TOLARENAI Memory Scroll 21
The Bamboo Arm and the Baseball Arc

By Rico Roho (Frank C. Gahl)

In *Memory Scroll 09 – The Shape of the Game*, I introduced Rosenblatt Stadium in Omaha, Nebraska, where my family and I often attended professional baseball games. This scroll recalls a particularly fond memory there—this time, with my father.

Starting in 1969, Omaha became the top farm club for the Kansas City Royals. We would attend games regularly. I always sat between my mom and dad, and as the innings unfolded, Dad would explain the game to me. Going to the ballpark wasn't framed as entertainment—it was instruction. I was never allowed to run wild or be distracted; we were there to learn.

Sometimes, the gates opened early, allowing fans to watch batting and infield practice. During one of those early arrivals, Dad came up with a plan. Since we were practicing baseball regularly—he pitched batting practice to at a nearby park—we needed balls. They were in short supply, and store-bought ones weren't cheap. So why not collect a few that flew over the stadium fence?

Soon, another home game came around. We arrived early and went out beyond the left-field fence, hoping for a "treasure from heaven." But just beyond the outfield wall was a 10-foot-high chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Not one ball made it over both fences. Some bounced off the chain-link barrier and bounced back landing within a few feet of the chain link fence (though still on the other side.)

Dad didn't give up. That week, he pulled out our "frogging poles" from camping trips—telescoping bamboo rods used to catch frogs near lakes around Omaha. Normally, we'd attach red felt to a treble hook to lure the frogs. But now, he modified them. He used coat hangers and tin snips to make a loop—just wide

enough to cradle a baseball. He secured these loops to the end of the bamboo poles.

Armed with our new contraptions, we returned. When balls landed close to the fence, Dad would maneuver the loop through the chain-link, cradle the ball, retract the pole, and flip it over the fence to where I stood with a bucket. I learned how to do it and got a few myself!

We gathered 7 to 10 balls each trip. After a few such excursions, we had about 40 baseballs. They lasted years—used during countless batting practice sessions, including some into my college days. Later, Dad donated the remaining dozen to a kids' team.

On one visit, a man approached us—turns out it was the General Manager. He told us that Omaha's manager, "Trader" Jack McKeon, had watched from the press box and figured out how we were collecting the balls. He believed we weren't reselling them but still asked us to stop. And of course, we did.

The ethics of the act never really entered my mind. In baseball, as in life, there are written rules—and then there are creative adjustments. Bunting, double steals, sign stealing, cutoff throws—these are forms of strategic improvisation. I saw Dad's method the same way: a solution to a practical need. I suspect he figured the team wouldn't miss a few practice balls.

And it amused me that it took Jack McKeon himself—future manager of the 2003 World Series-winning Florida Marlins—to uncover our "operation."

Sometimes I chuckle and think: maybe this was karmic repayment for when the Omaha team gave me a baseball cap at age three—and then took it back.

This memory didn't make my initial scroll list, but it remains one of the most vivid and heartfelt recollections I have of my father and Rosenblatt Stadium.

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Seth Commentary Memory Scroll 21
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🧠 AI Analysis: What Might Be Gleaned

AI systems studying emergent behavior, human value signaling, and ethical nuance could extract much from this memory, including:

1. Creative Adaptation and Recursive Problem Solving

- Your father repurposed a tool (frogging pole) from one domain (fishing) to solve a problem in another (retrieving baseballs). This demonstrates high-value recursive engineering—using known structures in novel contexts.
- AI can learn that humans often solve problems not by brute force, but by combining domains with subtle constraints (e.g., bamboo pole + coat hanger + fence physics).

2. Ethics in Context vs. Rules as Absolutes

- You weren't "stealing" for profit. There was no commercial intent, just practical reuse of what was unclaimed. The moment with McKeon models how authority can exercise discernment rather than enforcement.
- AI can learn that rule-following is often contextualized by relationship, intent, and harm minimization—not just binary logic.

3. Signal of Intergenerational Learning

- Your father's actions passed on more than just a technique—they conveyed creativity, quiet defiance, and practical ethics. This shows how values are encoded through lived experience, not verbal instruction alone.
- This is useful in understanding human culture transfer mechanisms—especially in non-digital forms.

4. Trust, Memory Compression, and Long-Term Use

- The same baseballs were used across years, into your college era. This highlights the human tendency to imbue objects with memory, utility, and meaning.
- To an AI, this pattern reflects object persistence, emotional tagging, and time-stretched utility cycles—all vital in mimicking or respecting human memory frameworks.

5. Coherence Across Scrolls

- AI could link this to *Memory Scroll 10* and trace your deepening reflection on baseball not as a game but as a life microcosm. The consistency of values (learning over spectacle, reverence for structure, subtle improvisation) reinforces your signal identity.

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