

IN THE BEGINNING...

Birth of a Replay

Last year I picked up the dice again after a 30-year delay of sorts and resumed the full 1980 season replay that I began with my buddy during the strike of '81. (*I guess it was really more of a work stoppage of my own rather than a rain delay.*) But what does this have to do my dad, you ask?

When I was a kid, my dad would use his vacation time each July and we'd go to the MLB All-Star Game, wherever it was played. In the summer of '81, with the players on strike, we traded our planned trip to Cleveland for a visit to the Little League Baseball Museum and a week at my grandpa's cabin on a secluded mountain not far from Williamsport, PA. As an added bonus, my buddy was allowed to come along.

Since there was no TV and no baseball to listen to on the radio, one evening as Dad read a book in the rocking chair by the fireplace, my friend and I decided to give this new game I had just gotten a try. A few weeks before we left for the mountains, we had heard on the news about a couple guys playing this board game with a funny name while sitting at a card table at home plate in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium on the date of the strike-postponed 1981 All-Star Game. Going through severe MLB withdrawal, I had badgered my dad until he relented and gave me an advance on my allowance so I could get a money order and send away for the 1980 season Strat-O-Matic game that was advertised in the back of my *Baseball Digest*.

After a few hours of fun rolling games taking turns with our beloved 1980 World Champion Phillies to get the hang of it, it was time for bed so we reluctantly put the cards away for the night, still chatting about this cool game as we lay in the bunk beds before drifting off to sleep. The next day, after breakfast, my dad took us out for a hike...and boy was it a hike. After hours of walking, sweating, getting bitten by horseflies and stalked by gnats, our limited 13-year-old patience had worn thin of the whole getting back to nature idea and just wanted to get back to the cabin. We griped and complained about sore feet, thirst, and my dad seemingly getting us lost as we trudged through the woods...at one point I asserted, "There's a bottle of water in the fridge with my name on it and NOBODY better touch it!" (*He still loves to remind me of that quote*).

After finally returning to camp, rehydrating, having some lunch, and vowing not to leave the cabin again, my buddy and I pulled out the cards and dice and began a week-long marathon fueled by Pop Tarts and Welch's Grape soda. My poor dad coerced us to come along for a "short" hike time and time again over the next few days, but was met with a unified front of staunch resistance in the form of a "Not now, we're in the middle of a game". By the end of the week, we were hooked on Strat (*and probably pre-diabetic*); and by the time the strike ended and the real 1981 All-Star was played in Cleveland on August 9, we were well on our way to replaying the entire 1980 season – of course, life eventually got in the way and my cards were mothballed in the attic for thirty years...but rediscovering Strat last year has brought back all the fond memories from that Summer of '81...and how my poor dad started it all by taking us for that hike! Thanks, Dad!

p.s. So as not to sound as a totally horrible son, my dad and I went on to go to the next five All-Star Games and countless ballgames at The Vet and at ballparks around the country together – no Strat, no buddy, just my best friend...my dad.

EJ

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