

San Jose Mercury News

Saturday, February 23, 2002

A Giants Fan in Good Health and Bad

By Linda Gebroe

Wintertime can be really tough on baseball players and fans. Guys who've been injured during the season have surgery to alleviate the pain they played with. Rotator cuffs are made able to rotate again, knees are relieved of scar tissue, elbows have bone spurs removed.

Me, I had my uterus out. Certainly my condition would have warranted surgery during the summer. Fibroids made me anemic and unable to do Xtreme cheering. As my health worsened, it became increasingly difficult to attend games. When I did, frequent trips to the bathroom forced me to miss key plays. It cost me as a fan, but more important, I let the team down.

Several times I'd return to my seat and see some of the players in the dugout facing back toward the stands. They were looking for me, wondering how I could have left them with the bases loaded. They were hurt.

I was hurting, too. I did my best, cheering feebly from my seat high above the field. At home, I'd watch the games on television, popcorn at my side, heating pad on my belly. Gradually I was losing my edge, that commitment to the game that separates the serious fan from the casual. I hung in as long as I could and kept the Giants in contention until the last weekend of the season.

You think I'm overestimating my importance? In 1989, I attended the Giants' pennant-clinching game that sent them to the World Series. It was Yom Kippur and I ate pig meat. I had a great time and atoned for none of it. The *very next game* the Giants were to play at Candlestick, Game Three of the World Series, I was there again.

Before a pitch was ever thrown . . . boom. The Loma Prieta earthquake hit. Me at a ball game on the holiest day of the year. A deadly earthquake. A coincidence? I think not.

With the possibility – and eventuality – of this year's World Series going into November, I decided not to have my surgery until December. I have to say the timing couldn't have been better. Winter is just about useless to a baseball fan. It's then I comb the sports section daily, hungry for baseball news and settling for the crumbs that appear, news about minor league coaches and such. I log onto baseball Web sites, but without scores to follow, I just point and click forlornly.

Sure, there's some contract negotiations and silly labor issues to follow. But winter? Might as well have your uterus out.

This is not to say I have been lolling around. No, I have been rehabbing, getting back in fan shape. During my recovery, I did simulated cheering, watching ball games on tape. In the beginning if I cheered too loudly or moved too suddenly, I would feel it deep in my gut.

Nobody said it would be easy. But ever the consummate professional, I am proceeding ahead of schedule. I'm happy to report I'm able to carry six-packs up and down stairs, my voice is in good form and I expect to be a hundred percent by spring training.

On Opening Day, when my boys turn back and search the stands, they'll see me and they'll hear me, loud and clear. It's been a tough off-season for some of us. But come April, we'll be good to go.

Linda Gebroe lives in San Francisco.