

REFLECTIONS

April 26, 2009

**The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.**

Psalm 19:1

Childhood Heroes

Baseball was truly the national pastime in those days. Television was only a novelty, yet to change the entertainment platform of American lives. So ballparks flourished in almost every community in the land. Our small town was no exception.

Summer evenings enjoyed sounds of baseball—leather gloves popping, wooden bats cracking, and cheers and jeers rising from fans at the ballpark. Our team was composed of a few locals that still had game, but mostly the players came from colleges around the south. These were my heroes—college athletes that added youth and energy to our team. I still remember their names, the positions they played, how fast they ran, and their chatter in the field. I remember two of them singing in our church choir.

I could hardly wait to go to the ballpark to watch my heroes play. The park was small and the stands sat only a few feet away from the players' bench, separated only by a chicken wire fence not more than 15 feet high. The setting was an intimate one, and the ballpark rocked with excitement as each game began. Sounds of country music sang from the P.A. system before the game and between innings. The seventh inning stretched to the tune of *Sugarfoot Rag*, a song that still makes my heart race with the thrill of those days.

I was among many kids hanging on the fence hoping for one of our heroes to break a bat. Broken bats were treasures. Once I successfully grabbed one, took it home, and repaired the cracks with nail sprigs to make it usable again. But I never used it. It was too great a prize. I kept it for years, even when I had children of my own.

Those days gone by have been replaced by new forms of entertainment. Most small town ballparks around the land are but nostalgic memories. Recently though, some of us “kids” were blessed with a reunion with our childhood heroes. As time always does, age has taken the spring from their legs and the life from their bats. But nothing has removed the spirit from their hearts or the joy they felt when young fans lifted them up as heroes. What a blessing! As one of the kids I offer a huge thank you to these men for allowing us to be with them again to relive those fond memories.

Our heroes enjoyed their time together too. They recalled the games they played, the girls they dated, and the summer heat they endured. But there was something about those days they didn't know. They were the childhood heroes to a bunch of impressionable boys. And some little bit of who our heroes were lives on through what we all became. For us they were a blessing from God—the work of his hands.

“You are the light of the world,”

Richard +

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