

A Personal Pastime

I gazed into the night sky as my eyes focused on a circular, small white object. The crowd erupted, and I watched the ball fly into the center field seats. I thought to myself, “Aaron Judge has just won the 2017 Home Run Derby!” Confetti rained from the sky and reality set in. My favorite baseball player and future MVP has just made MLB history as the first rookie to win the Derby. Not only was I lucky enough to be at this game, but I was also witnessing baseball history with my Dad.

Back in 2013, my Dad and I made it our goal to see a game in each of the thirty MLB stadiums. It’s something we both look forward to, an annual road trip. As of today, we are one stadium away from accomplishing our goal. We have traveled thousands of miles through twenty-nine different cities to attend games and have experienced many unique cultures, traditions, and foods, making each stadium visit unforgettable. While most of the people we met along the way were strangers, we all shared one commonality - our love of America’s favorite pastime. Baseball has the incredible power of uniting fans together and strengthening bonds over 9 innings and 27 outs.

Ten years ago, when my Dad and I began our journey, he was not nearly as interested in baseball as I was. However, he felt strongly about the two of us sharing a common, connected experience. He sacrificed his vacation time each year to watch baseball with me, not so much because of his personal interest but because he knew the game meant the world to me. He would drive day and night, hours on end, just so we could catch (no pun intended) a game together.

As a young boy, seeing the world around me with unassuming eyes, I thought our trips were meant for the sole purpose of watching ball games and experiencing other parts of the

country. Over time, I have realized that the baseball games were merely a bonus. The time spent traveling cross country became opportunities for my Dad and I to grow our relationship. We've spent countless hours talking, laughing, and just being together.

Our relationship has evolved from an average father-son relationship to an unbreakable bond. Annual baseball excursions guaranteed that we would spend many inseparable hours together - time we would not have normally had. Whether it was eating a burger sandwiched between a donut in Arlington, searching for rare All-Star pins in Cleveland, or admiring the yellow steel bridges in Pittsburgh, my Dad and I always made the most of our time together.

As the late innings of my youth are rapidly approaching, maturity and life experiences have taught me that it was never about baseball, it was about the time my Dad and I spent together. I have learned that in life, when it comes to our loved ones, it is not always about doing things that make you happy. It is always about doing things that bring you together. Time is precious, and 27 outs fly by as quickly as 18 years at home.

I never would have thought that baseball would lead me to travel the country and create cherished memories with my Dad. Our annual baseball excursions will never be forgotten. This summer, my Dad and I will travel to Texas to complete our stadium tour. It will top off what has been an incredible experience with my Dad. While Aaron Judge continues to be my favorite player, my Dad will always be the true MVP.