

Stealing Home: A Father, A Son, and the Road to the Perfect Game

Ron Seybold

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Stealing Home is a poignant memoir about the intersections of sports and fatherhood.

Former sportswriter Ron Seybold's affecting memoir *Stealing Home* is about using sports to break negative family cycles and become a better father.

Focused on Seybold's efforts to connect with his son, Nicky, the book follows their rigorous road trip. Seybold is seen struggling with fatherhood thanks to the memory of his disastrous relationship with his own father, who was stoic and erratic. Hoping not to repeat those mistakes, he plans his father-son trip with meticulous detail, moving across eight states to see nine baseball games. The pair cross state lines, stay in sketchy motels, and eat at White Castle on their trek to visit iconic stadiums including Wrigley Field. As they bond, Seybold reflects upon the past.

While another impetus of the road trip is the hope of witnessing a perfect game—a rare event in baseball—Seybold's account of the trip includes revelations and goes in unexpected directions. His sense of his own fatherhood drives him, and he worries that his divorce will result in his losing Nicky. Their shared camaraderie around sports and pop culture references is a guard against this. Even poor decisions, like yelling at Nicky over trivialities, are driven by a passionate desire to be a better father.

The text is dynamic as it balances scenes in the present and the past. The distances between games are covered, but so too are troubles with Seybold's father, his broken marriage, and the recent past. Events in the present prompt memories, rounding the narration out and drawing out negative and positive aspects of how fathers might act. This storytelling method is engaging and satisfying.

Though they are few and far between, photographs are included to punctuate the text's events. They picture family members and stadiums and help to ground the story in its realism. Seeing the joy on Nicky's face or the stoic nature of Seybold's father hammers home the book's points, complementing scenes and layering in emotion.

Steady in its narration, the book captures everyday scenes through a father's eyes, picking out and highlighting details that indicate his deep love for his son and his difficulties when it comes to pursuing a perfect outcome. The text is evocative and careful, and even scenes that are filled with sports jargon or inside jokes resonate.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (May 28, 2019)

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