

Albie

He stands on the mound at 70 years
Without precaution, devoid of fears
To throw a ball with towering arch
To keep each ball within the park

Albie boy, our pitcher, ace
The man took pride to quickly erase
Anyone's thoughts to openly doubt
The man who pitched, ready to bout

I always said that he was my why
The reason I hustled, the reason I tried
Because in him lived a passion for ball
Not common, shared, or understood by all

He'd rub the ball up against his pants
Dig in, tip cap, familiar dance
Made batters feel like this was the pros
Teammates, opponents, all of us bros

Albie taught me to drink a beer
Keeping the swallowing part of it clear
I asked him how'd you drink so fast
Just open your throat, let the beer past

See Albie would never do anything half
When sharing a drink or having a laugh
He lived each day like it was his last
And I hurt inside to know he has past

Gone not forgotten as some phrases say
But what we'd all give to just have one more day
Play one more inning, pitch one more strike
Gather for laughter by car or by bike

Albie cared more than many would know
About family, asking how our kids would grow
He loved the people, the talking, the jokes
Spending good time with quality folks

I always joked that my contract was tied
To him and when he quit my shoes would untie
But then he went on to score for each game
So I stayed and I played, but it wasn't the same

In his last visit, he came to the park
So I bent his ear and made this remark
"Albie I only want to make plays for you"

He smiled that bright smile and both of us knew

I realized then the great impact he had
And how softball morphed into something more sad
Some players thrive in the skills they display
Albie's success went far beyond his play

In jest we always would nickname him "claw"
But anyone watching who knew us, who saw
His meaning to our team went far beyond stats
It showed up in casual, yet meaningful chats

He never complained when his shoulder broke
Never missed a game, or dodged a joke
He went on as if it was only a scratch
Dressed up, ready to play, our upcoming match

Albie played old school with grit and with fire
Stemmed from a deep-set, inner desire
To do what we could do to help our team win
Keep our heads up, raise up our chin

With Albie now gone, I feel at a loss
Aimlessly playing without our team's boss
Wishing to turn back the clock a few years
So we could share stories and not fight back tears

Our rock, our captain, our team's best friend
From the minute we met, right up 'till the end
Words can only attempt to convey
How deeply we miss him and want him to play

In saying goodbye to our teammate and friend
We use these words to honour and mend
Our hearts, each hurt by missing him here
Each knowing above us our teammate will cheer

Knowing that heaven has just gained an ace
Comforted that Albie has now found a place
Away from the pain and hurt of his sick
Freely and pain-free, swinging a stick