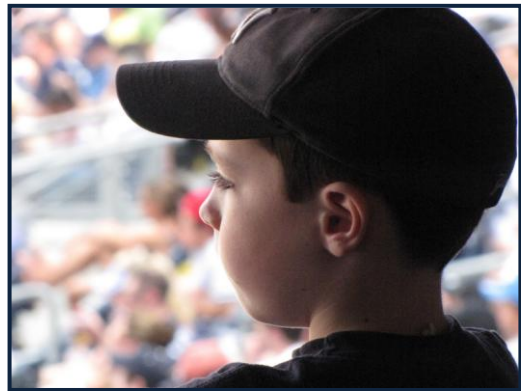


“Give the Kid the Ball”

It was a good evening to watch a ball game in the Bronx. The Yankees were out of the 1983 pennant race, but the air was cool, the tickets free, and Ron Guidry (Louisiana Lightning) was pitching.

In the second inning, a foul ball was hit in the direction of a 9-year-old boy in the stands. As the youngster was reaching for it, the ball was grabbed by a man of about 35 wearing horn-rimmed glasses.

In the struggle, a cheap pair of binoculars around the kid’s neck was broken. His mother tried to console him, but he was totally crushed. He had on an oversized Yankee cap that came down over his eyes and a baseball glove that was too big for him. He seemed a wimpy child, the kind every other boy on the block beats up on a daily basis.



Suddenly, someone shouted: “Give the kid the ball! Give the kid the ball!”

Horn Rims shook his head and put the ball in his side pocket. Inning after inning, the chant continued until it spread throughout the lower left-field stands. People were chanting without even knowing the story: “Give the kid the ball!”

By the seventh inning, the boy must have had a stomach ache. People around him felt so sorry they were buying him peanuts, sodas and ice cream. Then, one of the men nearby went over to talk to Horn Rims. Whatever was said, Horn Rims reached into his pocket, turned, and gave the boy the ball. The youngster’s eyes lit up instantly.

Somebody yelled, “He gave the kid the ball!” and the crowd was on its feet, clapping and yelling, “He gave the kid the ball!” The ballplayers were looking up into the stands. It seemed more excitement had been created in the left-field stands than in the game.

Suddenly, a strange thing happened. A man on the front row who also caught a foul ball, got up and gave it to Horn Rims, saying, “That was a nice thing you did.” Horn Rims thanked him and pocketed the ball. Another thunderous ovation rocked the left-field stands.

In the bottom of the ninth, a young man in a Fu Manchu mustache was leaving. As he passed the kid, he took a ball from his pocket. “Here kid – here’s another,” he yelled, flipping the ball in the air. Surprisingly, the boy caught it. More cheers.

(more)

Hundreds of fans who had been halfheartedly watching a routine game were smiling and slapping strangers on the back.

And the kid? He had two balls in his glove and a big grin on his face. He no longer looked wimpy.

The story is illustrative of the power of acts of kindness. A baseball game can be changed. Attitudes can be changed. A day can be changed.

I'm grateful that every day in the work of Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, displays of kindness are everyday occurrences.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (Galatians 5:22).

– Beecher Hunter