

When I sat and watched all the hoopla surrounding Cal Ripken's astonishing record of playing in 2131 consecutive baseball games, a thought occurred to me. Cal Ripken would be the ideal spokesperson for the National Society of Single Parents.

Oh I know that Cal is a happily married man, and I realize that there probably is no such thing as the National Society of Single Parents, being that most single parents simply don't have the time to organize.

But that's the point. Cal is an athlete who personifies the work ethics that single parents don't have an option with.

During this truly remarkable streak, we were told that Cal played the game with the flu, cold, headaches, sore knees, bad hair days, hangnails and mosquito bites. He played in the dog days of summer and the cool chills of early spring and fall. He played the games that were meaningless, and he played in the World Series.

No one ever asked Cal if he wanted a day off. Cal showed up at the ball park every day to play the game, not watch it.

Of all the crazy walks of life in this world, I would guess that the single parent probably appreciates Cal's record more than anyone else.

No person must deal with more issues every day than the single parent. No person must make more decisions every day than the single parent. And nobody goes to bed more drained every night than the single parent.

Every morning, the single parent must get up, feed the children and get them off to school before they hustle off to their own jobs. That sounds easy enough, but try doing it when

your temperature is over 100 and you are feeling miserable. Most parents have a spouse that can carry the load on days like that, but not the single parent.

The life of a single parent does not come with a lot of options. During the course of the day, the single parent has an exhausting list of things that they must do that other parents can approach with at least some measure of security in knowing they are negotiable.

The single parent must feed the kids, get them off to school, be the breadwinner,(too often, just that), juggle the bills, and follow through with the evening chores after a long day at work...feed them, bathe them, brush your teeth. Did you finish your homework? You want a bedtime story?

And this doesn't even account for the emotional issues that the single parent must deal with. They know better than anyone else that the real victim in a broken marriage or death of a spouse is the children. I've never met a single parent that wasn't dedicated to providing a stable, normal life for their children.

Unfortunately, the single parent doesn't have much opportunity to deal with the personal issues of what brought them to becoming a single parent. Again, they do not have many options. They simply must move forward. The kids always come first.

Cal Ripken is an American hero. As a baseball fan, I have no problem with that. His record is clearly the best thing to happen in baseball in a long time.

But if you really want to talk heroes, let's talk about the single parent. The single parent will make more sacrifices in a week than Cal will in his career. The single parent is clearly the MVP (most valuable parent) every day. And nobody plays the game of life with more character and pride than the single parent. Playing injured is not an option for the single parent.

I'm sure many single parents would yawn at Cal's record. After all, they will note, he has five months off every year to rest and recover from those mosquito bites.

Cal Ripken is a shoe-in for the Baseball Hall of Fame whenever he decides to hang up his cleats and go fishing.

In the Family Hall of Fame, I think the single parents should be afforded the same recognition. They certainly have my vote.

Just A Thought