



Caption

The View From Right Field

by Rick Ohler

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(The world's best hometown newspaper)

“One, Two, Three, Four— I Detect a Metaphor”

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We gave up our cable TV subscription a few months ago. The price seemed to increase with every bill, and we didn't watch enough to justify the exodus of our dollars. Who needs cable anyway; it's so 1990s, we thought. Besides, we already had Netflix for nine bucks a month, which gave us a good-sized catalogue of shows, and since my sweetheart knows the ins and outs of streaming, we would never run out of options on our small screens. With the addition of a FireStick to our flat screen for a one-time cost of 36 dollars, so many channels appeared in our queue that we were pretty sure we could ride out the pandemic in style.

Then the Buffalo Bills began to win. And win. And win. Don't get sucked in, we told ourselves; you'll get your heart broken again, just like you have every year this century and much of the last one. But that elusive phantasmagory (RIP Snake) off in the distance—a Super bowl victory—began to challenge our pessimism, or realism, until those instantly recognizable syllables—“♪hey, ey, ey, ey...♪” became the first four I would sing every morning. “The Bills make me wanna SHOUT!”

All of the sudden, this cultural superiority, born of being above the need for cable TV like the masses, began to flag, and then disappear. Emergency! How do I get the Bills games on TV? I couldn't go to the Right Field Satellite Office, southeast corner of Oakwood and Elm, or any

other public house, to watch the game because of the lingering pandemic. Tracking the account of the game on my laptop, waiting for an unseen correspondent to type in the result of each play felt voyeuristic, like hearing an account of someone else's magical vacation or wonderful meal—hardly the same as being there.

Ben Holmes at Wally's solved my problem for the first playoff game: he hosted a properly distanced, masks-on-unless-you-were-seated outdoor viewing event for about 130 in his parking lot, giving the sweetheart and me a rare chance to cheer, fret, scream, dispense non-contact air high-fives with strangers, fret some more and then ultimately sing “🎵hey, ey, ey, ey...🎵” all the way home after the victory. But despite the kudos he received from the Erie County Health Dept. and the notoriety on NPR and ESPN, New York State put the kibosh on a repeat of the party, so there we were: all dressed up and nowhere to watch the game against the Ravens.

Luckily, my daughter appeared with a solution; she offered to help us get hooked up to her YouTube TV account (thoroughly legal, no pirating involved), and there we were, ready to watch as our Bills took on Edgar Allen Poe's Ravens.

On game day last Saturday, we settled in for the 8:15 game, hoping that we could stay awake for the whole three-plus hours. These days, especially in the soporific darkness of January, 8:15 is about the time we start wondering if it's too early to start thinking about jammies and night-night. But this would be a special occasion, one worth staying up for.

That might be the end of the story, because you know how Taron Johnson's electrifying, historic pick-six cemented the victory. Well, I knew about it before it happened. Let me explain.

A bunch of us older gentlemen have a text chain that has played a role in our ability to get through these last ten months of relative isolation. No day is complete without the nine or ten of us busting each other's chops with juvenile and, shall we say, indecorous and impolite comments. If a transcript of the thousand or so Covid-era texts between us were ever released to the public, we would all be banished to Rigel XII, the uninhabited mining planet from the *Star Trek* series that forms part of the Andromeda galaxy, 800 light years from East Aurora.

There is, however, one exception to our hopelessly sophomoric texting behavior—Bills games. Then we are serious as we chart the progress of the game through constant texting, the closest thing to watching together.

Anyway, in the third quarter of Saturday's game, the Ravens were ready to score from inside our ten-yard line. They were moving; it was a done deal. Tie game, we could just as easily lose

as not. Woe is me. (I'm sorry, but as a 60-year Bills fan, I've learned to fear the worst.) Then, the texts started coming in from my buddies.

"HUGE PLAY!!!!" "Holy cow (or words to that effect) !!!!!" "Can you believe that?" "PICK-SIX!!"

I was confused. I thought we were about to give up the tying score. Sure enough, a full minute later, Taron Johnson got in front of a Lamar Jackson pass two yards deep in the end zone, and scampered 102 yards for a touchdown. (Not lost on us senior citizens was the fact that Taron was barely winded after running 102 yards, a sprint that would have been a week's work for us.) Apparently, YouTube TV works on some kind of delay. What they presented as a live broadcast, was only live-ish.

Technical savants in the crowd will understand the whys and wherefores of a one-minute delay. Non-technical fans won't care a wit one way or the other. Then there are those darned liberal arts majors lurking about, like yours truly. They will find in a one-minute delay, nothing less than a metaphor. And it goes like this: sometimes, while we waste our precious brain cells worrying that the worst is upon us, we lose sight of fact that good stuff has already happened.

Take the recent bungle by the Aurora Republican Party. In soliciting candidates for town-wide office in recent *Advertisers*, they continue to maintain that since multiculturalism will destroy American values, they are seeking candidates opposed to such foolishness. What those American values are, and what sins multiculturalism foments, they haven't articulated, leaving the impression that they are a particularly intolerant and close-minded bunch. To intolerant and close-minded, I would add anachronistic, out of step with the inevitable passage of time and evolution of decent society. Much of the world has already embraced multiculturalism. And since, as former speaker of the House Tip O'Neill said, "All politics is local," even the 14052 has not been immune to improvements in the way we treat each other.

I know, I know. I hear you scoffing out there. We are hardly the diversity capital of the world, you say. And the Trump years have been difficult for all of us, with small groups creating a disproportionate amount of racquet and making themselves disproportionately visible in an attempt to make us think ill of each other for wanting encourage multiculturalism here. But I maintain that we have become, amid the din of naysayers, the so-called patriots, a more welcoming bunch. Look around you. It's different. And the values that bind us—pulling together as a community to support the ROC, the Boys and Girls Club, FISH, BOLO, Providence Farm Collective, Sinking Ponds, the Western New York Land Conservancy, Knox Farm, our schools, our churches, our non-profits and every single fundraiser that comes about when a neighbor is in need—have never been more in evidence.

The Dark Ages are over, even though an apparent time delay kept some people from getting the message. What the Aurora Republicans feared has already happened, and, you know, it's

just fine. They might better have followed the admonition attributed to Elbert Hubbard (and everybody else from “Proverbs” to Mark Twain): “’Tis better to keep silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt.”