

# A View from the Pew

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## Oh Say, Can You See?

At fourteen, baseball is pretty much the center of a boy's universe. I still recall that summer afternoon dashing forward from my spot in left field. The short fly ball was clearly beyond the shortstop's reach. I struggled to get a bead on the hide-covered pill descending from the blue sky as I ran full-tilt. I reached up in mid-stride for the ball and –"doink" – it bounced – loudly and far – off the top of my head. The runner on second scored easily. The coach benched me immediately.

Throughout my short career, coaches and teammate's fathers remarked at my natural swing with a bat. I was gifted with the talents of my father who briefly played professional ball. When I connected the ball tended to travel a long way. However, as the opposing pitchers matured, I learned that I could not hit a curve ball; not even if they told me it was coming. No way; no how!

Fast forward four years – at the end of high school I decided that it was pointless to apply to a military academy for college. My eyesight could not be corrected to 20/20 – a requirement for all the academies.

It wasn't until almost thirty years later that I learn the connection between all these events – amblyopia – so called "lazy eye". Due to a developmental defect in the visual center of the brain, my right eye does not focus along with the left eye. As a result, I have virtual no stereoscopic vision and lack normal depth perception. Now I understand my problems with baseball.

Clearly, I never experienced the views of the world as most people do. I have never seen my surroundings in the same three dimensions as you. I will never know what I am missing. As an adult, a psychologist once questioned if this failure of my brain to perceive stimuli as others do impacted my ability to process information and arrive at conclusions as other people did. I thought it was an interesting question.

Does my altered perception of the world affect my responses to the world? More importantly, what else can't my brain do that yours can? Does this defect in information processing extend beyond the visual center? I will never know these answers.

But maybe I am not unique in this problem. Maybe we are all limited in some way or another. Perhaps none of us has any way of knowing if we perceive life as anyone else does. Nineteenth Century English novelist, George Gissing observed, "It is the mind which creates the world around us, and even though we stand side by side in the same meadow, my eyes will never see what is beheld by yours, my heart will never stir to the emotions with which yours is touched."

It could be that each of us has some "defect" that keeps us from "seeing" the world exactly as others. And maybe there is nothing wrong with that. Maybe our sight is not the most important determinant of our perception. Maybe it is really as French writer, Anais Nin noted: "We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are."

If this is true, it is less important to our lives how we see the world than how we see ourselves. We each need to perceive ourselves as the person we know we should be. In a sense, we were all born blind. Through Christ we come to see – see ourselves. As the blind man in the Gospel of John (9:25) said after his encounter with Jesus: "*One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.*"

Given the impact my vision has had in my life, and my ongoing struggle to correct my blindness to Christ, it is significant to me now that they start each ballgame by singing, "Oh say - can you see?" That's a good question.

That's my view from the pew.