

BASEBALL AND ME

The summer of 1968 I was a baseball fanatic. I loved the Detroit Tigers without reservation; win or lose, I was the ultimate true blue fan. I could quote batting averages, home run totals and ERAs of any Detroit Tiger and I knew the batting statistics of most of their formidable opponents. I learned how to mark a scorecard, and spent many a summer's evening listening to Ernie Harwell and Ray Lane give the play-by-play, marking in singles and strikeouts, doubles and double plays.

Saturday afternoons I watched the game on TV while I ate my chicken noodle soup and peanut butter and jelly sandwich lunch, trying not to spill broth on my scorecard. I yearned to be at the stadium, watching the game from a box seat instead of an arm chair. Twice that season my dad had taken me to evening games, and I loved the way the spotlights made the grass bright green and the seats shiny light blue against the navy blue sky.

When the Tigers clinched the pennant in September, the Tiger management announced a lottery system for seats for the World Series. I was determined that I, the loyal Tiger fan, would be at the World Series, so I went to the bank and got a money order for the price of two World Series tickets, and mailed my hopes away in the envelope to Detroit. After two anxious weeks, I got my money order returned -- no World Series tickets for the best Tiger Fan Ever.

My dad knew of my disappointment and told me he would try and come up with some tickets from some of his business associates. Every evening, he came home empty handed. The World Series started in St. Louis, and I, ticket-less, had to settle for baseball on TV.

On Thursday, after the Tigers and Cardinals had already played two games in St. Louis, my dad came home with a smirk on his face. He held out an envelope that said "The best seats in the stadium." I jumped for joy! I tore open the envelope to discover two tickets with toilets drawn on them! I had been had! I turned to wail my dismay at my father for playing such an insensitive joke on me, but he was smiling as he held out another envelope. I skeptically opened this envelope and pulled out two reserved seats for Sunday's World Series Game! That night, there was Joy in Mudville (well, Livonia), and I was the happiest Detroit Tiger Fan Ever!