

Baseball trips will go on despite losing one in group

It started as a trip to baseball fields that were ready to be demolished – a last hoorah before the stadium was destroyed, to be replaced with a new one.

My husband, Larry, is a diehard Detroit Tigers fan, so when he heard the stadium was being replaced, he decided to get a group of guys together for one last game.

That was 1999 when the first baseball trip with the guys took place. Larry and three guys he played softball with from St. James Lutheran Church and then a high school friend from Michigan and his dad.

It was not until 2008 that Larry went on another baseball trip to Shea and Yankee stadiums in New York, where, both stadiums were closing. It would be the beginning of an annual baseball trip where six guys went and an additional two more were then added in 2009, cementing the eight from that year on.

The group consisting of six men and their two adult sons - all Christian men – who played softball together on the St. James Lutheran Softball team that Larry coached. While some of the men retired from the



A SLICE OF LIFE

Linda Wilk



softball team, others moved further away from Marion and eventually the team disbanded due to lack of players, but their bond remained.

In fact, that group affectionately refers to themselves as the BBB's – baseball, beer and brats.

And each year, they decide which two stadiums they will visit – to date they have been to Detroit, New York, Baltimore, Toronto, Cleveland, Kansas City, Chicago Cubs and White Sox, Milwaukee, Minnesota, Washington, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh.

It was three years ago when they went to Atlanta,



The "Pack"

that they decided to only go to one stadium each year, realizing the weekend trip made it unfeasible to always get to two different stadiums.

Each of the men brings specific things to the trip. One researches and schedules the brewery tour, while my husband takes care of all the rest of the logistics, which has dubbed him the name One Dog Travel Agency.

One year one of the men decided to be funny and address the check to One Dog Travel Agency, only having to rewrite the check after the bank teller did not find

it funny, since Larry does not have a travel agency.

Over the years they have refined their weekend excursions, initially driving in two vehicles and then deciding renting, a 15-passenger van allowed them all to be together all the time and going from hotel stays to renting an AIRBNB again to better accommodate the bonding experience.

Each man also has specific things they bring on the trip – two bring the beer, two bring the sodas and two bring the snacks and one was the entertainment. Larry is exempt since he is the travel agent for the

group.

This September the plan is to go to Minnesota where there is a new stadium that none of them has seen yet.

I can always tell when baseball season is opening when I see my husband hovering over our computer keyboard, waiting for the exact second that tickets were able to be bought.

While the stories are kept close to the vest, it is the texts that sound as Larry and I sit and watch TV some nights that at times go on and on.

There is also the occasional BBB night out to a local sports bar to discuss

one of the member's stressors or just for a night out.

Then the text came Saturday morning, May 1. Larry had just gotten home from an early morning at the golf course, working to get frost off the greens so 21 high school golf teams could tee off as close to 8 a.m. as possible.

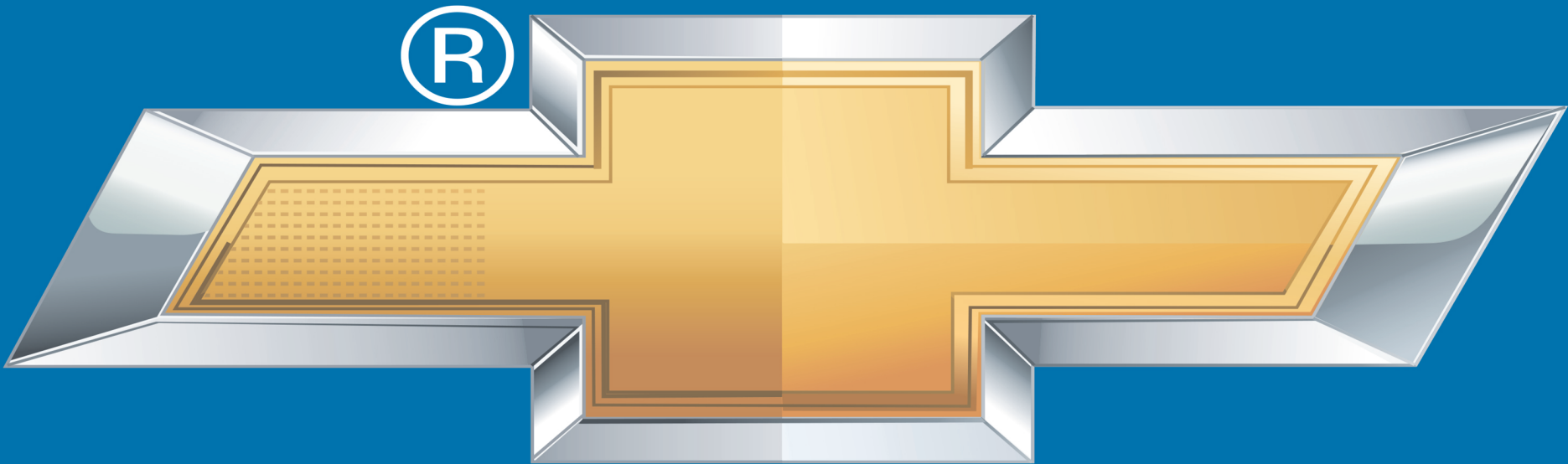
One of the men who was headed to a vacation get away, got a call that his son had died, just 35 years old, the youngest of the group.

The group ranges in age from the oldest at 69, then 65, 64, two at age 54, 47, 38 and 35.

Already the thinking is this year will be a little bit more somber. And a realization that a conversation they had about how long the baseball trips would last is far from done.

It was during those BBB conversations that a pack was created by the men that no matter who was unable to go on their annual trip, the trip would go on. Until the last man was left. So as the trip will go on, the experience will be different, and I would surmise there will be some kind of special memorial celebration for the one they lost too soon.

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