

Orioles magic: A night at the ballgame with the next generation of Orioles fans

As a child growing up in Baltimore in the 1980s, I rooted for the Orioles. Everyone did.

I thought of the players as members of the Baltimore family—and I always believed they would win. Who wouldn't believe Jim Palmer and Brooks Robinson could make magic happen at Memorial Stadium? They did it day after day, night after night.

We all had our favorites. Rick Dempsey. Jim Palmer. Storm Davis. Floyd Rayford. Cal Ripken, of course. Even the coach, Joe Altobelli, who wore my lucky number, 26.

My baby sister, who was born the year the O's won the World Series, loved Eddie Murray. He used to send gifts to her via one of my uncles. (It was years later that I realized perhaps #33 wasn't sending them on his own.)



Last week when my husband got tickets to a skybox to see an Orioles game, I was excited to go. So were our boys. We don't go to many games, but our sons know we are an Orioles family. And, although we aren't a big sports family, I hope that cheering on the Orioles will be part of their childhood—just as it was for me.



That night we drove through a discouraging downpour to the stadium, but as we parked, we could see it had slowed to a drizzle. By the time we found our seats, the rain had stopped.

Watching the stadium workers as they cleared the tarps from the field was a highlight of the night.



But there was plenty of other excitement. The skybox was packed with free, delicious food. And if you've ever taken a child to a sporting event, you know that children don't eat the same amount as adults. They eat more, much more. Our 6-year-old went through all the strawberries he could find, at least three hot dogs, half a crab cake, and an astonishing amount of popcorn.



Somewhere in between hot dogs, Larry Sheets was suddenly in the skybox, stopping by for a visit. Naturally I could think of nothing interesting to say to this former outfielder, this famous Oriole who was such a hero when I was a child. Our sons were completely mystified about who this man was, though they thought the baseball cards he signed for them were terrific.

We watched a few fantastic innings and cheered on the Birds before Daniel and I went to explore the stadium. We saw a real live Gold Glove, the 1983 World Series trophy, wonderful photos from Orioles history, and the “2131” banners that hung from the warehouse the night Cal broke Lou Gehrig’s record.



As we walked, I pointed to pictures and tried to explain to him how thrilling it all was—how much Orioles history is a part of my childhood and how fortunate we are to be in a city with a baseball team. He walked, but I wasn’t sure he was listening.



Then he stopped.

“Look, Mama! Look!” he said.

I turned, excited to see what he had discovered. Would it be a trophy? A photo? An old drawing of the Oriole Bird?

None of the above.

“They have cotton candy!” he said. “Can I get some cotton candy?”

And we did. So even though we saw home runs and amazing plays and a man play the National Anthem on steel drums, our 6-year-old will probably remember the cotton candy. Well, that and the three hot dogs. Or was it four?

