

## Play Ball!

By Jeanette Rhyan

Dad stopped walking and read the sign: “*Cominsky Park. Home of the White Sox.* We made it!”

Mom, Dad, and I were three of thousands of baseball fans streaming into Cominsky Park for an evening baseball game.

“Do you have your ticket, Jeanette?”

Waving the ticket he had given me, I answered excitedly, “Sure, Dad. It’s right here!” Pulling his arm, I continued, “Hurry up! Let’s go!”

### *Three Days Earlier*

My entire family loved baseball, so I wasn’t surprised when Dad announced after dinner that he was thinking about our going to a Chicago White Sox game. Holding my breath, I listened to Mom’s and Dad’s conversation. I really wanted to go to a game!

Stunned, Mom asked, “Can you take off for two days?”

“I’ve got a couple of days before we start haying, so right now is a good time to go. I can ask Arnold to do the evening and morning chores,” Dad assured her, referring to one of our neighbors.

“What game are you considering going to?” Mom asked.

“White Sox vs Detroit Tigers. It should be a good game since Al Kaline is playing for the Tigers. I can get tickets through the Page County State Bank.”

The discussion continued until Mom and Dad had all the details worked out.

### *Friday, July 12, Day of the Game*

It was a seven-hour road trip, so we had to get up very early to start the drive to Chicago. There were miles and miles of cornfields along our way, and I didn’t get really excited until we crossed the Mississippi River at Clinton, Iowa, into Illinois. Mom had made sandwiches for lunch, so we stopped at a little park near the river. I could hardly sit still to eat! Only three hours to Chicago! The rural countryside disappeared as we passed through city after city. Soon, we would be in Chicago!

Dad parked the car in the designated parking lot at the stadium. I clung to Mom’s hand when we started walking to the stadium. My head felt like it was on a swivel: I was looking everywhere, taking in all the sights and sounds of the ballpark. Once inside the stadium concourse, we made our way to a concession stand, where we each got a hotdog. Hot dogs at baseball games tasted

the best! After Dad stopped to buy a baseball program, we eventually made our way to our seats, halfway up the grandstand on the first-base side of the field.

It seemed like forever until we stood for “The Star-Spangled Banner” and the announcement of the lineups. Dad and I cheered for each Chicago player as his name was announced. The game was ready to begin!

“Peanuts! Get your red-hot peanuts! Peanuts!” shouted the vendor walking up and down the stadium stairs. I didn’t know whom to watch, the vendor or the Chicago right-fielder! It was three up and three down for the Detroit Tigers. Chicago was up to bat, and it was three up and three down for the Sox, too.

“Ice-cold drinks! Get your ice-cold sodas! Fifty cents! Get your ice-cold drinks!” The vendor kept trying to entice fans to spend their hard-earned money on sodas. I looked at Dad to see if he might consider buying me a soda. No such luck.

Second inning. Chicago scored a run! Yeah! Detroit scored two runs. Boo! The next inning the Chicago right fielder caught a pop fly ball right in front of us! I jumped up and down and yelled. I was having fun!

“Beer! Get your ice-cold beer! Beer here! Beer! Get your ice-cold beer!” the vendor kept repeating. On this warm July evening, lots of people were buying beer.

It was the middle of the seventh inning, and everyone stood up, including Mom, Dad, and me. The stadium organ started playing, and everyone started singing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” Even though I didn’t know all the words, it was fun to yell “One, two, three strikes, you’re out.” Then, the stadium settled down, and the game resumed. I finally got my soda, and Dad got a bag of peanuts.

It was the ninth inning, and the score had been going back and forth all game. Up to the plate stepped Al Kaline. It didn’t take many pitches for him to send the ball over the centerfield fence. Chicago failed to score any runs in the bottom of the inning. The final score: Detroit 7, Chicago 6.

### *Going Home*

The game had been exciting, and I was exhausted. We exited the stadium with thousands of other disappointed Sox fans. A few were already talking about the game tomorrow night. I just wanted to go to sleep.

Maneuvering the car out of the crowded parking lot, Dad slowly left the stadium area and headed back toward the interstate.

Driving down the highway, Dad announced, “On our way to the stadium, I saw a sign for a Holiday Inn in Brighton Hills.” Brighton Hills was a suburb of Chicago. “I’m keeping my fingers crossed that they have a room for one night.”

Staying at a motel was a luxury that didn’t happen often. Yes, they did have a room available! Settling into the room, I kept talking, nonstop, about the game.

“Jeanette, close your eyes. Get some sleep. We have a long trip home tomorrow. I need to get some rest,” my dad commented as he turned off the lights in the room.

In the dark he asked, “Did you have a good time?”

“Dad, it was the best!”

I was counting balls and strikes as I fell asleep.