

NOE

Mr. Noe's Pants

written and illustrated by
Stan Croydon

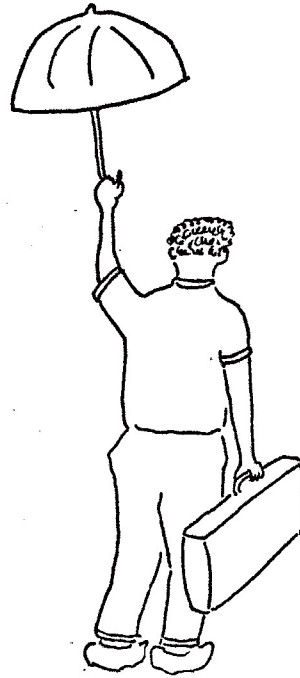
Don't think I have
a commission to
send. It really makes
more efforts

Publisher's Page

Dedication

MR. NOE'S PANTS

Mr. Noe was a great teacher. He made readin', 'ritin' and 'rithmetic lots of fun for his kids. And to make matters even better, the boys and girls didn't even mind doing their homework. Mr. Noe was sort of a "Mary Poppins" in teacher's clothing. Everything the class had to do seemed like fun. In the Winter, for example, when

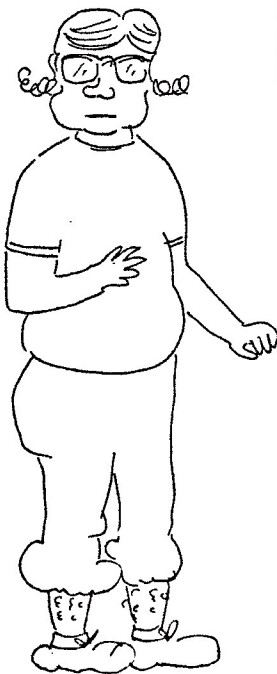


the weather usually kept the class inside at lunch and recess, Mr. Noe would read to the class from some of their favorite books. When he read Treasure Island, he came in dressed up like a pirate; he brought a sword and wore a plumed hat for The Three Musketeers, and insisted on being called D'Artan.an until the book was completed.

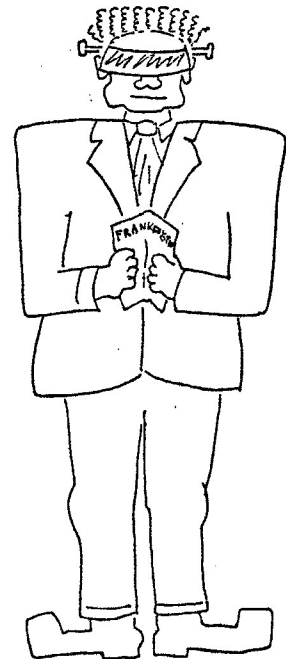
Mr. Noe also got the students involved in the stories, and once, when he was reading The Wizard of Oz, the children brought in axes, oil cans, dogs and even green glasses to make things look like the "Emerald City."



Reading these stories gave Mr. Noe an excellent chance to engage in one of his favorite activities, that of dressing well and wearing the latest fashions. He saw himself as a very stylish dresser, and everyone always noticed what he was wearing, and commented on how interesting his clothes were. He thought life was one big adventure, and wearing the latest fashions made it more exciting and



fun. If knickers and square-shouldered jackets were "in", then he would be wearing them. Many of the clothes even helped him when reading to the class. For example, square shoulders would fit in perfectly with Frankenstein, while Little Lord Fauntleroy would be the perfect setting for a pair of knickers.



When Spring arrived each year, Mr. Noe definitely reached his high point as a teacher. Reading and that other stuff might be necessary for a good education, but teaching the kids about sports was the best way to learn about life. Participating in different sports, and especially softball, a boy or girl became well-rounded as well as educated. Softball taught coordination, physical fitness

and strategy. A little competition and pressure sharpened a person's senses. Win or lose, you came away from a softball game with at least one good lesson about teamwork.

Mr. Noe got most of his ideas about softball from his days as a kid, and when he played ball in high school and college. Mr. Noe once had a chance to play in one of the "fast pitch" softball leagues, but choose to go into teaching, instead. The things he learned about life along the way were very important.

Mr. Noe was an average hitter in his playing days, but his work as a pitcher was truly legend. His pitching motion was said to be so graceful that at times, his delivery reminded people of ballet dancers from Swan Lake. His many different deliveries always had the hitters guessing and off balance. And when speed was called for, the batter was lucky to even see the ball.

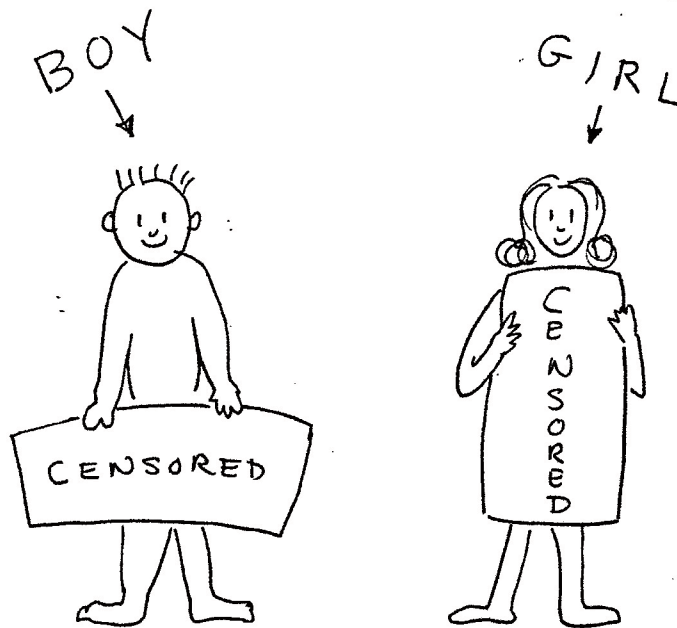


Mr. Noe's view of softball also showed a lot of concern for the manner in which teams were picked. He did not believe in the practice of letting the two

best players choose the sides. When you did that, someone, usually the last kid picked for the team, went home crying. That wasn't good for anyone's mental health. Having the two best players toss a bat to see who could hold onto it last could be hazardous to your physical health, too. Rumor had it that Mr. Noe found this out the hard way, when as a kid, he completely missed the bat that was thrown to him by the opposite captain. It made for one really bad headache, and on top of everything, his team lost the game that day, too.



To avoid any problems with the team selection process among his class, in late February Mr. Noe came up with what he thought was a perfect solution to the problem. The boys would be on one team, and the girls would be on the other. No



one could dispute the qualifications needed to be on each side, a boy was a boy, and a girl was a girl. In addition, his plan had some personal benefits. He could generously volunteer to be the girl's pitcher and clean up hitter to even up the sides. And when he wasn't hitting, he could be the umpire, too.

"That's sexist," Mr. Noe, shouted Diane when she heard the idea. "We can whip the boys with or without your help."

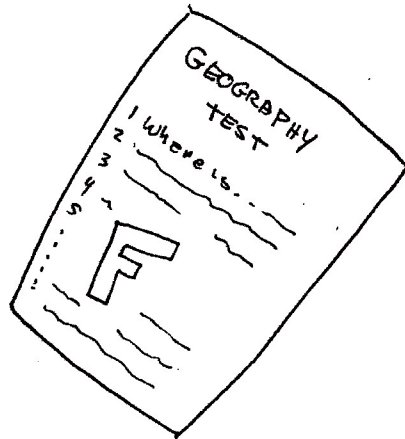
Gerald, who had heard all of the tales about Mr. Noe's softball abilities, quickly agreed. "You're one of the 'guys', Mr. Noe. You can't play for them. And Diane's right, this is 1984, not 1944."



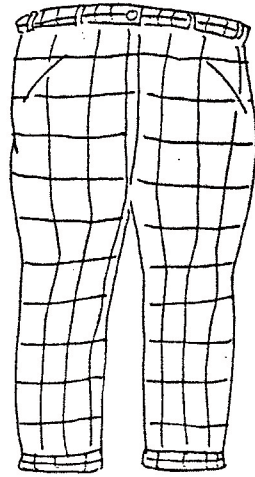
"Sorry kids, but I need to participate in order to keep closer check on the game. Besides, there are two more boys in the class than girls. This way, the sides will be a little more even."

Diane gave up without any more debate. It might be male chauvanism, but she had to admit he was a great pitcher, and the girls wouldn't mind the help, this time. Gerald gave up, too, primarily because there was a big test next week, and he didn't want to give Mr. Noe any more reasons than he already had to give him a low grade.

When the first warm day in April rolled around, all of the kids knew what was in store for them at recess. The boys had checked out bats and balls from the gym. Everyone brought softball mitts from home, and almost everyone was wearing their favorite team's baseball cap. It was the first softball game of the Spring.



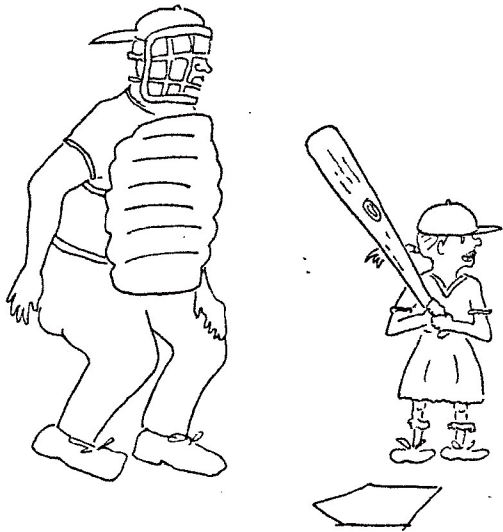
Mr. Noe had been preparing himself for the big day, too. He had been practicing his pitching at home for a number of days, and he felt ready. He was also wearing his "lucky pants" from college, and had on his best baseball cap. His only problem was the rumblings his stomach was making from eating too much Italian food the night before. He now wondered if that fifth helping of spaghetti was one too many.



When everyone assembled on the field, the girls were up first, and the boys took to the field. The boys wanted to "cream" the girls, and had visions of a 25-1 score (they were willing to concede at least one home run to their teacher).

GIRLS	0	0	0	0	1	1
BOYS	4	8	6	7	-	25

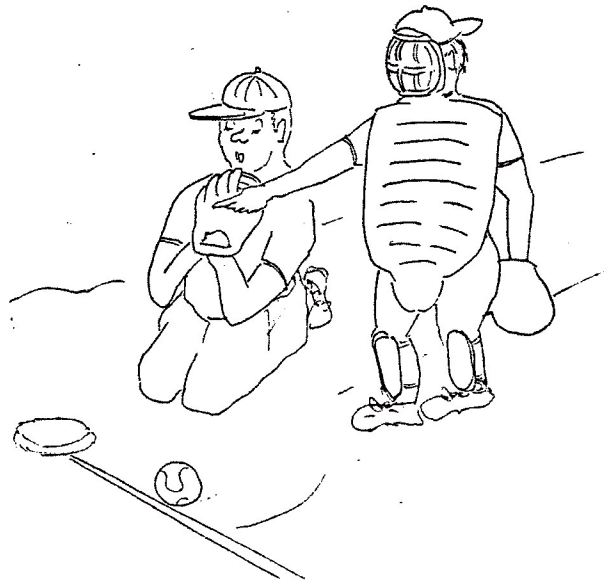
With Mr. Noe on their side, the girls figured they would certainly make the contest close.

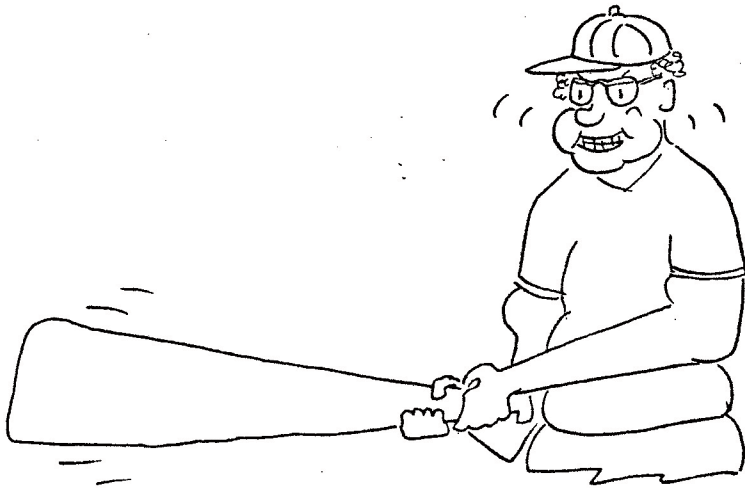


Agnes was the first hitter. She was no "power hitter" by any stretch of the imagination, but she was great at getting on base. She was at least a foot shorter than everyone else in the class, and her size made it very hard not to walk her if only she had the patience not to swing at even good pitches. Four quick throws by the pitcher, Wade, and she was standing on first.

The next girl to bat was Nancy. After running the count to three and one, Nancy just barely got her bat on a good curve and sent the ball trickling down the third base line. If had been a bunt, it would have been perfect. As it was the ball was inching down the line, looking like it might go foul. In case the ball had any ideas to the contrary, Howard, the third baseman, and Melvin, the catcher, were both on hand to do as much coaxing as possible to convince the ball to cross the baseline.

Their efforts failed, and as the players returned to their positions, Agnes stood on second, and Nancy on first.

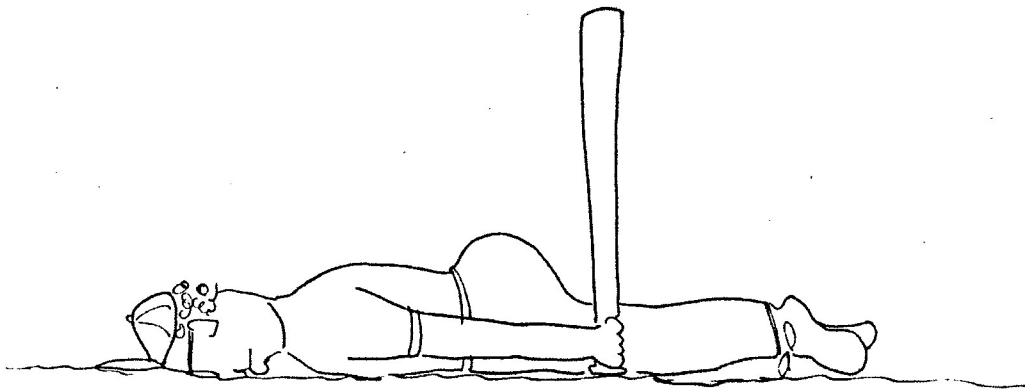




Melvin decided it was time to shout some encouragement to his pitcher. "Come on Wade, let's start getting these dumb girls out. Get some more speed on your pitches. We haven't got all day, just recess."

Things got worse for Wade. Diane singled cleanly to left field, and only a quick throw home prevented Agnes from trying to score. After Diane was the clean-up hitter, Mr. Noe, who was busy taking his practice swings behind home plate.

Wade was so nervous that he nearly hit his teacher with the first pitch. The second pitch was a little closer to the plate, and the third one was actually a strike (Mr. Noe had decided to look one over before he unloaded on the boys.). With the count two and one, Wade was beginning to feel a little more confident.



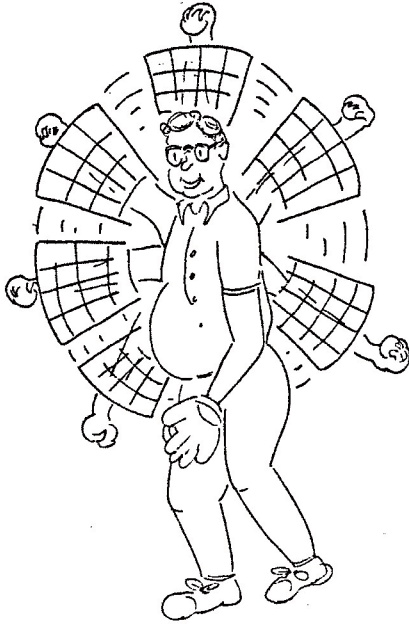
Mr. Noe hit the next pitch a country mile down the first baseline, and fortunately for the boys, it was a foot foul. Wade was worried again. He had to place the next pitch just right. But unknown to Wade, Mr. Noe had some ideas about where to place it, too. Only Mr. Noe's ideas, and bat, put the ball about fifty feet over Tommy's head in center field.

As Tommy ran after the ball, Agnes crossed home. Nancy scored by the time Tommy finally picked up the ball, and Diane scored as the ball was just getting back into the infield. Because Mr. Noe was not the fastest thing on two feet, and he had yet to reach third base, and was still huffing and puffing his way around second.

As he rounded third, he saw the three girls who had already scored, waving for him to keep moving. Wolfgang, the cut-off man, hurled his best throw straight at Melvin, the catcher, who was busy trying to protect the plate. The throw was high, but it arrived an instant ahead of Mr. Noe, who, to the amazement of everyone on the field, wasn't sliding. He ran right into poor Melvin, sending him sprawling, ten feet behind the plate, but still holding onto the ball.



"I guess I'm out", Mr. Noe exclaimed to the surprised crowd that surrounded him. "I should have slid, but I was afraid I'd tear my pants, or maybe get them dirty."



Wade got the next two hitters to ground out, but the score after a half an inning was girls, three, and boys, coming to bat.

Since this was their first chance to catch a glimpse of their talented teacher in action, the boys went down, one, two, three, in their half of the inning. Mr. Noe either dazzled the hitters with "Swan Lake" grace, or when he felt it was necessary, gave them a "Windmill Special" when

they weren't expecting it. Whatever the pitch, Mr. Noe was brilliant, striking out the entire side. Wade, Tommy and Melvin never had a chance.

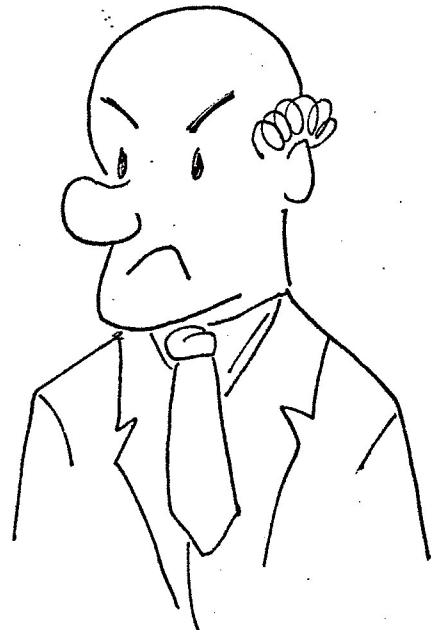
The tricky motions than Mr. Noe gave the hitters was one thing that a batter could eventually get used to. After a few hitters or innings, you came to know when the "windmill" was coming, and a "Swan Lake" didn't awe you quite as much as when you saw it for the first time. But it was the sounds that the hitters heard that most distracted and confused the boys. Mr. Noe's hoots and hollars were to be expected, but it was the strange rumblings and muffled roars that seemed to come from the area of the pitcher's mound that frustrated the boys more.

The hoots were made by a human voice, but there was no easy explanation for the other sounds. They weren't human at all, the ball wasn't making the noise as it turned in the air; no one noticed a small earthquake in the area, or an airplane flying close by. The sounds made concentration very difficult, and whatever the cause, it wasn't helping their hitting.

In the second inning, Wade got two of the girls to strike out, and the third to ground out to second. When the boys' turn to bat rolled around, their hitting luck seemed to be taking a turn for the better. Despite three quick outs, they got the ball out of the infield each time on flyballs to all three outfielders. Even though they still trailed three to nothing, the boys started to believe that Mr. Noe might not be invincible, after all.

Little Agnes was the first hitter in the third inning, as the girls went through their lineup for the second time. She made the mistake of swinging at the first pitch, and bounced out to short. Nancy popped a fly to right field, and Diane struck out. Wade heaved a sigh of relief that could be heard all the way to center field, and the principal's office. Mr. Noe was the next scheduled batter, and now Wade knew he would face him without anyone on base.

The boys had their worst three hitters due up in the bottom of the third inning. Stanley, the first hitter, had a reputation for striking out. The next batter, Robert, was great at hitting into

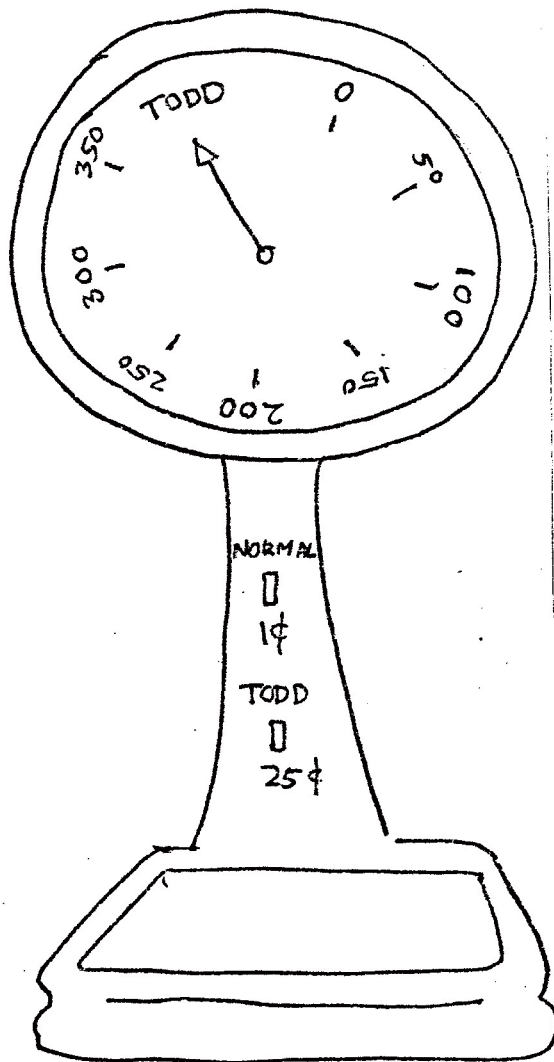


MR. SMITH, PRINCIPAL

double plays. And Todd's best quality was his size, which usually caused a pitcher to hit him with the pitched ball.

Stanley not only didn't strike out, but he made contact with the ball. He lined a hit over Agnes at third base. He could have stretched his hit into a double when the outfielder bobbled the ball, but he was so surprised by his hit, he stopped at first to brag about his accomplishment to the firstbase coach. If he had been on second, there would have been no question of avoiding a Robert's double play.

But Robert came through with a hit, too. When his grounder miraculously took a last second crazy bounce over Diane's outstretched glove at short, the boys found themselves with runners at first and second, and nobody out. Mr. Noe was beginning to look vulnerable, and the game was getting interesting.



When Todd came to bat, he got as close to the plate as possible. He glared at Mr. Noe, daring him to get him out. "See if you can put it past me," he chuckled as he stuck his stomach out over the plate as far as possible. Peggy, the catcher, looked up at Todd and growled, "You're supposed to hit the ball, and not have it hit you, you dummy."



The remark didn't ruffle Todd one bit, and he stuck his body out over the plate even farther, smiling down at Peggy as he shuffled his feet.

Mr. Noe's first pitch was high and plenty outside. He tried to get closer to the plate on the second pitch, but he only succeeded in bouncing the ball over Todd's foot. The third pitch struck Todd right in his stomach. It certainly didn't hurt him since he had more padding there than the catcher had on her chest protector, but he feigned pain, anyway, holding his belt buckle all the way to first base.

"Ohhhhhhh," he groaned, as he stepped on the bag. "Are you crying because the ball hit you, or because you haven't had lunch yet?", quipped first baseman, Susan.

"Go ahead and tease," responded Todd, "but we've got the bases loaded. And nobody's out."

The bases were loaded, now, and Mr. Noe really looked worried. He came through in the clutch, however, striking out Wade on three straight flutter pitches that had Wade swinging wildly. The next batter, Tommy, wasn't going to be so easy, the teacher thought.

Tommy needed an extra special wind up, Mr. Noe thought to himself. His arm whirled back and around for what seemed like a dozen times, as Tommy took his practice swings at the plate. At the same time, those weird noises that the boys heard earlier, started to become even louder and stranger than they were before. Tommy called time, just as poor Mr. Noe was about to release the ball. The action caught the teacher completely by surprise, and Mr. Noe almost tripped off the mound as he stopped himself from throwing the ball.



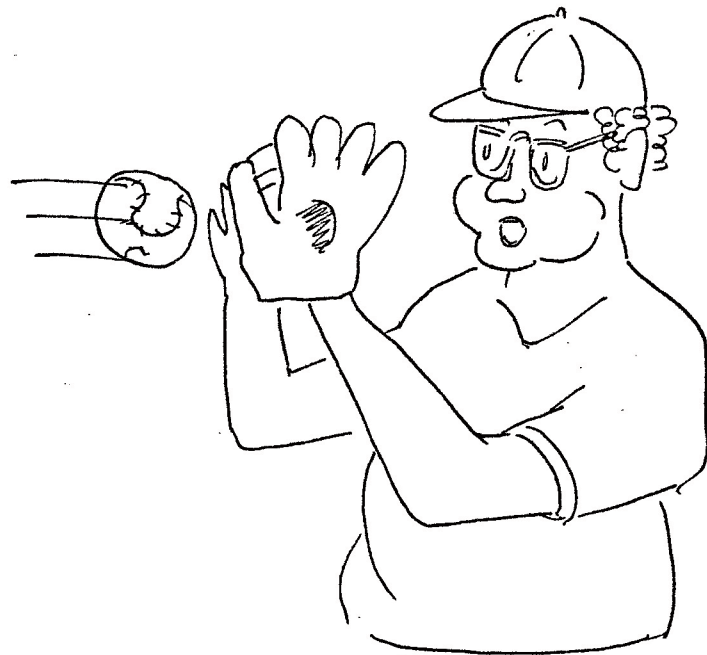
Tommy went over to Wade for advice. "What can I do about that sound Mr. Noe makes? The noise is driving me crazy."

"Here's some Kleenex. Why don't you put it in your ears? Then you won't hear anything."

"I'll try anything," shrugged Tommy. "Maybe it will help."

Mr. Noe, who was really never aware of any of the noises he sometimes produced on the mound, couldn't understand what Tommy was doing, or why he was doing it. His concern was to get out of the inning without a score by the boys.

When Tommy got back to the plate, Mr. Noe again roared into his windup. This time, the Kleenex must have helped, because when the fast ball came at Tommy, he hit it squarely, and right at a startled Mr. Noe. Mr. Noe normally would have gotten hit right in the middle of his forehead, but fortunately for him, and the girls, his glove hand had wound up stretched out in front of his body, and he caught the ball quite by accident.



"Whew, that was close," called Mr. Noe to his catcher.

Now everything was up to Melvin. He had to have a hit that would knock in at least two runs, so the game would be close. Then, even if Mr. Noe got out of the inning without any further scoring, the boys would still have a chance in the next, and probably, last inning. But, after seeing the incredible luck Mr. Noe was having on the mound, well He knew he could knock in the runs if only he could avoid those windmill pitches. Mr. Noe, however, was thinking the same thing.



Mr. Noe started Melvin off with a windmill pitch that Melvin quicked fouled down the right field foul line. The second windmill was also fouled off and Mr. Noe began to think that with the count 0 and 2, something tricky might be in order. He decided that the "Hawaiian War Chant" pitch was just what was needed. The boys hadn't seen that delivery. It had speed, and most of all, the motion was sure to confuse the hapless Melvin. Mr. Noe hadn't used the pitch since college, but with his lucky pants on, he felt he could do anything.

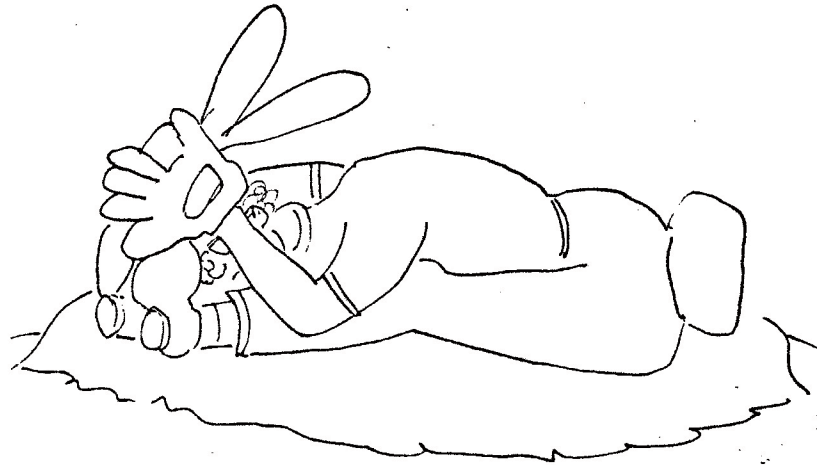
The rumblings that grew louder with each swing of Mr. Noe's arms, and with each shake of his hips, began to turn into another sound that could be heard all over the playground. Later, people said the principal heard them in his office, too. The rumble that everyone wondered about, slowly

RRRRRRRR-III III III III III III III III III III-

Mr. Noe heard this sound, alright, and froze right in the middle of his pitch. Unfortunately, it was too late to have any effect on the problem he was now facing.

"Balk, balk, balk," yelled two or three of the boys. "Come on home, Stanley," motioned Melvin from the plate.

"Help," yelled Mr. Noe from the pitcher's mound as he looked to the boys closest to him for assistance. "Stanley, Robert, Todd, come here quickly," cried Mr. Noe as he motioned for the three kids to join him on the mound. At the same time, their teacher was collapsing in a heap, throwing his arms about him and covering himself up in as small a position as possible. He looked like he was a rabbit, about to enter his burrow.



"What's going on?" shouted Stanley from third.

"Maybe its some sort of trick to get us caught off base," called Robert with skepticism.

"It's too early for lunch," mumbled Todd.

"Just get out here, please. Time is out; you don't have to worry," called the desperate Mr. Noe. "Just come here, I need you, now."

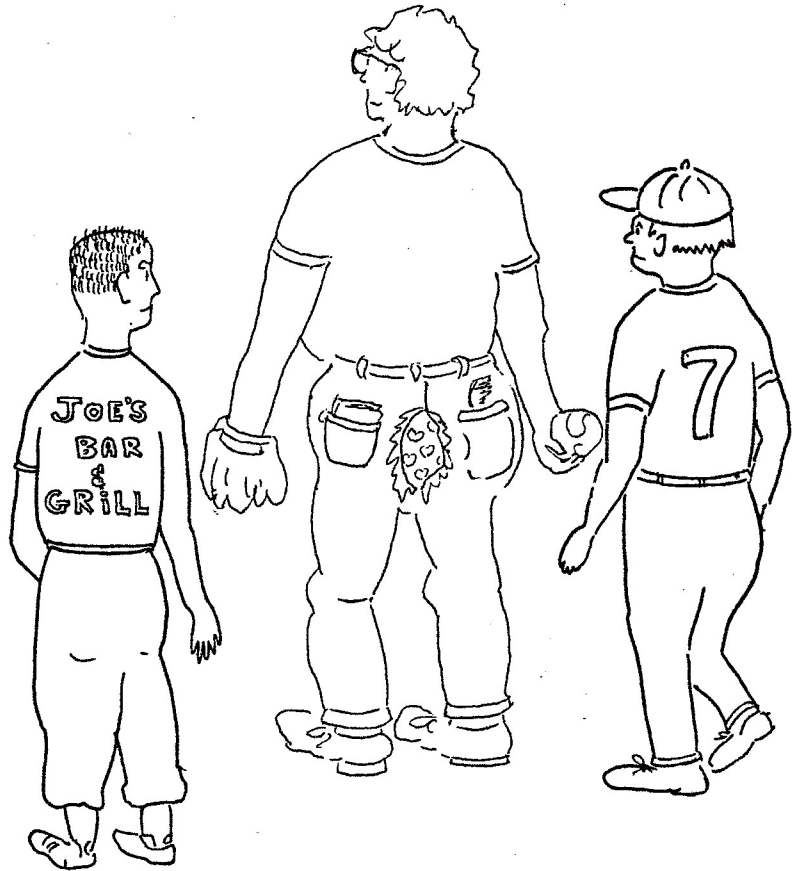
The three boys ambled to the center of the infield, wondering what this was all about.

"Get me to the Home Ec. Room, and in a hurry," Mr. Noe whispered when the three kids bent down to see what the teacher wanted. "I'm going to stand up, now, and we have to be careful when I do it."

The three runners who circled around him, still didn't understand what Mr. Noe's problem was, but they sure did the moment he rose to his knees. As their teacher dusted himself off, Stanley could see that the seat of Mr. Noe's lucky pants had an enormous tear in them. And not only was the tear noticeable, but so were Mr. Noe's underpants.

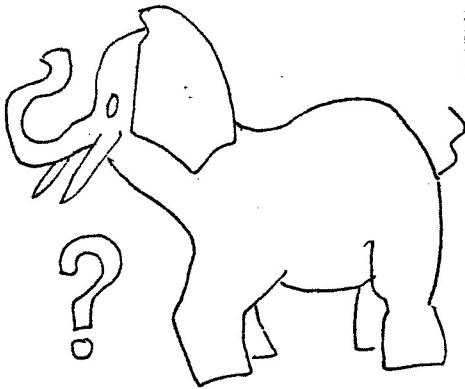
Suddenly, everything made sense. The rumbling noise the boys had been hearing the last two days had been the sounds made by the seams of Mr. Noe's pants. The seams had been trying to stay together against the forces and motions made by Mr. Noe's body. The movements by their teacher's stomach and touche had too much, and their teacher had lost his biggest game of all time, the one against his waistline. To make matters worse, a lot of kids in the class just found out that he wore he wore underpants with red hearts and pink bunnies on them.

Mr. Noe pulled the three boys closer to him as he got to his feet. They then all marched at a brisk pace in the direction of the school. Most of the boys and girls that remained on the field were left scratching their heads in confusion. The outfielders on the girls' team were too far from the action to have seen anything of importance. They might not have even heard the "RIP" if the wind was wrong. The boys on the sidelines were in a fairly good position to see and hear most everything, but the class was going to have to rely on the infielders to find out "what really happened".



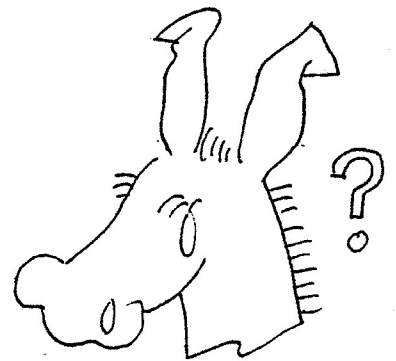
Out on the infield, some of the kids were suggesting that Mr. Noe had gotten a cramp in his leg, although no one really saw him limping as he went toward the school. One girl thought he got something in his eye with all of that hip motion he was making, and Agnes even said they were heading for the Nurse's Office, "right now."

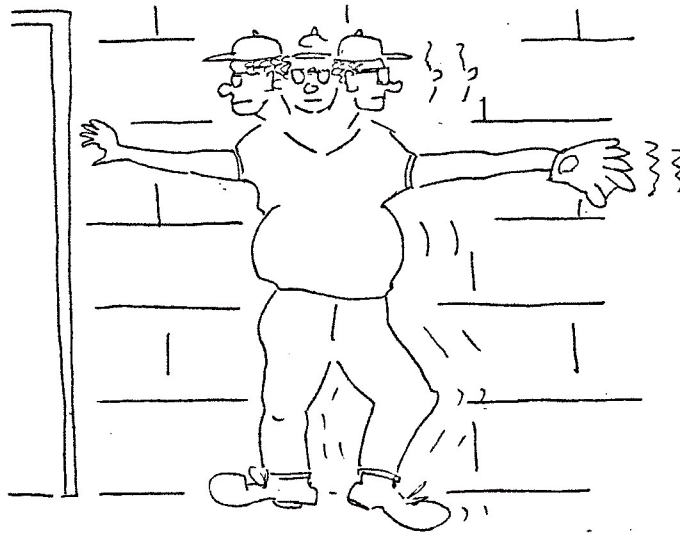
It took Diane to shed real light on the situation. "I think he ripped his pants," she blushed. "From where I was standing, I saw a big patch of white, pink and red, right between his hip pockets. And it wasn't any hankerchief, either."



The giggles started, and then the laughter. Before things calmed down, even the right fielder was claiming that she could see pink elephants on Mr. Noe's seat. One of the boys, however, was quick to come to Mr. Noe's aid, and claimed they were "donkeys" since he thought Mr. Noe was a Democrat.

When the three runners and their poor teacher made it to the school entrance, Mr. Noe quickly ducked inside the door. The Home Ec. room was at least ten doors down the hall, and he was going to have to be very careful getting there. He put his back up against the wall, and started to do a sidestep in the Home Ec. room's direction. At each classroom, if the door was open, Mr. Noe did a quick about face, showing a slightly reddened face with a big grin on it to any teacher who happened to see him.





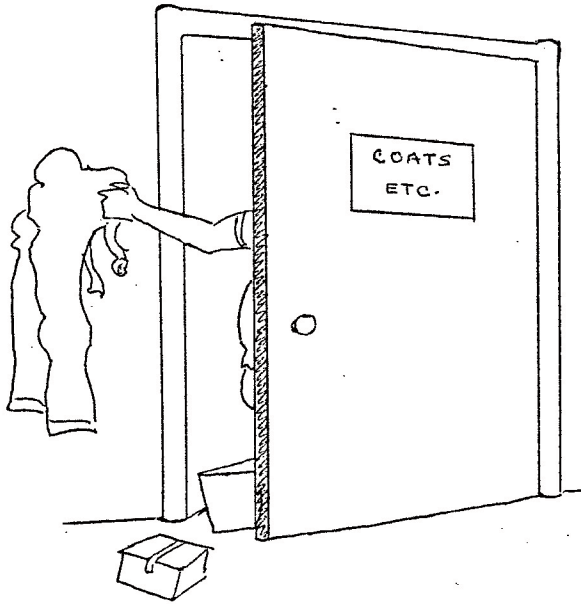
When the baseball players reached the Home Ec. room, Mr. Noe dashed inside. "Miss Wilson, I need your assistance in a matter of great importance," Mr. Noe called to the surprised teacher, as he ducked into the nearest closet he could find.

The class of mostly girls was startled by the unexpected entry of four bedraggled athletes into their class on sewing and cooking. Miss Wilson was a little surprised, too, but she did her best to maintain control of the situation.

"Why certainly, Mr. Noe, what can I do for you?", all the time wondering what Mr. Noe was doing in the closet, and if he could even hear what she was saying.



"My clothes need a few alterations," came the muffled explanation from inside the closet, and under the boxes that had fallen on Mr. Noe's head when he



tripped in the darkness. "See what you can do with these," came the answer, as his hand, holding the damaged pants, shot through a small opening in the door.

As Miss Wilson surveyed the pants, she began to comprehend the enormity of the problem. The main seam of Mr. Noe's pants had split apart a nearly a foot.

"Well Mr. Noe, I think I can help you, but it's going to take more than just a few minutes. That's an awfully big tear you have there."

"Thank you for your analysis, Miss Wilson, but please just fix it. I have a class to get back to."

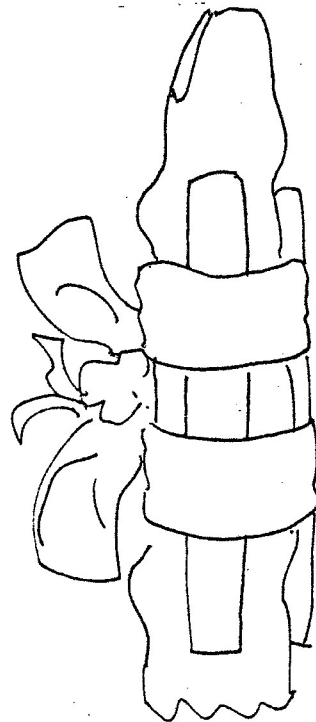
It took Miss Wilson about ten minutes to repair the pants, but it seemed like two or three hours to Mr. Noe. When the job was finished, Miss Wilson knocked on the closet door, and handed Mr. Noe his pants through the small opening that once again appeared. "Thank you," was the muffled response that was heard through the crack.

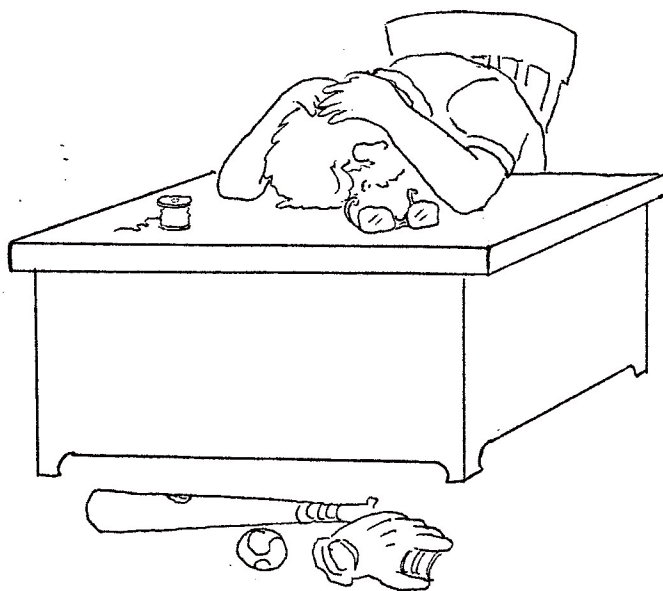
In a few seconds, Mr. Noe emerged from the closet, trying to look like nothing strange had ever happened. "Let's get back to the playground, guys," he called as he marched out of the Home Ec. room. "The class is waiting for us."

The kids on the playground had decided to resume the game after the group had been gone for ten minutes. Just as the girls had feared, the boys tied the score, but it was now the top of the fourth inning.

"Sorry kids, but the game's over for today," called Mr. Noe as he bounced back onto the field. The nurse said I pulled a muscle in my pitching finger, and will have to give the game up for a few weeks", or at least until I lose some weight he thought to himself. "Now let's get back to class work."

When the class returned to their regular work in geography, everytime Mr. Noe turned to write something on the blackboard, he thought he heard someone a snicker or a giggle, but he was sure that Miss Wilson had done a good job of sewing. He knew it had to be his imagination playing tricks on him. He had hit the ground the moment he was aware of the rip. There was no way any of the class could have realized what had happened. Maybe tomorrow, he'd come to school with a split on his finger, just to help convince anyone who doubted his hasty explanation.





The real shock to Mr. Noe came a few minutes later when a student of Miss Wil;son's knocked on the classroom door. After the girl entered, she spoke to Mr. Noe in a voice the whole class could hear. "Mr. Noe, Miss Wilson wants you to have the thread she used to sew up your pants. If it ever happens again, you might need it. "Electric red and green" thread is awfully hard to find, these days."

"Aughhhh," Mr. Noe cried as he sat down at his desk, and buried his head under his hands and arms. His secret was out.

The sports records for Memorial School show that Mr. Noe holds the record for the most pairs of pants ripped in a single year, (four), and for the longest seam ripped in a single game (ten inches). At the end of the school year, Mr. Noe's students, who thought so much of him that some even tried to flunk and be left back a year, got together and gave him an award as the "Most Valuable Player/Teacher (MVP/T)". They took a softball from one of their games, stuck a needle and thread in it to resemble a pin cushion, and then had it bronzed.

