

Epics from Marie's Life's Journey

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The recent victory of the Anaheim Angels in the World Series brought back some memories that inspired a story about my husband, Ray — a story that I think many of you will be able to relate to in one way or another.

Baseball

I can see him now, in the Seventh Heaven with his baseball cronies hashing and rehashing every play of the World Series. He was up there coaching right along with Mike Scioscia — telling him who will make the best pitcher for the day, what strategy to use on each Giant player, encouraging each player when a Giant's ball went out of the park. He would be doing no different in heaven than he did on earth for the man was obsessed with sports, especially baseball.

When times were hard and troubles came his way, baseball was a passion so deep he would forget all his worries by worrying about the failure of the team he chose to call "his team."

He lived through seeing Lou Gehrig come and go, Mickey Mantle at his best, Joe Demaggio and all the unknowns whose dreams came true as they made it to the "big leagues." He knew them all by name, their batting average, how many games they won, what years they played, their idiosyncracies. He coached more games than any one coach who was paid to do so. It was a common sight to see him sit before the television watching the game and the radio playing, listening to the announcer call each play. And then, he just had to read the sports page to see what he might have missed or read another person's analysis of the game.

While living in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Braves were "his team." He groaned and agonized over each play. He cheered the players on to victory — suffered when they were disappointed in their performances. And when we moved from Wisconsin

to California, he made the unthinkable change of allegiance from the National League to the American League and the Los Angeles Angels became "his team."

When he had both legs amputated, it did not hinder him from going to several games a year and, of course, the same commitment he had made to the Braves he now made with the Angels. The amputation of his legs only heightened his love for a sport he could play from his wheelchair.

His love for the game rubbed off on all around him. He would draw attention to simple things going on in the game one would ordinarily miss. Each play was a new experience for him and made all who watched with him get into the game as if it were the last wonderful experience one was to have on earth.

When it was his time to leave and go to the seventh heaven, his prayer was, "Lord, let me live to see one more World Series." He was in intensive care, tubes coming out from all parts of his body with a television transcending him to the playing field and, yes, he got to see the World Series before he went to the seventh heaven in January of 1996.

This lover of baseball was not Gene Autry; it was my husband, Ray. Thanks, Ray, for cheering the Angels on to victory from a box office seat.

God's blessings to each and everyone of you during this Thanksgiving season,



Marie Kolasinski