

Two minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

The Summer when I was 12

No, I'm not going to relate that summer and bore y'all. Actually, I am. But isn't it the truth that when you read about adolescence, it's all about boys coming of age—at age 12? Novels by Dan Simmons, Robert McCameron, Ray Bradbury, and the “King” himself.

For most, it was a happy time. A time when you are really starting to figure things out, but not so much that you will dwell on it. For me it was hiding from the nuns and the priests on Saturday. (I lived across the alley from my school, down the street from the church, and two doors away from the convent.) My, oh my, if they caught me, I would be cleaning the attic of the convent again. All day long for a dime and a carton of white milk—not even chocolate.

Avoiding them was important. That and getting over my crush on Ellen Kopenski (nice Polish girl) and falling in love with Barbara Corso (nice Italian girl). Until baseball began, of course, then it was who needs girls?

Going to see Jason and the Argonauts at the movies, watching Creature Features at night on the weekend. But creeping up in my mind, it was figuring out what was going on in the world. Some remnants of the 50s; bomb shelters, the space race, political turmoil, communism and the Bay of Pigs!

All washed away and forgotten completely when I could run home after school and watch the last couple of innings of Cub baseball and the 10th inning interview with my beloved Jack “Hey Hey” Brickhouse. (I lived on the north side.) Then let's go find a game!

While I love hockey now and do remember going to the Stadium to watch Moose Vasko lay out some Detroit forward, it was baseball that took my mind off my young worries.

And now it's about to happen again, albeit I'm somewhat older! Union problems, elections, threats of layoffs, suspensions, negotiations, the new U.S. President, the new Congress, the stimulating stimulus bill, the taxes that will hammer us all, the ignorance of our mayors and a few chiefs. The perils, if true or not, of global warming, and saying goodbye to Polar Bears and the little Bear, Rex Grossman.

Can the Blackhawks do it this year (I hope and pray) and will the Cubbies, after 100 years, go to the big game?

While I salivate over the hockey playoffs and Stanley Cup about to take over my TV viewing (or should I say continue to take over my TV viewing, now that Rocky Wirtz has put **all** Blackhawk games on TV) it is our national pastime that takes me back to when I was 12.

Playing ball all day long in the summer after a spring of oiling and beating your glove, planing down your old bat, and hoping that we could steal enough baseballs to get some games together.

Getting the guys together for a game was never a problem. Everyone put their differences aside when it came time to “play ball.” No organized games, either. In the streets, the alleys, school playgrounds, or bank parking lots, and sometimes even a Park District field if we were lucky. We played in the city wherever and whenever we could.

It’s that time again, people. Time to put your troubles away. Forget about the sham and drudgery that life can sometimes bring. Let the fact that your wallet is slimmer and the fat cats in Springfield have their hands in your pocket again ooze away as your memories of baseball come back to the forefront of your being. It happens every Spring.

Forget about Brad and Angie, Rihanna and Chris, Bill O’Reilly and Chris Matthews. Baseball is in the air. The ballplayers are training in far away places like Florida and Arizona. They will be here soon. Oil, leather and wood. Such a beautiful ménage a trois.

C’mon Lou; c’mon Ozzie, make my day. C’mon, let’s be 12 again.

Stay safe.

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