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OPEN FORUM

Thanks for the Memories, Shea

A Mets fan reflects on baseball and family at the end of an era

By **Larry Jaffee**

Leave it to America's pastime to make me wonder if the so-called generation gap is perhaps exaggerated.

Growing up, my father was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan who brainwashed my brother and me to be Met fans. The Dodgers might have moved to Los Angeles, but my father wasn't going to give up on the National League. He hated the Yankees, whom I began rooting for in 1976 mostly to piss him off.

But in the late '90s, I started paying attention to the up-and-coming Mets. During the regular season in 2000, I was absolutely appalled when Mets slugger Mike Piazza was beaned in the head by Roger Clemens. It was obvious to me that Clemens had meant to hit him, since they faced each other five times previously and Piazza responded with three home runs.

By October 2000, I was firmly in the Mets camp, and the Subway Series divided my household. My then-2-year-old daughter, Annie, like me, sided with the Mets (admittedly, Annie's allegiance was based on "Mr. Met," the team's baseball-head mascot). Jake and my later-to-become ex-wife were going for the Yankees.

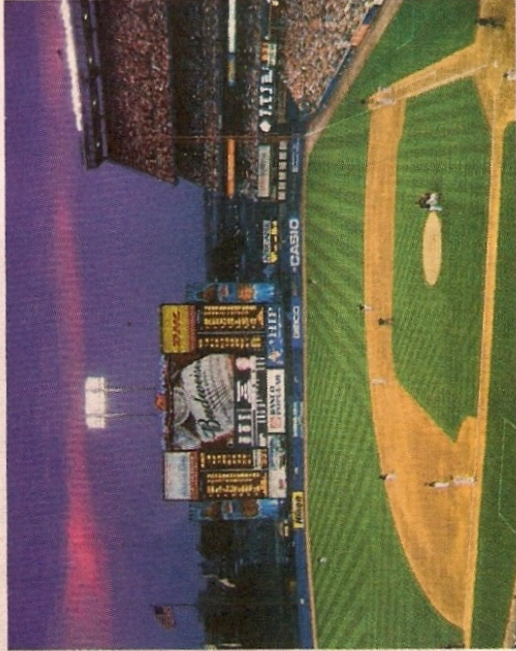
Even at 2, Jake showed promising hand-eye coordi-

nation with a Wiffle ball and bat. He was soon in awe of Derek Jeter. While my father was still driving a taxi-cab a few years ago, he picked up the Yankee captain,

hall-of-famer in his cab.

For the past three years, however, the Yanks have been out of town on Jake's birthday, and he's begrudgingly agreed to see the Mets instead. He's been able to see his name up on the scoreboard wishing him a happy birthday—and one year, he got a little more. About midway through the '06 game, my father, who was sitting in back of us with my mother, told Jake he was going to catch a ball. I turned around and told my father, "It's nice wishful thinking, but kind of doubtful, don't you think?"

Sure enough, in the ninth inning, opposing player Josh Barfield hits a rocket nearly 400 feet, heading straight for us. We were sitting on the left-field side in fair territory three rows back in the mezzanine, 50 feet up. The ball gets deflected by the guy in the front row of our section and bounces under the seat in front of us. Jake sees it too, but his arm is too short. In a split second, I stick it in his glove, and three generations of Jaffees are on Diamond Vision. ■



along with Alex Rodriguez. Jeter obliged with an autograph for his grandson, and it's Jake's prize possession; my dad inexplicably ignored the other future

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