

Card Collecting Can Be A Dangerous Hobby!

He was only nine that Spring of 1960. It was one of the first times he was allowed to walk to school by himself. Usually Mom did the escort, Dad was off to work. He had no idea why he needed an escort, it was easy after someone showed you the first time....just walk one block that way, turn right, and walk five more blocks. You can't really miss a school, it takes up a whole block, pretty much. It's where lots of kids hang out, they are all over the place. And loud.

But this day, oh yes, was different. He didn't even make the first block, and life changed. Looking around, like kids do, soaking up everything they can take in, and he happened to look down. It looked like a picture of a guy. He stopped, picked it up, and took a good deep look at it. Maybe it was more like half of a guy. Or a third. You could see on the left side of the thing the guy's name was Hal, and a picture of a guy throwing a baseball. It was part of a baseball card.

The nine year old knew of cards, but had no idea where or how to get them. Sure, he had a few at home, but they were likely left behind by other kids who had come to visit or play and forgot them. Maybe they knew where to get them from. Some of the kids who came over were bigger and older, so they would be more likely to know this sort of stuff. He remembered one card in particular that was in that short stack at home, some hockey guy named Jean Beliveau, but it looked more like a drawing than a picture, and it had some sort of phony looking signature on it. Looked phony right from the start. And another one, a guy named Mantle, square card, mostly, but the picture in the middle was in a circle, and it just showed his face. He had no idea who had left them at his house, but that was fine with him. Everybody had heard of Mickey Mantle.

He picked it up, and wondered where the rest of it was. It didn't take him many more steps to find the rest.....and the mystery was solved, the guy's last name was Woodeshick, and he was a pitcher for the Senators, whoever they were. And the card number was 454. But this card was different. It wasn't tall like the other two, it looked kind of more like square, and stretched out a bit. But it was a card. Kind of hard to piece this mess together though, so into the pocket the pieces went.

The rest of the journey to school was mostly uneventful. He was early, so got in a bit of scrub softball. Best part of that was the rule someone made up, "If you catch a pop fly, you are up!" And all you did was trade places with the batter if you caught one in the air. And if someone grounded out, they went to play right field, and everybody moved along one spot. He never really understood the expression "infield dirt," since the whole field was dirt, and there wasn't a single blade of grass to be seen.

The first class that day was Spelling, and was pretty boring, as usual. The nine year old took a chance, and asked another kid in the class if he had any Scotch Tape, since the card needing fixing. Caught talking in class, he was brought to the front by the teacher, and made to write on the chalk board fifty times "I must not talk in class." He never liked her, anyways.

The next morning, in Geography class, the kid at the next desk over had a few cards sitting in a neat little pile in front of him beside his scribbler. The top card looked really interesting, so he whispered over to him "Do you want to trade that Frank Robinson for what is really two Hal Woodeshicks?" The next thing he knew, he was back at the front of the class writing on the board "I must not bother the other students in class." ONE HUNDRED times!

After school that day, he collected a few pop bottles on the way home that had been discarded by people who obviously had no idea how much money they were worth, and headed for the corner store, which was exactly the opposite direction from school. He turned in 5 bottles, and was handed 10 cents. Instead of buying the usual candy, his eyes settled on a box on the counter that said "1960 CFL Trading Cards." Only 5 cents each, for four cards and gum! Life changed in that very moment, and the money was spent on two packs. In his first one, he got Joe Kapp, who was supposed to be some sort of new player who was going to take the B.C. Lions to the Grey Cup. He had been in the papers, so he must be important. The second pack had ANOTHER Joe Kapp, he was everywhere apparently. He made a mental note to watch for more pop bottles on his way home.

Back to school the next day, and the first class this time was French. Could anything possibly be a worse way to start a day? Besides, he hadn't found one card on his way to school, despite looking everywhere he thought cards might have landed. It wasn't looking like a good day. But when he whispered to a classmate that he would trade a Kapp for that Aaron that was on the top of **his** pile, the day got worse. Teacher was there like a shot, and said something like "You don't seem to learn, do you, so we are going to the Principal's Office." Now THAT is scary. Maybe the **strap** is coming!

He returned to his classroom alone. He didn't say a thing, just walked over to his teacher's desk, picked up **her** Scotch Tape, and put his Hal Woodeshick back together. Then over to his own desk, and he put Hal and Joe Kapp down, and walked up to the front of the classroom.

He picked up the chalk and began to write:

"I must not push the teacher down the stairs....."

