

**Still A Great and Glorious Game**  
**By**  
**Daniel E. White February 10, 2025**

I saw a reminder, as I was scrolling through *Dodgers' Beat* online, that Spring Training was only two weeks away. That means, if you are reading this the day I have sent it (February 10), tomorrow.

I felt my heart quicken and the sun felt a little warmer. Because good friends from Hawaii days have made plans to attend a few spring games in Arizona, and we were unbooked for one of those days, we will be at a game in March. Life is good just now!

I regard seeing that reminder as fortunate. Nearly every year since beginning *About Aging*, I have written at least one piece involving baseball. Baseball and Memory; Infield Fly Girl; Lessons from the Game; Photographs, Hopes and Baseball; you get the picture. Until seeing the reminder, I was having trouble agreeing with my muse about what would connect me enough with the game I love for me to write about it this year.

I think I know why.

Readers of long-standing will recall my use from time to time of the aphorism “expectations are resentments under construction.” In a way akin to that wisdom, I think my problem has been me. I have succumbed to the words of talented writers who have captured the poetry of baseball, the game played on Elysian fields where the object is to get home. Baseball is a game with none of the aggression and violence inherent in football or suggestions of social privilege, a 20<sup>th</sup> century critique of golf and even tennis.

Bart Giamatti, after a stint as President of Yale, was Commissioner of Baseball before he died unexpectedly. In his book, “A Great and Glorious Game,” he wrote about how the game reflects the duality of the American experience historically. Community is important but individualism is the highest value for many Americans.

In baseball, the initiating action pits one individual, the pitcher, against another individual, the batter. Either one can, by himself, have dramatic impact on the game; striking out the batter or hitting a home run that changes the score. The community becomes a factor only when the batter hits the ball but not out of the ballpark.

Individualism and community co-exist.

Alas, money has sullied the idyllic. That’s been hard for me to accept, so enamored have I been with the mythology I soaked in so easily.

My bad. What aspect of our public life has not **always** been subject to the influence of money? And why does each instance of that happening disappoint me so? After all, the warning we all know reads “the **love** of money is the root of all evil,” not the money itself.

Perhaps my malaise has resulted from my reading too many stories about the game in the off- season. Which player is going to sign a contract for how many years, worth how many millions

of dollars a year? Will players choose loyalty to a team and a town over making more money playing somewhere else, or will a team divest itself of a fan-favorite player nearing the time for a new contract to parlay his “value” into a slew of younger (read less expensive) players?

Maybe the varying levels of willingness among owners, gazillionaires all, to spend what the “market” dictates they ought to spend to purchase enough talented players to field a competitive team disappoints me. Implicit in such calculations is disregard for the fans who pay for seats, buy food, drinks, and team-logo shirts and hats, all to the benefit of the owner’s bottom line. Certainly, owners have not been hesitant (and to some extent, I understand why) to make seats so expensive.

You can check out online the average costs for a family of four to attend a major league game and understand what a financial commitment that would be for a middle-class family. When you pay your first baseman \$25,000 for every time he bats in a season (if he plays every game, a significant “if” these days), the money has to come from somewhere. (Can you say “television?”)

Note: our seats for the game we will see in March, one that doesn’t even count, cost \$75 each. They are just past first base 20 rows up.

My Edenic vision has players loyal to teams, owners appreciating that they perform a valuable service to the community by fielding competitive teams with players who are involved in that community, salaries that don’t boggle the mind, and so on.

How naïve of me!

The reminder that the playing part of baseball begins again on February 11 has muscled through the clouds of my disappointments. I know that most players play for the love of the game. The game is still played in parks. There are owners who view fans as more than profit points, who are, themselves, passionate fans of the sport. The blend of individual endeavors and team success still remains as a reminder of traditional American values.

When I settle into my seat at Sloan Park in Section 117, Row 13, Seat 19 to watch the Giants play the Cubs, all will be forgiven with the first crack of the bat.

At least, that is my expectation.

Click here to email your comments to Dan: [danwhitehi@gmail.com](mailto:danwhitehi@gmail.com)