

"American on Purpose: The Improbable Adventures of an Unlikely Patriot"

By Craig Ferguson

Preface

One of the greatest moments in American sports history was provided by Bobby Thomson, the "Staten Island Scot." Born in my hometown of Glasgow, Scotland, in 1923, he hit the shot heard round the world that won the Giants the National League pennant in 1951. Had Bobby stayed in Glasgow he would never have played baseball, he would never have faced the fearsome Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Ralph Branca in that championship game, and he would never have learned that if you can hit the ball three times out of ten you'll make it to the Hall of Fame.

Today I watch my son at Little League games, his freckled Scottish face squinting in the California sunshine, the bat held high on his shoulder, waiting for his moment, and I rejoice that he loves this most American game. He will know from an early age that failure is not disgrace. It's just a pitch that you missed, and you'd better get ready for the next one. The next one might be the shot heard round the world. My son and I are Americans, we prepare for glory by failing until we don't.

I wish I'd known all this earlier. It would have saved me a lot of trouble.

In order to write this book I reached into the darkness for my past and found to my surprise that most of it was still there, just as I had left it. Some of it, though, had grown and morphed into what now appears to be hideous and reprehensible selfishness. Some of it had crumbled into the ruins of former shame.

This is not journalism. This is just my story. There are bound to be some lies here, but I've been telling them so long they've become truth, my truth, as close as I can get to what really happened. I left some tales out because to tell them would be excessively cruel to people who probably don't deserve it, and altered a few names for the same reason, but I believe I spared myself no blushes.

I didn't flee a dictator or swim an ocean to be an American like some do. I just thought long and hard about it.

I looked at the evidence of my life and gratefully signed up.

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