

Invisible baseball

Pat wandered out to the neighborhood diamond for a game of baseball. The only problem was that there was nobody around to play with and Pat didn't have a baseball, or a bat. He did have his dime-store glove however.

by **Kurt Kelsey**

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Kurt Kelsey lives in Warsaw, Indiana. He wrote saying, "My neighborhood has many good memories. I still feel a bond with all of those people. There still to this day is a remnant of the tiny park in which we all played, and houses now stand where our baseball diamond was— smack dab in the middle of the neighborhood.

This is the story of something that happened in that baseball diamond and that something remains smack dab in the middle of my heart."

Pat was a man like most, full of dreams and expectations. He sought friendship, companionship and love. But unlike most other men, Pat had Down Syndrome and would never have the opportunity to see some of his dreams come true.

My neighbor Mike was Pat's nephew. Mike and I were very best friends and spent the majority of our time hinged at the hip. We did what most twelve-year-old boys did in the seventies— played Hot Wheels, watched TV, got into some mischief, played baseball and drove Mike's mom crazy with our 45 record of Monster Mash.

We had a very close-knit neighborhood with a small park and a baseball diamond right smack dab in the middle of it.

***When Pat would come to Mike's
for a visit, we would play with Pat,***

***and for the most part treated him
as our equal. We loved Pat dearly.***

One summer afternoon, Pat came for one of his usual visits. If memory serves me correctly, Mike and I were at my house playing Hot Wheels under my back porch. Since we were not around to play with, Pat wandered out to the neighborhood diamond for a game of baseball. The only problem was that there was nobody around to play with and Pat didn't have a baseball, or a bat. He did have his dime-store glove however.

Nonetheless, Pat began to play a game of baseball. First he batted, then he pitched, then he played in the infield, then he batted some more. You could hear Pat from under my porch,

"Hey batter batter, swing batter!"

One of the neighborhood kids, Patty, walked out to play baseball with Pat. Mike and I looked at each other and without saying a word, went to the diamond to join the game. As the game continued on, each of us took turns in the various roles. Pat decided who played which position.

Then something unexpected and amazing began to happen.

***One by one, kids from all around
the neighborhood began joining
the game. No one questioned why
we didn't have a bat or a ball—
they just walked out to the field or
waited their turn at bat.***

Before we knew it, we had a full-fledged game of invisible baseball, with Pat leading the outcome of the game. There was chanting in the infield and cheering from the sidelines when someone smacked a home run. There were "tens" given as kids crossed the home plate (we didn't do high fives back then) and votes of sympathy when someone struck out.

It had all the excitement of a regular game of baseball. Parents stood from their houses, spectators to this wondrous event, filled with pride and some with tears of joy.

And Pat, I never saw him happier than that day— the day of invisible baseball.

What we had experienced that day is what God desires for all of us.

***We experienced love,
compassion, friendship,
teamwork, pride and joy.***

We played the game without question, simply because we knew it would make Pat happy. There were only winners that day, nobody lost the game. It was reward enough just to play.

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