

Diamond poetry

Ex-Zion resident writes 'little nuggets' about baseball, living

By Frank Abderholden
STAFF WRITER

Former Zion resident Dan Zamudio has come out from the underground in publishing his second book *Catcher in the Wry: Baseball Poems*.

His first book, *How to Sneak into the Movies*, was more along the lines of Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*.

"I got my start at Lakehurst and then brought the techniques to Chicago and California," said the 35-year-old with a laugh.

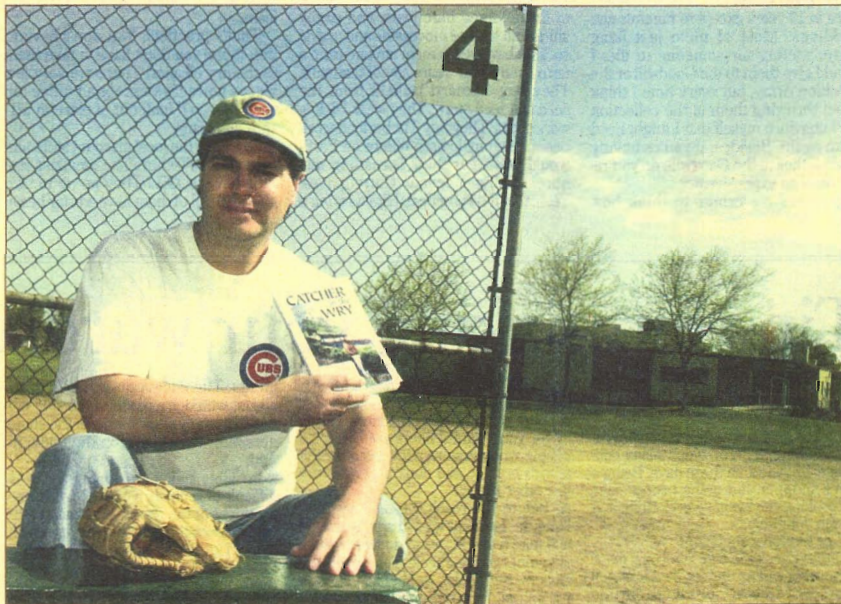
There are four basic methods: The old in the out door; pay for one stay for more; adopt a family (stay close to the group, usher isn't counting tickets just tearing them); and desperate emergency ("Please, let me use the bathroom!").

Time Out

Breeze lifts infield dirt mitts hide faces

The book got blurbs in the New York Times, Entertainment Weekly and the men's magazine, Maxim.

"It was a silly book," said Zamudio, but that was what got him into the book-writing business and led to his second book that is targeted at male readers between 10 and 16 years old or anyone



Dan Zamudio of Chicago, shows his book of baseball poetry *Catcher in the Wry*. Zamudio grew up in Zion and played baseball, as a youth, on diamond 4 at Shiloh Park. The Senior Center in background was the library at that time.

was thinking of becoming a children's librarian and a number of teachers encouraged him because there are not many males in that field.

He started exploring children's literature and he found that there really was no poetry for boys between the ages of 10 and 16.

"They basically have nothing to read and they stopped reading poetry," he said.

So Zamudio started researching baseball poetry and he was surprised to find there were actually a lot of books,

"I'll be right there!"

Spring training game on radio,
Dad's snow shovel
scrapes front porch

and not just *Casey At The Bat* published during the 1890s.

"I kept bringing home stacks of books and my wife couldn't believe it. It was surprising," he said.

He also noticed that McFarland & Company Inc., a North Carolina publisher, had printed a lot of those books. He met a representative from the company at a conference at Indiana University and he made a pitch about trying to

Loosening the Pitching Arm

snowballs
soar past stop sign —
a long winter

reach those young boys with a poetry book.

"A week later, I had a contract in the mail. I sent him some samples and he liked them," said Zamudio.

The poems are short and sweet be-

Do I Really Need It?

foul ball caught
barehanded
given to child

that likes baseball.

The writing bug took him over like a slow cancer. He was trying to be an actor in Los Angeles. He was an extra on shows like 90210, Melrose Place and the Fresh Prince of Bel Air.

"The biggest thing I did in acting was I was a regular alien Bjorn worker on *Star Trek: Deep Space 9*," he said.

"Basically, I started writing in acting class because I wasn't a very good actor," he added.

"I wrote scenes and monologues and I started to get a good response. Then people wanted me to write scenes and monologues for them and *Sneak* was a

Record Book Says Error

Right fielder misses
routine catch
my only triple

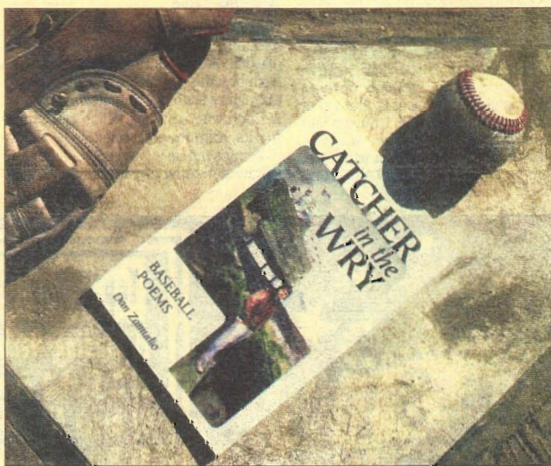
side project," he said.

Zamudio said he was surprised that he actually wrote a book and someone paid him money for it. "I thought to myself, maybe I've got something here."

So he moved back to the Midwest and Chicago partially because it was just time to get out of California.

"I was there for the riots, big fires, a major earthquake. I'd just had it. It was time to move back. I didn't want to live where they have earthquakes," he said.

After he moved, he decided to go into the library field and he went to get his master's degree in library science at Dominican University in River Forest. He



Catcher in the Wry

American League Stress

illegible scorecard
ruined by the
designated hitter

Rookies":
Nice form,
Good stance, single —
definitely a plus

There is a poem about the great White Sox player, Minnie Minoso, filing up his car with gas outside Wrigley Field.

"No one was giving this guy a hard time. Even Cubs fans had respect for Minoso," said Zamudio.

Other poems bring him back to the days he lived at 2517 Gideon St. in Zion and played baseball at Shiloh Park. He bought baseball cards at Cavett's Drugs, where Kmart is now, and worked at Rooks Restaurant. He went to Our Lady of Humility School in Beach Park for grade school and St. Joseph High School in Kenosha, Wis.

What is next for his career?
His wife, Julie Sulzen, is expecting. "I always wanted to do a book with her illustrating it," he said. So watch for a children's book in the future.

cause the author doesn't like long poems. In one, the title is three words and the poem is four.

"I like little nuggets. It's life and about living, and baseball is just a running theme in the poems," he said. There is a whole section on the Cubs and the cover of the book, a watercolor painted by his wife, shows the author at Wrigley Field.

Wry humor is what a lot of the poems are about, such as "Back Pocket":

Mom washes my pants,
cleans
Pete Rose
Or like: "How My Sister Rates The