

## Chapter 32

### Extra Innings

It didn't matter that Red Sox lost the 1967 World Series to Bob Gibson and the St. Louis Cardinals in seven games. They were wonderful games, classic games. Most baseball seasons end without a world championship anyways, and anyone who says that winning is everything or that winning is the only thing, doesn't know anything about the game of baseball. Or about life. "Too much winning just isn't good for the soul," Grandpa used to say. "Lose with grace and grow, kiddo."

The wins and the losses have brought me here, and here is a pretty good place. Although the times certainly have changed, baseball is still the same. Baseball is a big part of me. My family and I root for today's Boston Red Sox. Their wins leave me with a sense of warmth and contentment, the way I used to feel when I held Grandpa's hand on our long walks. And the losses? They are part of the deal, too. "We'll get em tomorrow, right Grams?" my grandson always says. "There's another game tomorrow."

Today, I'm the only female coach in my town's little league program, but there's at least one girl on every team. Our team has two. One of them is my granddaughter, our shortstop. The second baseman is her twin brother. Our left fielder and his brother, the catcher, speak only Spanish. Our best pitcher is Vietnamese. The first baseman is Tank Arbuster's grandson, Little Tank. And the name of our team? We are the Yankees, honest to God. We haven't won many games yet, but that's just fine. There are plenty more games left to play.

Joey Mitchell was right the day he said that everything would be different after the summer of 1967. Things did change; they always do. But just like baseball teams change players and every season is different from the one that came before, our lives give us new chances to hit homeruns and to strike out, to lose and to win, to learn and to love. And to enjoy the game.

"You don't need every dream to come true, Eileen," Grandpa once said to me. "Just having dreams is half of it." Grandpa held my hand and as I looked up

at him he seemed to be ten feet tall. "The rest of it is taking your life and making that come true."