

Greed turns “Field of Dreams” to nightmare

A bit of speculative theology today to set the mood before we get to the business at hand. The deity, as I recall scripture, assured that when we have sinned so grievously as to require a return visit, it shall not be with flood waters, but with fire.

Thus do I offer a personal litany of American transgressions of sufficient gravity as to warrant such harsh judgment. And please do not misunderstand; we’re not speaking of Sodom and Gomorrah here, but rather very nice places that have been defiled by the sins of success and excess.

We’re talking about Niagara Falls and the Wisconsin Dells, places of great beauty in the deity’s grand plan, places which humankind saw to be good, but, as with all things good, good was not good enough. And thus the excess for which they must atone.

Zip lines and bungee jumping towers, for instance. And trinket shops selling golden calves. Vendors so prolific as to block the view of the falls at Niagara and the dells of the river which first brought people to the Wisconsin town.

And, of course, Branson, Missouri. Perhaps the most

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A MOMENT

Ed Breen



egregious. Worse by may fold than Las Vegas or Atlantic City. Seventeen thousand eight hundred and fifty motel rooms in an Ozark Mountain town of 7,500 souls, most of whom were content with their lot in life until Andy Williams and the Lennon Sisters and the Japanese fiddle player came to town and ruined everything. And then came the hull of the Titanic, right there along main street. It was Roy Clark, bless his heart, who first led his faithful there 40 years ago.

So you see my point.

And to this we must now, regretfully and tragically,

add the Field of Dreams, that Garden-of-Eden-like setting nestled in the cornfields of Iowa, just east of Dyersville. You know: As in “Is this Heaven? No, it’s Iowa.”

Full disclosure: I have made multiple pilgrimages to these few acres, going back a dozen years, when a coffee can tacked to a post sufficed for a ticket office. I have trotted around the bases back when I could still trot.

I played catch with a fellow between first and second base a couple of years ago in what I can only describe as a mystical moment. He emerged from the tall corn which formed the outfield fence, approached with two baseball gloves and asked if I would have catch with him. One glove, he explained, had belong to his father, who had died before father and son had a chance to make their pilgrimage from Virginia to this place first built in the mind of writer Bill Kinsella and then put on the screen by Kevin Costner and James Earl Jones and Burt Lancaster – you know: Doc Graham, Moonlight Graham.

And who can forget Terence Mann, standing there on the first base line, telling



Field of Dreams Souvenir Shop

Ray that “People will come Ray, people most definitely will come.”

For 32 years they have come, first just a few, curious to see the place Ray Kinsella was told by his own deity that “If you build it, he will come. . .”

There was the ball diamond, perfect in its symmetry and simplicity. The house is up there on the hill. And the few bleacher seats from which the guileless child Karin tumbled, setting in motion Archibald Graham’s life-changing decision.

And the light stanchions and, of course, that outfield

wall of mature corn from which and into which the boys of summer emerged and then vanished.

But all that has changed. It has been desecrated. Defiled. Ruined by success and thus added to the places to be visited with fire.

Success. Hundreds, thousands of visitors. Trinket shops. Parking lots. And event center and a place to buy sandwiches and \$35 baseball caps.

But worst of all, is the desecration wrought by Major League Baseball, those very people who should have been most protective of this shrine.

They are going to play a game, a big-league baseball game, in this place in August. The New York Yankees and the Chicago White Sox will come to Dyersville on Aug. 12 to play, not on the Field of Dreams, but on a new, fancy, field built no more than 200 yards to the east. And they’re selling tickets and they built 8,000 seats and light towers because, of course, it will be a night game to get the TV audience.

What was there remains, helpless, defiled. Ruined by success and greed,

It awaits the vengeance promised by the deity.



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