

Another POV

All was perfect in the world.

I was going to write a piece about the rash of thefts in my town, but I dropped the idea as I was too close to it and felt I couldn't be objective about the subject. Then, I wrote a piece on the state of undocumented workers and the possible alternatives to that problem. I was comfortable with the subject and the effort thus far, but then the Supreme Court of the United States issued a ruling on handgun ownership, and that became the hot issue of the day.

I scrapped the undocumented worker story and started on the handgun decision. Somewhere between the initial keystrokes of my computer and determining the immediate impact on my little community, I lost enthusiasm for the piece. The theft piece was already scrapped, and the undocumented worker piece needed work. The path was clear—no column this week.

On Tuesday, I went down to Atlanta, and along with my wife and two friends, we stopped at this large arena-type structure where many thousands of people had come. They sat in hard seats all around this odd open-air structure and watched what seemed to be two groups of men dressed in similar clothing.

One man stood on a pile of dirt and threw a spiracle object at another man who attempted to whack it with a stick. When he failed to hit the spherical object, the crowd, who seemed to be dressed as he was, called him names like "bum" and inferred he had difficulty seeing. When this same man successfully whacked this spherical ball, this same group of people cheered wildly. This hitting man would then run to a pillow-like object on this large field and stand there as if it were a base upon which he was safe from the other men who were throwing the sphere. There were other pillow-like objects on this field, and when these hitting men got to the second one, the crowd screamed more wildly. And then, when he got to the third one, they were wilder still. At the same time, the other group of men stood all over the field and tried to catch the whacked sphere. When they caught the sphere, those people in the arena groaned. But there was another group of people who appeared to be dressed like that team who fielded the sphere, and they cheered while the others booed and lamented.

The two groups took turns trying to hit and catch the whacked sphere. Then, after the men took seven turns at the whacking, all the people in the arena stood, and they sang this song about peanuts and crackerjack. Everyone sang together, even both groups of people who would boo and cheer in opposition to each other sang this strange song together, and when it was over, they cheered together. The arena was filled with people of all types, all sizes and shapes, all colors and descriptions, and there seemed no division between them as they all cheered or booed together. This condition seemed the same for that second group of people, the smaller group of people cheering and booing for what must have been their group of hitters and fielders.

The groups of men on the field then took two more turns at whacking, and then they stopped. One group of whackers and fielders, along with their similarly dressed people in the arena, seemed very happy, while the other group and their what could be

called fans were equally unhappy with the contest's result. All in all, this game of bases and balls was very strange.

As I watched this contest, I somehow was not the older man that I am, but I was just fourteen and was back to my hometown. I was sitting in a similar arena filled with people from my hometown, and we were all wearing our team's colors. As I looked onto the field, the faces of the men, these fielders and hitters, had changed, and I knew them by different names. Names like Mike Schmidt, Steve Carlton, Tony Taylor, and Larry Bowa were in my colors, and men with names like Hank Aaron, Sandy Kofax, Stan Musial, and Bob Gibson stood formidably in the other color. I felt the excitement of the contest and I could see myself on this field.

I had a leather glove on my hand and hit it with my fist as if to make it ready to receive this hit ball. I grouched down in my position, waiting for my turn to catch this hit and throw it to the base a half a step before the hitter got there. I longed to hear my crowd cheer for me. I dreamed of being older, old enough to stand there and defiantly face that man throwing the ball, ready to hit the ball right out of the arena to the sound of cheers of my fans. I knew if I just got a little older and got my chance, I would be on that field with the warm sun in my face and a bat in my hand, ready to join Schmidt, Aaron, and the others in this great game.

I watched the game for three hours on Tuesday night, and in that time, I never once thought of people taking what was not theirs or of gun control or undocumented workers. I ate hot dogs and peanuts and drank a cold beer with my best girl. I watched, cheered, and, in my mind, I played the game. All was perfect in the world.

I am a lover of baseball. I was born in Philadelphia, and I love my Phillies. Win or lose, I always have and always will. If the Phillies manager were to knock on my door and say, "If you give me your house and all that it is in it, you can play one inning on my team." To be young enough to play just once, to play just one inning on that team, on that field, in a game I love. It is a remote chance, but if he did ask, I think I would say yes--at least, I hope I would.

It is a very odd game, this singularly unique American pastime, this game called baseball. A game were young boys dream of being older and old men dream of being younger.

Next week, I will express Another POV.

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