Why We Don’t Play Stickball Anymore

When we played stickball in the dust of the back lot, we only had two gloves. One for the pitcher, and sometimes one for the catcher. The other boys used their mother’s oven mitts to guard against the sting of the hit.

Some say, that the worst sting came from Mickey Spinelli’s fastball, which, in its nascent form, wasn’t so much hard as it was off-center.

And on days when the sun was hot, and our mitts stuck to our skin, a young hitter would connect with one of the fastballs that Mickey threw in a beeline to the fat tip of the bat, not the sweet spot, not the strike zone.

And the whole game became off-center.

The ball ricocheted to the outfielder’s glove; so when little Johnny looked down into his mother’s mitt, he thought he saw roses, in the off-center hit that stings a burning hole into his hand.

-Alicia LaMagdeleine