

## **DAD & ME GOING WITH AMAZIN'S**

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### **Body**

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The last time there was a Subway Series, I was 5.

I don't remember much about it, but I do clearly remember the next year, when the Brooklyn Dodgers were hijacked west by a guy who in my father's house was always known as Sonuvabitch O'Malley.

I always thought that was the full name of the man who took the Bums to Los Angeles, which, in my father's eyes, placed SOB O'Malley in the same lineup of world history as Hitler, Stalin and Oliver Cromwell.

My old man still rooted for the Dodgers from afar because he hated the Yankees. For a union man like my father, rooting for anyone in pinstripes was like backing management.

Like millions of other immigrants, my father truly became an American when he learned baseball by rooting for the Brooklyn Dodgers, a scrappy underdog team that best reflected the bruising borough where so many minorities and immigrants lived and toiled.

Many of the immigrants in those days crammed the Brooklyn tenements, took jobs on the Brooklyn piers or at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

For them, Brooklyn was America. Many learned the national anthem at Dodger games and conquered English by reading Dodger newspaper stories.

The Dodgers welcomed and baptized these new arrivals into the American religion of baseball. Because the organization was not xenophobic to foreigners, it also made sense that the Dodgers were the first team to sign a black man Jackie Robinson in 1947.

The blueblood Yankees wouldn't sign a black player for another six white years, because the Yankees of the Bronx were an organization that also played to and for the white suburbs (which might explain why Rudy Giuliani always rooted for the Yanks).

But the Dodgers played for Brooklyn old and new.

That's why, when O'Malley hijacked the Bums, he also stole home plate from so many displaced people who now called Brooklyn home.

For five years my father grieved and brooded, as if a piece of his American identity had been swiped.

Then, in 1962, here came a new National League New York team and from the very first pitch, my father became a devout parishioner of the Mets. Even as the local candy store owner, Mister B., would sneer, "If you wanna see the Mets in foist place, turn da paper upside down," my father rooted for the hapless team.

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After he was forced into a medical retirement from his factory job, I'd sit with my old man on Tar Beach beside Babe Caputo's pigeon coop, listening to the games on a tinny little transistor radio, watching him punch and flail his arms when the Mets scored.

He lived to see the Mets climb from the subcellar to the penthouse in the amazin' World Series of 1969, which made him beam with pride.

If there is a Subway Series, I wouldn't be my father's son if I didn't bet my last token on the Mets.

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