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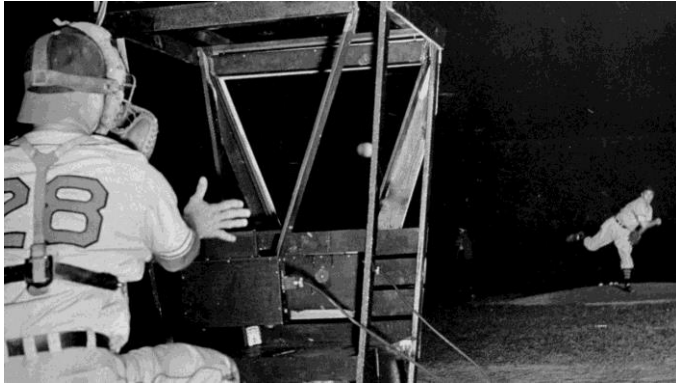
Baseball

When I was a freshman in college, one of my duties as a pledge was to play on my Sigma Kappa softball team. I was not an athlete. I did not particularly like team sport. I knew nothing about baseball or softball except that the latter had ten rather than nine players. I was sent to play center field on the supposition that I could do less damage there than anywhere else. I had already humiliated the team in a volleyball game where I couldn't serve the ball over the net. We had a smart captain, but she didn't quite figure out how to utilize my athletic prowess.

Our first softball game started at 4:30 one fine spring afternoon against our arch rivals, Kappa Kappa Gamma, the overall sports champions of the Pan Hellenic League. They were up first. The first pitch resulted in a high fly to center field. While I chased it down, pursued noisily by the left fielder, the hitter scored a home run. And so it went. Not every pitch resulted in a hit, but most of them did, and most of the hits were to center field – line drives, short flies, long flies. They all eluded me even when a grounder headed for my eager hands. There may have been a variation or two when third base caught a hit and fired it almost on time to first base, but those causes for Sigma Kappa cheers were the exception. The score mounted inexorably. Ten runs...twenty-three...thirty, and just one out. I was getting tired of being yelled at by my loving sisters. I was growing more exhausted from my constant sprints after the elusive balls. The sun began to sink. Finally, when the score mounted to 54 with the Kappas still at bat (weren't *they* getting a bit weary of loping around the bases?), the game was mercifully called because of darkness. My softball career, indeed my entire athletic career except in required gym classes, was over.

So much for background. In 1943, I married a lovely man who loved baseball. We began our married life in Portland, Oregon, during baseball season. Love is a marvelous motivator. I went happily with Paul to the Portland triple-A baseball games. Now remember, this was war time and no organized baseball team had very many outstanding players; they were all in the armed forces. All teams struggled to field some kind of team. Portland's team was especially pathetic. But that was an excellent time for a novice spectator to learn about the game, the fundamentals and even some of the finer points. Paul and I enjoyed going early just to see the rigidly stylized infield practice: a fungo to the third baseman who threw to first, who threw to the catcher, who threw back to third. The drill was then repeated to shortstop, second baseman, and so on. I learned to appreciate the poetry of defensive play, especially a quick, pivoting peg from short to first. We had some wonderful evenings - I had some wonderful evenings - watching the teams and agonizing when Portland lost. Two summers later Paul was transferred to Washington, D.C., where we could watch the old Washington Senators, known as the "Nationals" but playing in the American League. As the war wound down and absent players returned to their teams, I was able to see some of the all-time great players: Joe DiMaggio, Dom DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Bob Feller, Bobo Newsome, and many others. One of the highlights was watching an early, primitive attempt to measure Feller's fast ball, using a crude device installed at home plate and requiring minutes of calculation

after Feller delivered the ball. One hundred miles an hour! I learned which teams belonged to the American League and, by elimination, which teams belonged to the National League. By the time we left Washington I was devoted to the game, perhaps not a zealot but interested enough to enjoy radio accounts of the teams I had seen first hand and to enjoy an occasional minor league game by the Dallas Steers.



The D.C. demonstration (<https://www.mlb.com/cut4/on-bob-fellers-birthday-we-remember-the-time-his-fastball-was-measured-by-army-equipment/c-100403596>)

Years passed and graduate school intervened, leaving minimal time for watching baseball, but we still managed to find time to listen to the World Series. Then our boys came along and quickly became baseball fiends, particularly Roland who, from age four, was a dedicated Yankees fan.

Paul's professional meetings, generally in the summer, were held in various cities around the United States and were the occasions for wonderful family vacations, always by automobile. As soon as the boys learned the location and dates of the year's meetings, they began reading baseball news to find out what major league teams would be accessible on our trip and to have a very vocal part in the planning of our itinerary. One year we were able to attend the All-Star game at Shea Stadium, a memorable occasion which tested our eyesight and altitude resistance, as we sat high in the uppermost reaches of the stadium. On that same trip we toured the Baseball Hall of Fame, spending a blissful day in Cooperstown.



Our most successful trips took us to Pittsburgh for the Pirates, to Cincinnati for the Reds, to Milwaukee for the (then) Braves, to Chicago for the White Sox, and to Saint Louis for the Cardinals. We got bored at the Cincinnati game, left old Crosley Field early, and spent the rest of the game in the parking lot, blocked by cars, listening to the game on the car radio! In Saint Louis, the Cardinals game was especially memorable for we saw it with an old friend who decided to enliven an otherwise lackluster game by predicting a home run by the next hitter. Miraculously, the player obliged with a homer, so impressing our shy Roland that, with the volume of a public address system, he proclaimed to the surrounding crowd, "We have a prophet in the crowd!"

Roland's biggest disappointment was that we were never able to be in New York when his beloved Yankees were playing. However, after he was married, he and Jan got to Yankee Stadium for a game. That was a red-letter day even though he was no longer a staunch Yankee fan. George had his adult triumphs when he saw the Angels in Anaheim and the Giants in San Francisco, and especially when he got to talk to Yogi Berra as they shared an elevator in Boston. Not wanting to be just an ordinary fan, he said to Yogi, "I understand you're going to the Rangers as manager." Yogi's head snapped around, and he demanded, "Where did you hear that?"



From upper deck Yankee Stadium

Under the influence of my family, both husband and sons, I have evolved over the years into a great "fan" of almost all sports, from those days in Portland and Washington on through the trips with the boys plus watching their baseball, football, and basketball games during elementary school and extending to the present with college and professional games on television. But I remain a dedicated spectator, not a participant.