

Some people will tell you that this is for Austin Carr, Mark Price and Brad Daugherty. For World B. Free, Lenny Wilkens and Bill Fitch. It is. It's for all the guys we loved, who toiled away in the shadows of the NBA without reaching where the Cavs are now -- their first-ever NBA Finals. Papa Cass chimes in on The Morning After.



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But these are the Cleveland Cavaliers. This isn't just about celebrating what passed for success prior to Saturday night. This is about exorcising demons, spraying for cockroaches and scrubbing mold off the bathroom wall.

This is for Ted Stepien, an owner so bad the NBA had to make a rule that prevents teams from trading away first-round draft picks in consecutive years. An owner who made a half-hearted attempt to move the team to Toronto until Pete Franklin blasted him on the air.

This is for Shawn Kemp, who arrived in Cleveland as "The new NBA" and left as an inflatable joke three years later.

This is for Wrong Rim Ricky and wrong-everything Darius Miles.

This is for Walt Frazier, who was more interested in practicing yoga than playing for the Cavs.

This is for 15 straight losses to start the franchise's inaugural season, and 24 straight losses over two seasons in 1982, still an NBA record.

This is for Craig Ehlo flailing at Michael Jordan, and then crashing to the floor

along with the Cavs' 1989 playoff run. This is for Jim Chones landing on a teammate's foot during a playoff practice in 1976 and hearing a snap in his own foot that ended any hope the Cavs had of beating the Celtics in that year's Eastern Conference finals.

This is for Jordan shoving another series-clinching dagger into the Cavs in 1993. This one clinched a sweep, just because he could and just to show how anticlimactic beating the Cavs had become.

This is for Jordan calling those Cavs "cream puffs" and for Rasheed Wallace likening the Cavs to a dog's hindquarters last year.

This is for Lamond Murray and Chris Gatling and Jim Paxson's drafts. For Price's knees, Daugherty's back and Larry Nance's ankles.

This is for the navicular bones in the feet of Zydrunas Ilgauskas. Seven foot surgeries nearly ended his career. But they didn't.

And this is most definitely for Carlos Boozer, who will be watching the NBA Finals from the comfort of one of his homes as the team he spurned plays on.

This is for a LeBron James-led rise from 17 wins in the spring of 2003 to the NBA's world championship series in 2007. This is for the multitudes, in Cleveland and elsewhere, who thought it could never happen, who thought LeBron was too good to be true.

Well, he is good. He is very, very good. And he is very, very true. And if there is a way to measure basketball IQ specifically, LeBron is the NBA equivalent of the kids at the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Thursday, he knew he needed to take the ball and score. It was the only chance Cleveland had of getting the one necessary win in Detroit. Saturday, he knew the Pistons would hound him, trap him, double- and triple-team him. Before the game, he said he told Daniel Gibson to have his trigger finger "locked and loaded."

LeBron repeatedly found Gibson wide open beyond the arc, and Gibson's barrage of fourth-quarter three-pointers singlehandedly broke the Pistons' resolve.

The Pistons, the supposed archetype for a blue-collar, nose-to-the-grindstone basketball team, the type of team you simply can't rattle, lost their collective cool as the game slipped away. When Wallace arm-tackled LeBron in the fourth quarter, then flipped out at the foul call, earning a double-technical and automatic ejection, it was the end of the road for the Pistons.

This is for a Cavs team that got into the Pistons' heads over the last four games the way the Pistons were supposed to get into their heads. This is for a Cavs team that is growing up and growing together right before our eyes.

And this is for all of us, who watched the days in Richfield, good and bad. Who remembers Dick Snyder over Phil Chenier and Steve Kerr's half-court heave against the Celtics in Game 7 in 1992, Larry Bird's final game.

For anyone who loved how Mike Fratello could somehow make a 64-59 final score seem entertaining simply by his presence. For anyone who thought having Dan Majerle in a Cavs uniform was cool, even if it was only for a year.

For anyone who still likes to imitate Kenny Roda imitating the rasp of John Lucas ("I need my BIGS, Kenny! I need to get BIGS back! I need Chris Mims!")

For anyone who was a willing participant on the roller coaster ride of the past 37 years, who experienced more downs than ups, who never in their wildest dreams thought they might enter The Q this coming November and see a new banner hanging from the rafters, this is for you.

The Cavs are in the NBA Finals.