



Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

It may be inaccurate to say that I am a sports fan. But I am interested in some sports, particularly major league baseball and college football. Going to the stadium to be part of the action, so to speak, has produced some good memories. But I have recently decided to never again attend a stadium event.

The experience just isn't what it used to be. For one thing, my favorite team built a new stadium, despite the fact that I had grown accustomed to the old stadium, which also had sentimental value due to the fact that it was where my family went when I was a kid. With the new stadium came many other changes — changes I just can't deal with.

But there are other reasons I will never go back. The music they play over the public address system is nothing like what they played when I was a kid. It simply isn't my style. And the volume level is excessive!

In recent years I noticed they no longer have the crowd sing, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." This was one of the highlights of my stadium experience throughout childhood. I just cannot concentrate on the game and enjoy it any longer because they don't cherish that time-honored tradition.

And you ought to see the clothes some people wear to the stadium. There just isn't the respect for the game like there used to be. Even some of the vendors wear clothes that are offensive. I cannot enjoy my peanuts and Cracker Jacks when they are hawked by such slobs.

The dignity of the game and its traditions have diminished by the fact that the whole experience has become such a production. Back in the day our focus was on the field of play. Now we are distracted by high definition jumbotrons. As if that isn't enough, they launch fireworks when something super significant happens. Doing so is an insult to patriotic citizens, who know the

connection of fireworks to our nation's celebration of independence. Our independence was won by brave and honorable military personnel. Using fireworks to celebrate a spectacular event on the field of play cheapens the celebration of patriots on the field of battle.

In addition to all that, today's crowd is not the same crowd I remember from my childhood. Some of the fans seated near me were downright disrespectful. They didn't greet me when I arrived. In fact, most of them never said a word to me the entire time I was there. The team has changed dramatically, too, from a new manager to a completely new roster

of players. It isn't the same organization I joined as a fan years ago.

I never really felt welcomed or at home in the stadium. When I entered, the gate attendant took my ticket to scan it.

As he handed the stub back to me, he mumbled the obligatory, "Enjoy the game." The game I went to see took place two weeks ago and not one person in the team organization has contacted me to learn if my experience at the stadium was positive, much less to thank me for attending the game. Neither have they extended an official or personal invitation for me to return.

I was shocked that the coach never spoke to me. In fact, he never even acknowledged my presence in the stadium.

Finally, another reason I will never go back to the stadium is that I just couldn't get over the number of times we stood up and sat down. And there were people going in and out, milling about and visiting with each other, hardly paying attention to the game.

Hey, I just now realized that I haven't even mentioned the game. And that was the very reason I went to the stadium. I allowed myself to get so focused on other things that I failed to focus on the main thing. 

I Will Never Go Back

