

CALL TO WORSHIP

In July of 1936, the Cleveland Indians brought in their newest pitcher in a game against the St. Louis Cardinals. He pitched three innings and struck out eight batters. In August, he started his first major league game and struck out 15. In September, he tied the major league record for strikeouts, racking up 17 against the Philadelphia Athletics. That made him the first pitcher in baseball history to achieve a number of strikeouts that matched his age. That's right – the new pitcher, Robert William Andrew Feller, was 17. He was an overnight sensation.

Feller recalled the first time a reporter asked him for a quote. “I was so green,” he said, “that I thought he was asking me for some kind soft drink.” It was a lot of attention for a small-town kid who hadn't finished high school. But it didn't turn his head. For that, he credited his upbringing on a farm.

Chores and baseball were world enough to occupy almost all of his attention in Van Meter, Iowa – pretty remote from what was happening on the rest of the planet. Including major league baseball. In high school, Bob Feller's closest contact with professional sports would have been listening to Chicago Cubs games broadcast on radio station WHO in nearby Des Moines. The station had a ticker tape machine for receiving information from Chicago about what was happening in the game. The information was put together with sound effects and dramatic play by play narration by a young radio announcer – a guy named Ronald Reagan.

It was a very different time. Whatever their personal ups and downs, Bob Feller's parents must have felt they had more than a fair shot at how their child would grow up.

We shouldn't romanticize parenting in the Twenties and Thirties. But the sheer invasiveness of the world today is like nothing that has come before. Looking at the cacophony of claims on the attention of your children, you have to wonder what it means to call them “yours” -- except, of course, when they do something society doesn't like. How can parents be parents in the face of this bombardment? What role should a religious community play in bringing forth the whole divinely sparked person waiting inside each child? Come, let us live in the questions again today. Come, let us worship together.