Leibovitz and me to coach our sons' BCC Baseball team. When I approached Phil about my idea, he explained how busy his construction firm Sandy Spring Builders was and how he couldn't possibly manage the construction of a ballpark in the winter and spring of 1999. I want to apologize right here to Phil's clients for any delay in getting their houses built on time that year. Phil and Sandy Spring Builders went all in. They were there right up to the afternoon of the first game on June 4, 1999 putting the finishing touches on the press box. Of all the concrete construction firms based in Bethesda, we made the fortunate choice of going to see John McMahon at Miller & Long. His crew of engineers and builders worked at lightning speed, and Miller & Long has remained a generous donor throughout our 20 seasons.

One of the heroes of our *Ballpark Vacations* book was Peter Kirk, one of the two or three most important figures in the revival of minor league baseball. I saw Peter across a crowd of people leaving Cole Field House after a February 1998 Terps game. I caught up with him and invited him to tour Cabin John Regional Park. When he got there, I explained how we planned to add more aluminum bleachers to the existing field. And he explained to me that the only chance we had to be successful would be to get repeat visitors. The only people who would return to watch baseball if they have to sit on aluminum bleachers would be moms, dads, girlfriends, and scouts. We all have Peter Kirk to thank for those major league quality seats on a

concrete grandstand.

It really was an extraordinary process. For 18 months, John and I would meet with the busiest people we knew, and they would set their work aside and take an hour to swap baseball stories and listen to our dream. In visit after visit, no matter how outrageous our request, we received the same answer: “We're in. We'll do whatever you need to make this happen.” From our Founding Members, we asked for money. For others, like Sandy Spring Builders, Hopkins & Porter, and Miller & Long, we asked for their professional building skills and donated materials. In Robby Brewer and Paul Alpuche at Lerch, Early & Brewer, we found the first rate legal assistance we needed.

By April 10, 1998, we had incorporated the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club (BCBBC) with a commitment “to raise money to improve the quality of youth baseball fields in Montgomery County and the District of Columbia.” We were moving fast and needed to be able to accept tax deductible contributions long before the IRS would grant us our tax-exempt status. Fortunately, there was a Montgomery Parks Foundation available to accept tax deductible contributions so we could move forward with our plan to have a ballpark ready for our first game on June 4, 1999. And we needed a team. Derek Hacopian, a Churchill High School grad who was an All-American at the University of Maryland before his professional career was cut short by injury, had recently opened a baseball training facility in Gaithersburg. Derek agreed to recruit and coach the team.

One-by-one, all the pieces were falling in place. As is so often the case, when you need something done in Montgomery County, you'll find the world's expert living here. We needed a scorecard, and Garrett Park's Paul Dickson, author of *The Joy of Keeping Score* (Walker, 1996), designed a scorecard for us. We needed an architect, and Alan Sparber stepped up. My friend Alysia Emden connected us to Chris Renshaw of Text Design, and Text Design has produced the best graphics in all of summer college baseball for us for two decades. The *Gazette* newspapers agreed to donate ad space to promote our games. We needed good food, and Rob Rubin of Ledo Pizza was our guy. We needed new and stronger lights, but we didn't have the money in the budget. Someone in the Parks department noticed that it was time for new lights on the Cabin John 90' diamond and pointed out that the money was already in the capital budget. The experts told us we needed a covered

picnic pavilion if we expected to make money on picnics. But we didn't have that in our budget either. The Davis Family stepped up and donated the funds. And the weather gods looked fondly on us as well. Because of limited snowfall that winter and a Herculean effort by the local building industry, we were able to build the ballpark in five months and have it ready for opening night June 4, 1999.

By December 1998, under John Ourisman's leadership, the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club had raised \$500,000 to build the ballpark. We needed another \$100,000 to complete our initial plans, but, even more importantly, we needed to begin to get the word out and start to build a fan base. As John and I explained in dozens of meetings in 1998, this wasn't a sure thing. The conventional wisdom was that summer college baseball could not succeed in a busy place like Bethesda with all the entertainment options we have here. As an example, when the highly regarded Coastal

BETHESDA COMMUNITY BASE BALL CLUB

FOUNDING MEMBERS

<p>ERIC BILLINGS STUART BINDEMAN ALAN BUBES NEIL COHEN SKIP DAVIS TIM DAVIS WAYNE DAY PEGGY EACHO FECHNAY MICHAEL GELMAN DON GRAHAM DOUG JEMAL</p>	<p>PHIL LEIBOVITZ BRUCE MACKEY HALL MARTIN JOHN MCMAHON PETER MINSHALL JOHN OURISMAN ROBERT OURISMAN MAURY POVICH MITCH RALES JOE ROBERT ALBERT H. SMALL, JR.</p>
---	--

CORPORATE FOUNDERS

FRIEDMAN BILLINGS RAMSEY | LINENS OF THE WEEK
OURISMAN AUTOMOTIVE | PEPSI-COLA
RIGGS BANK | THE WASHINGTON POST