

Father-Son Story by Bryan Wyatt

It was the summer of 1971, and this 13-year old was desperately looking for a kind of baseball game that would be comparable to my interest in table hockey, and collecting hockey cards in the winter. I clipped out the ad from a comic, and sent away for the game company brochure. I remember it so clearly when it arrived, with the card image of Johnny Bench. After reading the brochure, it seemed fairly straight forward how the game would play, and my dad thought so too. I used the rest of my allowance, and anxiously placed the order for the game and six teams under the selector set.

A month or so went by and the game arrived. My dad opened it and took his time counting out the number of teams and as he counted right up to 24, I realized he had put the rest of the money in so I would have the entire set. The 1970 season cards and the game quickly became my favourite thing to do.

Around the same time, my Mom needed to have back surgery, which meant a lengthy stay in the hospital. My Dad visited her every day after his work-day was over, which meant he didn't get home until later each evening. My oldest sister had already moved away, and my other sister and older brother were very much into their own things, so I didn't have a whole lot going on. My Dad and I started playing the game at night, and it formed a great connection for us. We started with a modest 10-game schedule in each division, with each team playing each other twice. I kept rudimentary stats for a 13-year old, as we played. My Dad had his unique "managing" skill, as he would just use the players he thought would give him the best chance of winning. We didn't have rules on player usage at all; the biggest rule we used is that you could only use positions on the card. As I recall, Hal McRae had 2nd base on his and Dad would use him to start over Tommy Helms.

The games were always fun, and they certainly helped me deal with not having Mom around as much for the several months of hospitalization.

The next gift for me in Strat was that Christmas when I received the old-timer set of the '22 Giants, '24 Washington, '27 Yankees, '31 A's (in red ink) '34 Cardinals and '35 Cubs, and the two Hall of Fame sets. We used these teams a lot too.

In the summer of 1973, I decided to join a play-by-mail league. I had to go away for four weeks to Royal Canadian Air Cadet camp, so I asked my Dad to play my required games for my Kansas City Royals. He stepped up to the plate, and did a good job filling in for me, although I'm sure he must have felt a bit constrained with rules about usage and positions.

Over the years (I am 58), this game has helped me get through some pretty rough periods in my life. It always helps relieve my stress, and gives me a great escape each time I play.

My dad, Stewart Gerald Wyatt, just turned 89 on May 9th and lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

Bryan Wyatt
Thunder Bay, Ontario