

# The Boys of Summer Survive the Autumn (Finally!)

by Anne Verville

Anne of Freedomville, NH: *I can't believe it!*

Tammy of Haverhill, MA: *Thank you!*

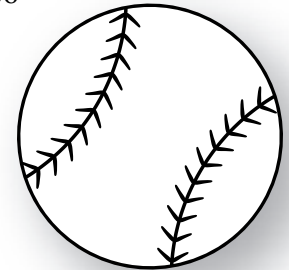
Connie of Laurenton, MA: *They did it!*

Carole of Loopton, MA: *Yes, I knew my guys could do it!*

What are these people talking about? About The Event that occurred late one October night. I don't mean Halloween, though The Event *was* spooky in a way. Heck, The Event even happened the night of a total eclipse of the moon.

Even if you have only this moment returned from a sojourn to the moon, you have heard the earth-shattering news: For the first time in four generations, the Boston Red Sox have won the World Series! This is big news, of course. BIG. Thanks to the likes of Manny, Johnny, and Papi, the long-beleaguered BoSox have

made the cover of *Time*<sup>®</sup>. *Sports Illustrated*<sup>®</sup> even issued a lovely glossy red edition in the Sox' honor. Naturally, New England newspapers were overjoyed at the first chance in 86 years to scream the joyful news. I heard that newspaper publishers could hear the presses gleefully chanting, "The Red Sox won, the Red Sox won. I knew they could, I knew they could," as they



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churned out the papers. I believe the story. After all, I saw the blissfully bold banner headlines leaping out at me the next day.

I believed the Red Sox could win the series too. I knew they had it in them. The team made the playoffs occasionally and often played brilliantly. I just hoped the team would win it all within my lifetime. I was not the only one to feel this way. In the corner store the day after The Event, I mentioned to the store owner (who wore a Red Sox shirt) that I was thrilled that the Red Sox had finally won the Series. Another customer, a 60-year-old school bus driver, deliberately turned to me. He exclaimed, “I am too, and I’ve been waiting longer than you! I didn’t have as many years left to wait either!”

Yes, we were all waiting... waiting until that moment, that final throw to first base, at about 11:40 pm, Tuesday, October 27, 2004. Ever since the start of that game, I had a good feeling that the Sox were going to shoo away the Cardinals. We had won seven games in a row, and I knew we would make it eight. I did leg stretches so that when the winning moment came, I would be able to jump high enough to touch the sky. Instead, when the big moment came, I imitated a petrified tree. I felt disbelief and numbness. I endlessly whispered to myself, “The Red Sox won the World Series, The Red Sox won the World Series” until the concept penetrated my thick skull. Then I jumped for joy.

Disbelief, relief, joy, and a sense of closure and revenge—these were the reactions of denizens of Red Sox Nation. Many of us felt all these sensations almost simultaneously. All of us have a story to tell, too—a story 86 years in the making. I knew my story. I wanted to hear

others’, so I asked.

Tammy S. told me a story of closure, forgiveness, and a little revenge. On her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, the Red Sox were playing Game 6 of the World Series. She and her friends, who happened to be Mets fans, were watching the game on TV as they celebrated. When the Red Sox player Billy Buckner flubbed an easy play, the Mets took advantage of it. Tammy moaned, and her friends cheered. Tammy returned home depressed. The Red Sox never recovered and lost the series to the Mets.

That was October 27, 1986. Tammy and her friends celebrated 17 more birthdays, sans the company of the Red Sox. On her 39<sup>th</sup> birthday, Tammy was once again able to celebrate while watching the Sox in the Series. As she watched the last Cardinal thrown out at first, she screamed, “Thank you! What a great present! I forgive you, Bill!” She immediately sent a Red Sox World Champion shirt to her father, a Sox fan who had moved to Florida. He proudly wore it to his horseshoes tournament, in which fans of the Yankees—the same fans who had taunted Mr. S. whenever the Yankees beat the Sox—took part. They read his shirt and said nothing.

Some long-time veterans of Red Sox games could not take the stress of watching the World Series. Connie G., who had seen the Sox in several World Series, shunned all of the 2004 post-season games. She had watched most of the regular-season games faithfully, but she decided she just couldn’t endure another ride on the typical Red Sox post-season roller coaster. Instead she eagerly watched the news reports and read the sports pages. She prayed for the Sox and sent them her best wishes.

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Connie also thought of her father, who was an extraordinary Red Sox fan. On days he couldn't see a game in person or on the TV, he would listen to it on his radio. When his radio broke, he sat in the car to listen to the play-by-play on the car radio—even when the temperature was 90 degrees outside and 120 inside the un-air conditioned vehicle. What did this fan's daughter do when she heard about The Event? She looked to Heaven, raised her fist and exclaimed, "They did it, dad! They did it!"

The Red Sox won not only for today's generations but for generations past. After The Event, several players said they were proud to be able to win the Series for living legends such as Johnny Pesky. They were also proud to win it for the legendary Ted Williams, who'd gone to the Ultimate Baseball Hall of Fame years ago.

Carole G. says her husband's deceased father had been an avid Red Sox fan. Unfortunately, Mr. G. became seriously ill just before the 1975 Red Sox World Series games. As he lay in the

hospital bed, he begged visitors for news of his precious Sox, for he had no TV. His son scrambled to procure a TV, and the ailing fan watched the Red Sox win a couple. Mr. G. died before the series ended, but he died happy, thinking that the Red Sox just might win it all. The Sox did win, 29 years later, and when they did, his son Tony gave his father a salute.

Tony's wife Carole had believed in the Red Sox since their first playoff game against Anaheim. "I know my guys will come through if I believe in them!" she told me. Her faith never wavered. Even when the Sox had fallen down three games during the playoffs against the Yankees, Carole had told me, "I am supporting my guys 100%. If I get behind them heart and soul, they will win!" She was right to believe in the Sox as she did. She was also right *not* to believe in the supposed Babe Ruth curse. "What curse?" She always asked.

What curse indeed? The Sox certainly didn't play like a team under a curse. They played like a team on top of the world, and that's where they ended up.

*Anne Verville is a New Hampshire writer who is thrilled to be able to write an article about the Red Sox winning the World Series. She is grateful to every member, past and present, of the Red Sox team.*

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