

Topic: What I Miss Most

May 18, 2020

Chico "F.....g" Ruiz

By Morri Namasté

It was September 21, 1964 and the Phillies had a 6 ½ game lead with 12 games to play. A National League pennant was assured and a World Series title was not just possible, but probable. Uncle Max had procured second row box seat tickets for the game against the Cincinnati Reds for the opening game of the final 10 game home stand. Connie Mack Stadium was an exciting place to be and we loved our heroes. The Phillies had been bottom feeders for years and had not come close to a title since the hey days of the Wiz Kids who won in 1950.

The game was 0-0 going into the 6th inning. Art Mahaffrey was pitching great. Then it all fell apart. Chico Ruiz was on 3rd base with future Hall of Famer Frank Robinson up to bat. There were two strikes on him with two outs. Suddenly Chico decided on a gamble. Mahaffrey never looked Ruiz back to the bag. He stole home with Mahaffrey's pitch sailing over Dalrymple's out-stretched glove to the backstop. The Reds went on to win the game 1-0. Phillies manager Gene Mauch launched into a tirade saying that nobody, in that position, would have thought it wise to steal home. "Chico 'f.....g' Ruiz," he ranted throughout the clubhouse. "Chico 'f.....g' Ruiz."

Thus it began. The Phillies went on to lose every game in that final home stand. 10 games in total before winning the last two in Cincinnati. But it wasn't enough. The St. Louis Cardinals ended up winning the pennant and the World Series. The Phillies and the Reds finished tied for 2nd place just one game behind the Cards.

I listened to every game on my transistor radio while hiding under the covers of my bed. Sometimes Mom would sit on my bed and listen as well. Dad was not so much interested. Loss after loss after loss. Clay Dalrymple threw a game away. Cookie Rojas missed an easy catch in left field. Richie Allen, the rookie of the year in 1963 stopped hitting. Pitchers stopped pitching. Arragh! It wouldn't be until 1980 when the Phillies won the World Series but that fateful year would be ingrained in every person in Philly. Later the Red Socks would lament Bucky "F.....g" Dent's in losing to the Yankees but for Phillies fans it would be Chico "F.....g" Ruiz.

I miss baseball.