

The old chair and the sea



Long ago, when my birthdays were still about getting gifts (and not just hosting a barbecue), I received an especially valuable gift from one of my friends.

I am an avid baseball fan and an avid barbecuer. Add them together and you have a recipe for tailgating! I already had a mini-barbecue (the type that uses those little gas canisters) and had a large enough vehicle to transport grill, cooler and table (a cool aluminum foldout that also had a rack to hang a paper towel roll and grill implements). What I didn't have were chairs. Oh, I had some folding chairs, but no real "tailgating" chairs.

My friend solved this with a pair of top-notch Coleman chairs. My favorite color is blue, so that worked out well, too. These are your classic "stakeout" chairs: full back, two arms with a mesh holder in each (a beer for each hand – if I drank beer). I had many a fine tailgate at Joe Robbie Stadium until the recent owners bamboozled Miami into building a stadium for them down at the old Orange Bowl. Yeesh. To tailgate there, I would have to leave when I woke up...and that's for weekend games; forget evening games.

When I set out to write my books on the beach, the (by now) long-unused chairs returned to service. The chairs have an aluminum frame, so they make excellent salt-water resistant

seating. I packed up a small shoulder bag with supplies (laptop, beach towel, etc.) and slung the chair over the other shoulder. After a bit of smoothing, I plopped the chair on the beach and the rest is published history.

Now going on four years since I first took up the craft, the chair is suffering from the wear and tear, literally. The side seams have begun to unravel and the rest of the chair is fraying. The seat and back are still strong (haven't fallen through the chair yet) and the arm holders are undamaged (makes excellent utility for my water bottle in one and the phone in the other).

I have strong feelings for my chair, sentimental and superstitious, and I am confident that the chair can make the remaining few months left in finishing Book 3 of my trilogy. After that, it's possible I will retire the chair. I'm not sure I can bring myself to throw it away or even donate it. I feel it's somewhat like keeping that "first dollar I ever made".

Thankfully, being single, it's not a battle I have to wage with anyone but myself. I expect the chair has a few more years in it...and maybe a few more books as well.