

MIRACLE AT THE FIELD

The year was 2006 and around 8 months had gone by since Brian passed away. The inaugural Brian Krueger Memorial Baseball Tournament had already concluded. Around 16 teams had participated and for a first time tournament it was very successful. However life without Brian was still affecting my family and I. Some health professionals might call it depression, but my wife and I knew it was very deep sadness.

I was struggling at work and conflicting with my supervisors. Angry voices were raised by people who never shout. My boss wanted to know where the old Ken went. "I told him he left with Brian, and will never be back." People who have never lost a child just cannot realize how devastating it is on a parent. They just do not understand and wonder why it takes so long to get over it. Things got so bad I felt like quitting my job.

It was a very warm August day when I left work and I felt lousy. I do not remember the date, but I know it was a Thursday. I would normally play golf on Thursday afternoons as part of an employee league, but my back hurt and my mental state was not good. Instead I went straight home and laid down for a short time. My wife and daughter were out so I was alone in my thoughts.

My christian faith has always been a source of strength for me, but when bad things happen to good people, "the why question normally comes into play." Yes I asked God what is the meaning of all this. I was on the verge of tears as I prayed for answers. At this point a voice entered my conscious and said go to the field. The voice again said go to the baseball field named for Brian. After Brian died I would occasionally visit the baseball fields as I would visualize those happier times when Brian was playing baseball. However, on this day I just did not feel like going to the ball fields. "But that voice, was it truly the Holy Spirit speaking to me?" Yes, I reluctantly got in the car and drove to Sunset Park, where Brian's Field is located.

It was around 5:30 PM when I arrived at the field. I parked and walked to Field 1 (Brian's Field). I went up and sat in the bleachers on the first base side of the field, like I have in the past. It was warm and very quiet, with a light breeze. There were no games being played and no one was around. Even the play ground, tennis and basketball courts were empty. So there I sat alone on those metal benches again questioning my faith. A few minutes had past, and it was now around 5:45 PM. I again questioned that inner voice. "Ok Lord I am here. Yes visiting these ball fields helps me to feel better, but why today? What are you trying to tell me?"

Within minutes of that thought my life began to change. Cars and vans started to pull into the Sunset ball field's parking lot. And out of the vehicles came children of various ages. Many of them were accompanied by teenagers and other adults. The quiet of the moment now rang out with the voices of enthusiasm and excitement. Yes, these children came to play baseball on Brian's field and the adjacent ones. But you see these were not ordinary children. They were "special needs children" (physically and mentally challenged). They were here to play **Buddy Ball**.

MIRACLE AT THE FIELD

I sat in wonder as the tears rolled down my face. And the inner voice again spoke to me. "You see Ken these children have come here to play baseball just as Brian did. They too struggle to play the game, but Brian could actually play on his own abilities. He did not need a helper or a buddy. He could walk and run, hit and catch the ball. He could talk and listen to his teammates and coaches. Ken, feel their pain, but take hold of their spirit and enthusiasm. They too inspire as Brian did." "Yes Ken, you are sad and feeling sorry for yourself. You must learn to forgive others that do not understand your pain. You must get along with your employers and colleagues as you still have a family here that needs you. The ability to forgive is a gift. Whether right or wrong this virtue must be ingrained in all of us."

Wow, I am really seeing this and hearing these words? I stayed and watched the children play Buddy Ball to the very end. As I was leaving I went up to the woman that appeared to be in charge of the group and thanked her for bringing the children to play baseball on Brian's field. She looked at me and said "are you Brian's dad?" I guess it was pretty apparent as I was the only one watching and my tears and red eyes were easy to see.

I can tell you that my attitude and general well being truly changed after this experience. My life started to improve and I gained a new appreciation for what I have and gratefulness for having Brian 11 years in my life. Yes there are still life's hills and valleys to navigate through, but the valleys are not as deep and easier to climb out of.

I guess most people would say this whole experience was just acquiescence, but I prefer to believe otherwise. You see Buddy Ball was scheduled on Thursday nights during the month of August. *However, I did not know that.* After my difficult day and the way I had been feeling - I needed answers. God answered my prayers. He brought me to the place that Brian loved. He guided me through the most difficult time of my life. He put love and meaning back into living. I will never forget that day, and why these fields (Brian's Field) is so special to our family. "To all who play here, feel his presence and gain strength from his spirit."