



Tom



Ted



Joe

Dick Carey
Sports Beat
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Father Mac

Two of the nicest things about sports, aside from the friendly competition, are the camaraderie and the memories that come with athletic contests. For, long after the final scores are forgotten, images of teammates and opponents, too, live on in our minds.

A case in point — last week Father Thomas McDonnell, a well-known priest in and around Boston, went to his eternal reward. You may have read about him in the major newspapers — how he studied in Rome where they send only the best and brightest; how he befriended all

those in need in South Boston, especially at St. Augustine's and St. Monica's parishes; and all about his prolific and erudite writings.

All of this is true, but what I remember most about this former outstanding Boston College High School scholar-athlete is a baseball game he and I played half a century ago. Only a few years out of high school, Tom was the player-coach of our college team, and he picked me, a shortstop, to be the starting pitcher in this particular game. After I gave up nine runs in the first inning, Tom sent me out to the mound again in the second inning, and I rewarded the coach for his confidence in me by yielding only five more runs.

Before the third inning began, Tom told me that he was going to make a pitching change. (I didn't argue with him.) Then, the coach brought in Needhamite Eddie DesRoches, and the hard-throwing right-hander shut down the opposition the rest of the way. He locked the barn door, but, unfortunately, the horse was long gone.

On the few occasions that Father Mac and I met during the intervening years, he spoke

highly once or twice of my ability as a shortstop but discreetly and kindly omitted any mention of my pitiful, two-inning pitching performance in a particular baseball game 50-plus years ago — and I didn't discuss it, either.

At any rate, for his patience with pitchers as well as for the encouragement and help he gave to those who had been hit much harder in the game of life than I was in the game of baseball, may Father McDonnell, who has just been called up by the general manager of all to play for the Heavenly Nine, find a place in the starting lineup — and may God hold him in the web of His glove.

Rounding third— and heading home

Many years ago, a famous Boston baseball player by the name of Ted Williams, who used to draw thousands each week to Fenway Park just to see him hit, wrote a book as he turned 40, near the end of his career. Writing about himself, he penned, "My Turn at Bat."

Around the same time many years ago, a well-known Boston Catholic priest by the name of Father Joe Manton, who used to

draw thousands each week to Mission Church just to hear him preach, coined a phrase as he turned 90 at the end of his life. Speaking about himself, he said, "I'm rounding third and heading home."

Many of us, who have reached senior citizen status, can relate to the musings of the baseball player and the preacher, for we have had our turn at bat, and many of us are now rounding third and heading home. Life is a lot like baseball, for, in many ways, our journey through life is like a trip around the bases,

But before we can get to bat, we must spend some time in the womb of the dugout. Unfortunately, however, many of our human family teammates never reach the batter's box, nor even make it the on-deck circle, for their careers and lives are cut short before they learn the smallest steps to take. Among those who do get a chance to bat, many never complete the trip around the bases, because their lives were ended by war, accidents or illness.

We seniors, who have had our turn at bat and are making the round trip, have found that the

first leg of our long journey seemed to have taken the longest. Getting out of the baby's crib, like getting out of the batter's box, was difficult. Then, we had to get our legs into motion before we could really run, and it took a long time to reach first base. But, as we headed toward second and third, we were really motoring and those middle years flew by.

Now that we have rounded, or are rounding third and heading home, we seem (or time seems) to slow down again — and we wonder how and when we shall reach home, our eternal home. Shall we slide in safely on a close play, or shall we score standing up? Will it happen sooner — or later? Life, indeed, is like baseball in many ways, isn't it? We don't know the best answers, but one lesson we have learned on our long trip around the bases. It is now how long you live, but how well you live.

Quote for the week:

"When the one Great Scorer comes to mark against your name,

He writes not that you won or lost, but how you played the game" — Grantland Rice