felt like hell. I lay in the top bunk shivering with a fever and battling nausea unlike anything I had experienced before. I lay there wishing I would die.

As my younger brother walked into the room, my stomach betrayed me before I could make it out of the bunk. As a result, I threw up over the side.

The former contents of my stomach splattered Jim Brown, Walter Payton, Alan Page and Terry Bradshaw. The football cards, which my brother had unwisely left in a shoe box on the floor next to our bunk beds, were ruined instantly.

Into the dumpster went Roman Gabriel, Mercury Morris and others. Luckily, my baseball cards were stashed in a different set of shoeboxes across the room. Baseball cards had a special place in my heart, and I wasn't going to put them in a place where something could force their early retirement.

For a kid, nothing beat tearing the waxy paper off a new pack of baseball cards and shuffling through them, praising the all-stars and dreading the worthless checklist card.

You'd trade with your friends and, if you were lucky, some kid who didn't know beans about baseball. That way, you could unload a handful of scrubs you were lucky, some kid who didn't want them in a place where something could force their early retirement.

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