

Today, Feathered Quill reviewer Barbara Bamberger Scott is talking with John Henry Hardy, author of *The Day God Played Baseball*

FQ: What is your baseball background?

HARDY: Well Barbara Scott you may chuckle over this, but my baseball experience is limited to playing in the cow pastures with my cousins who lived next door to me in an old duplex farmhouse. I also played grammar school baseball with the orphans who resided at Saint Michael's Children's Home in the little town of Hopewell, New Jersey. That being said however, my daughters Michele and Wendy were rather athletic and were the only two girls to make a league team. The boys all wore their hair long as was the style then so the coach thought they were boys, since he didn't know any of the kids' names as it was a try-out session. When practice was over and my two kids were picked to play on the team, the coach was flabbergasted when I called them by name. It was a miracle they made the team. That is the basis for concocting the story *The Day God Played Baseball*. I also did a lot of research to learn about various pitches and the rules of the game, and that league coach, whose real name I can't remember, became Alex Sardinski, one of the main characters in the story.

FQ: Do you come from a tiny town like Pineville, PA?

HARDY: Yes I owned a small farm in Pineville, Pennsylvania for several years. We had five cows, two horses, hundreds of chickens, several dogs and a couple of rabbits. My children learned responsibility early in life, since taking care of farm animals is a lot of work; it was how I grew up. We actually lived in Pineville, when the girls made the league team. The town is so small it looks like a mere cross-roads to a stranger. It had a general store that also served as the post office and boasted of a tavern, both of which are depicted in the story.

FQ: You seem to know a lot about the textile industry; where does that knowledge come from?

HARDY: I worked on a farm that belonged to Catholic Charities and its produce went to the orphanage mentioned above, Barbara. We would take the corn and other grains to the feed mill and have it ground up into feed for the stock. That is when I learned about the colorful flour sacks the farmer's wives made into dresses, skirts and blouses. Of course there was the ubiquitous burlap bags for the cattle feed, but later the plastic coated feed bags became very popular and were cheaper to make than the cloth bags. I also researched the textile industry to make certain I knew something about that industry.

FQ: Do you envision this book as suitable for young adult readers?

HARDY: I was raised in a Catholic home and I have a strong belief in God, and I wanted to write something that the youth of this country might find interesting and perhaps inspirational. Our country was founded on Christian-Judeo principles that are waning as progressives and the American Civil Liberties Union push our nation toward atheism, with the assistance of the liberal ideologists in our schools and colleges.

FQ: You have several "miraculous" happenings in the baseball game engineered by Timmy; how did you decide what specific plays/moves God might make?

HARDY: Actually Barbara the ideas just popped into my psyche as I wrote the book. I wanted something simple and subtle, and not out right miracles. I wanted the story to be humorous and not too religious

oriented. I also wanted a story and the character of Timmy to relate to all religions and not just Christianity.

FQ: Maria is a “natural” name for the mother of God, but why did you choose Timmy (later Tommy) for the “god-boy” baseball ace?

HARDY: Well Barbara, I wanted the God character to have a name just like any other kid who plays baseball. The name Maria points you in the direction of who Timmy really is in the story, but his common name identifies more closely with the kids who actually play baseball. When it became so obvious that God loves baseball as much as the other kids do when He appears as a pitcher for another team and another season, I wanted a name that was very similar to Timmy's name so a youngster could readily identify the new pitcher on Alex's team; a one letter change from Timmy to Tommy worked very nicely for me.

FQ: Have you known of amazing turnarounds in a life such as you depict in the life of Conrad Beamis?

HARDY: I once worked in the business world and met a few people who remind me of a Conrad Beamis type character, although all of them were not males; I wanted to make fun of them as they did some rather mean things. My wife was a Chemical Dependency Nurse and detoxed many drug and alcohol abusers-the Heroin users were the worst patients-and although I never knew their names I knew their turn-around stories.

FQ: One scene that is especially moving is when Conrad’s autistic son makes a great play. Have you worked with autistic children in sports?

HARDY: No I have not, but I have a relative who is autistic, and I can tell you first hand that they live a rather challenging life, and I wanted to give a young adult who reads this book a glimpse of what kinds of challenges autistic children-and their parents-face every single day of their lives. When that autistic boy finally gets a hit and the people cheered, I hope it gives the reader the impression that all is not lost for for these unfortunate people if we love them and support their efforts.

FQ: What can you say about baseball as a character-building sport for children?

HARDY: Baseball, and in fact all sports are a great opportunity to instill in all children a sense of work, comradeship, and self confidence. Hopefully, they will realize the need to be physically active all of of their lives. The lack of exercise is one of the major causes of poor health among adults, along with smoking and drug abuse, which includes alcohol.

FQ: Do you envision a sequel to *The Day God Played Baseball*?

HARDY: Maybe some day the good Lord will inspire me to write something like *The Day God Played Baseball*, and hopefully if I work hard enough at it the kids will understand and espouse that we need to keep God in our Pledge of Alligence and in the Christian-Judeo principles upon which our country is founded!