FIELDER'S CHOICE
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Two thousand seven hundred and fifteen hits. A 22-year career. One of only five baseball players to play in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. He embodied the cliché of a hard-nosed, gritty player who combined talent with hard work. He played hurt, he didn't complain, and teammates loved him and the first line of Bill Buckner's obituary read, "he will be most remembered for the error that cost the Boston Red Sox the World Series in 1986" The bouncing groundball down the first base line that squirted under his glove and between his legs allowing the Mets to score the winning run and eventually win the World Series.

Are we remembered for all the good that we did or tried to do in our life, or for the that one big mistake, the groundball through our legs that shows up on our own

proverbial blooper reel for the rest of our life, and apparently even after we are gone?

I've been thinking about this a lot this week, in part because my own blooper reel is probably a short film by now, and also because of the greater lesson from Bill Buckner's life, the human capacity for forgiveness. To forgive others and often hardest of all to forgive ourselves.

As Terry Glavin will tell you, the first thing they teach you when you begin to publish your writing online is never read the comments, its only the zealots, haters and trolls that spend their days tearing apart your writing for sport and punishment.

But sometimes, sometimes and it is rare, sometimes the internet is a wonderful thing, it can rally the voice of the

people, it can drowned out the haters and flood the space with humanity and empathy.

Think of all those YouTube videos people have sent you of teammates helping a physically or mentally challenged player shoot a basket or score a goal.

Think of those meems (that's a story or picture that goes viral online) about the people who came to defend an innocent victim or shouted down racism and bigotry in the most unexpected places.

The times the internet has brought people together in common cause, for uncommon good.

Sometimes the internet with all its hate, vitriol and partisanship can surprise us in a good way, because long

gone are the days when it retained the capacity to shock us with its ugliness.

As I read the comments on the Bill Buckner headline, I heard the human heart, not only forgiveness but regret and empathy and what he had to endure, being the butt of so many jokes, the example coaches would use for decades about why you have to get down and get your body behind a groundball, or you could pull a “Buckner”. His error had become a noun, a moment of humiliation, of failure, of ineptitude, that’s a “Buckner”.

Can you imagine the pain of his family as every third obituary headline brings up a single mistake that your husband, father, brother, uncle made more than 30 years ago?

Our capacity to continually wound each other is limitless, heartless and well documented

I was ready to give up on our world for the day, besieged as we are by such cutting and brutal discourse, people shouting at each other, tweeting at each other – I was having a Moses moment, when the Hebrew slave is being beaten by the Egyptian taskmaster and no one is doing anything, saying anything. Moses rises up and kills the taskmaster, I wasn't going to do that, but I was ready to kill the internet or at least turn off my wifi.

But there in the comments, beyond the headlines and the collective indignation was the voice of human understanding. As I scrolled down the page I saw people calling out the headlines as obnoxious, inhumane, cruel and heartless.

In the passage of time, that great equalizer of so many emotions, Bill Buckner, who got death threats for years after that ball game, had not only been forgiven, but he was being apologized to. The internet was doing t'shuvah for the years they had treated him as a punchline instead of a human being. Death can do that, sadly often too late, it reminds us all that we are human, or at least it can, if there is still a shred of humanity inside us. And human beings make mistakes, beyond breathing its probably the single thing we all have most in common.

Fans who had ridiculed Buckner, now saw themselves in him, and now directed their righteous indignation at those who would sum up a person's life by their failings rather than their accomplishments.

Person after person wrote of their outraged that ESPN, the AP, and the Washington Post all led news of Bill

Buckner's death with his World Series error. In fact those news outlets had to issue an apology and re-write their headlines and lead stories.

The way we treated him became the news and for that a great many felt regret and then reading beyond the groundball, reading of how Buckner had done the even harder thing, he had forgiven himself – even more felt admiration.

Sidney Greenberg writes that while we speak of the importance of having a good memory, it's equally important to have a good "forgettery" so that we are able to not hold on to or to perseverance about things best forgotten.

We would be wise to remember that forgiveness has a companion, it is forget. Once we have forgiven, the most

humane thing we can do for the one who has wronged us in some way and for ourselves is forget. Let it go, like a groundball through your legs and move on, as they say in baseball, there's always next year.