

It must be a truly amazing experience to sing the national anthem at a baseball game, but that is something I will never get to do. I lack the vocal skills that would qualify me for that. My weaknesses are not so great - only problems with pitch, too much volume, fuzzy tone, bad breathing mechanics, and untimely urges to swallow. Also, I tend to get emotional and my throat chokes up, which certainly doesn't help my singing any.

I sometimes sing with a group, however, trying very hard to blend my voice with the others. I especially remember one such event. It was such a beautiful day; we soaked in the air and sun, and a soft breeze caused rippling in the grass as we stood waiting for our cue. But we were not there to briefly glorify the nation before the baseball game began. We were actually there to honor an individual after the game of life was over.

We were not on a baseball field, but in a graveyard. The beloved son of part of our spiritual family had died tragically. We were there in an attempt to comfort those that were grieving. It was not about our individual voices, but their integrated product. It was not about producing a beautiful melody, but trying to connect those that were suffering to the supreme grace of God. Even though we don't always understand it completely.

We were there as a group to glorify not the nation, but the family. It was a much more important duty than merely singing in front of a national audience.

We sang a special song, as requested by the father. The song was short, but we put our whole hearts into it. A sort of spell was created, and we could see the family nod in acceptance and perhaps some understanding. There were tears (even for us), and as they flowed, they left tracks that led towards a level of closure.

We were there to try to connect the suffering with God's love, but we felt the connection as well. It was all about the depth of their feelings, but our feelings were also deepened. The "spell" was broken when the song ended, though it had very lasting effects.

We left separately, but with a profound sense of unity and harmony. There was great satisfaction in working together with such a great purpose: to inspire, and to comfort.