

Those who know me know that I am a big time baseball fan. When I was just a little guy, playing baseball was the only activity on my list of things to do. If anyone needed Andy, they knew the first place to look was down at the sandlot where it was a good bet to be the only place to look.

I loved baseball. In my youth I would say that my game was eighty percent love and twenty percent talent. I'd play any position and any game that required a bat and glove. Every day was wrecked with disappointment as the sunset forced us to put away our mitts for another day. I was not a romantic, I was a ball player and for me sunset was the worst part of the day.

When my family moved to San Diego, my game faded quickly from participation to appreciation as my teen years moved me into a world of surfing and playing music and baseball became a great night at the ball park watching my Pads. The Padres were a young franchise. They played horrible and looked even worse in those taco bell uniforms. But I loved going to the games. Watching the Big Red Machine, Mays and McCovey, and oh those dreaded Dodgers. If the Pads won, it was a great night. If they didn't, well it was baseball and it was the Padres after all.

My favorite player of all time was Tim Flannery. For a teen growing up in San Diego, Tim was the coolest of cool. It was said that he played baseball because it gave him his days to go surfing. And when Trader Jack McKeon came to San Diego, it is believed that Tim went to Jack and simply told him that if he traded him, he would retire. He was a San Diegan who loved the Pads and the city... loved to surf and had a landscaping business. He would not play for any other team. Two years later, Tim was the only veteran Padre who was still left on the team.

I share all this with you because it leads me to my point of this story. I wanted to talk about my mom, it being Mother's Day and all.

You see, most people would read the start of my story and think, 'Well let's see here. His Dad was a big sports fan and he had three older brothers, so he certainly had a lot of influence with sports.'

My Dad was a big sports fan to be sure. But none of my brothers got into any sports when they were growing up.

If you were to ask me where I get my love for baseball, I would not hesitate in saying that I got it from the females on my family tree. Specifically, my mother and her mother.

Granny Dot (Dorothy to the rest of you) was my grandmother. She loved baseball. When she was nearing the end of her travels on this planet, we would go to visit her. She could never get our names right or who had what children. With six of us and several great-grandchildren, you certainly could not fault the woman. However, if you asked her ANYTHING about the Pads, she would know the answer. She may not have known who she was talking to exactly, but she could certainly let you know that Tony Gwynn went two for three last night and is now hitting .327. The story of her passing is that she slipped into a semi-conscious state and the doctors were just waiting for her to let go of life. When my mother visited her on that last night, she leaned over and whispered to her that the Pads won, breaking an eight game losing streak. Granny Dot smiled and said, 'That's nice' and let go of life. Nobody challenges that story because we know what kind of fan Granny Dot was. We have no doubt that she refused to leave this planet while the Pads were losing. We're also certain that God would not have wanted to deal with her any time sooner.

My mom took over where Granny Dot left off. I live in Nashville now and I am well aware that come spring, I need to have my Padres schedule close by because you do not want to call mom when the Padres are playing. And when you do talk to her, she is a great mother who loves her son and her grandchildren, to be sure ... but when you mention the Padres, the level of excitement in her voice is always elevated and she can talk all day about her boys at Petco Park. She clearly is the best Padres fan in San Diego.

So when you ask me where I got my love of the game, I always think of mom and Granny Dot. I called mom to wish her a Happy Mother's Day on Saturday after the Pads won again. Good thing, too. Today St Louis is pounding the Pads. I'm thinking it wouldn't be a great phone call right now.

Just A Thought