

# Cheap cheese heroin a deadly snare for teens

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## CYBER COLUMN:

### Stomping, shouting, and listening for God

**By Brett Younger**

Two weeks ago, my 13-year-old son, Caleb, and I decided at the last minute to go to a Fort Worth Cats baseball game. We bought our general admission tickets and headed out to right field to find a seat, but the people in our section weren't sitting. We hadn't realized that they had given general admission tickets to this game to all of the elementary school students in the Fort Worth ISD who had perfect attendance. The bleachers were overflowing with 7- and 8-year-olds attending what appeared to be their first baseball game.

They didn't show any signs of interest in the game itself, but they were fascinated with stomping on the metal bleachers. Unfortunately, they had more enthusiasm than rhythm. It sounded like hail on a tin roof. When they tried to clap in time, it also was without any recognizable rhythm. We were, however, in sync when we sang YMCA with the motions.

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This was not a crowd that appreciated the intricacies of a sacrifice bunt, a well-timed change-up or hitting the cut-off man. The biggest cheers weren't for any player, but for Dodger the Mascot, whose goal is to stand between me and the game. It was like watching baseball while trapped in the play area of a Chuck E. Cheese's.

It was fun, but it wasn't the way I watch baseball. A baseball game, and I don't want to make too much of this, is like a Sabbath, a visit to the church of baseball. I'm a fan who takes it seriously. I know this makes me sound like I wear a pocket protector, but I keep score using an intricate system of hieroglyphics that provides a running tally of what every batter does. This is how real fans watch baseball.

The Cats were soon losing by eight runs, so many of the people who paid more than \$4 for their tickets went home. I'm embarrassed to admit this, but in the sixth inning we moved one section away from the knothole gang.

Stomping may be a fine way to enjoy a game, but it's not the way some of us experience baseball.

Recently, we went to my son Graham's high school graduation. The sign over the entrance said, "No Noisemakers. No balloons." You might think: "That's unnecessary. No one would bring noisemakers or balloons to a solemn ceremony like graduation." You would be wrong. The metal detector would also be a clue that this was not your father's graduation.

Daniel-Meyer Coliseum, which is normally the home for less rowdy events like TCU basketball, was filled with signs celebrating Victoria, Teddy, Luz, Doogie, Little Jelly and a host of other 18-year-olds. I was one of the lucky ones not seated behind someone with a banner.

The students, even the ones wearing sunglasses indoors at 8:00 at night, were much better behaved than the parents who screamed through the choir's anthem.

The person seated directly behind me had a special talent for ear-piercing whistling. This is a skill he loves to share. Someone I wished ill brought a plastic clapper—which was even more irritating than the air horns and cowbells. Imagine if they had allowed noisemakers.

As the graduates' names were called, spectators shouted, screamed, shrieked, screeched and squealed as though they were shocked to hear their loved one's name called.

It wasn't a bad graduation, but it wasn't exactly what I would have chosen. I felt like such an old white man. Back in my day, there were more men in suits and ties than baseball caps and cowboy hats. We waited quietly for the first strains of Pomp and Circumstance. The students acted as though they were not surprised to have graduated.

We listened solemnly as the speaker droned on about how the word "commencement" means "to begin," and so this is not the end of something, but the beginning of a lifelong journey, a time of marching to the beat of our own drummers, taking the road less traveled, lighting candles rather than cursing the darkness, following our hearts. We applauded politely at the end. It was dignified, serious and meaningful in its way.

Shouting may be a fine way to celebrate a graduation, but it's not the way some of us experience important rites of passage.

The same is true within the church. Some worship fast and loud, and that is a fine way to celebrate God's goodness, but it's not the way some of us experience God's presence. Most of the time, God isn't loud and overwhelming. When we worship, we find silence as holy as the sounds. For some of us, God whispers more than God shouts, so we need to listen carefully.

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