



Nobody around here asked for this region to be the Atlas burden-bearer of sorrow. Yet, here we are.

Nobody asked for Art Modell to move the Browns in 1995. Nobody asked LeBron James to take his talents to South Beach.

Nobody asked the Indians to choke away a 3-1 series lead against Boston in 2007. Nobody asked Jose Mesa to start bouncing curveballs in the dirt 10 years earlier, when a World Series title was two outs away. Nobody asked Earnest Byner to get stripped of the ball. Nobody asked John Elway to drive 98 yards against a cake-icing prevent defense. Nobody asked Brian Sipe to force it in to Ozzie Newsome.

Nobody asked Craig Ehlo to lack the athletic ability to stay with Michael Jordan on an inbounds pass. Nobody asked Jim Chones to break his foot on the eve of a playoff series with Boston.

Nobody asked the Lerner family to buy the Browns and saddle us with 13 years of poor decision-making.

Nobody wanted to be sitting here, in January 2013, with the Browns, Indians and Cavs all positioned as losing teams. Without a winning record or playoff appearance among the three of them in almost three full years.

Yet, here we are.

It's an unenviable place to be. To walk around with your head held high as a Cleveland sports fan takes intestinal fortitude. It's much easier to fashion a garment out of your bitterness and spite, and wear it as a robe of righteousness, vowing to never forget or forgive until things have been made right and just again, according to your definition.

But what does that really do? To hold onto grudges, to take the low road, to be prideful instead of proud, to remain revenge-minded instead of willing to let go and move on?

It has been said that the Amish community has the reverse mindset of the rest of society when it comes to healing. When a major crime occurs within the Amish community, the Amish are taught to forgive the offender as the very first step. Then the healing takes place, over time. In outside society, forgiveness comes only after the healing takes place. Forgiveness is the final step. Which means that throughout the healing process, the victim and/or the victim's family carries the burden of their sorrow with them.

It doesn't have to be a statutory crime. Maybe you lost your job, and blame your boss. Maybe you felt you were wronged by a family member. Or maybe someone took your favorite football team away from you.

This space isn't meant to serve as a forum for debating Art Modell's Hall of Fame-worthiness. As far as I'm concerned, he's borderline. He was an influential NFL owner for half a century. He recognized the value of TV before most of his peers. But he was also a wretched businessman who spent money he didn't have, racked up choking debt and tended to make enemies of

people in powerful positions. All of which factored into his franchise's relocation.

If I lived in Texas or California, and had no attachment to Modell, Baltimore or Cleveland whatsoever, I'd probably be rather indifferent to the whole situation. Would I feel a tremendous wrong had been committed if Modell's bust ever stood in the Hall? Probably not. Is there a gaping hole in the Hall without Modell's bust? I don't think so. I don't lose sleep either way.

What this is about is how Cleveland carries itself as a fan base. Nobody is asking any Cleveland fan to like Art Modell, just like nobody is asking this city to root for LeBron to win more titles with the Heat. But it's time to loosen our collective grip on Art Modell's throat.

Modell needs to become a part of this city's past. We shouldn't keep holding vigil to make sure his bust never sees the Hall. We shouldn't take that burden, that resentment, that anger to our graves, collectively or as individuals.

It happened. The team moved and became the Ravens, and that franchise has been successful for the past decade, winning a Super Bowl title and advancing to another. We, on the other hand, have been left with a pathetic excuse for an expansion franchise. You don't always like what you have to accept. But accept it, you must.

To me, the ultimate act of defiance would be to not only let Modell get into the Hall, but to put his name in the Browns ring of honor and invite David Modell to attend the ceremony. Not because we're looking for some championship karma, or because it's begrudgingly the right thing to do, but because we really, truly want to do it. We want Modell to be honored as an important figure in our city's football history.

Crazy, right? But as far as most uninvested people are concerned, it would be a more respectable gesture than maintaining a death grip on what loose strands of punitive action we feel we can still levy against the man and his legacy.

Forgiveness can empower. Maintaining the current course of petty, embittered action can only continue to eat away at us from the inside. And if anything, it makes us less deserving of a

championship, or any sports success.