

Mr. Perriwinkle's Pants

I guess Mr. Perriwinkle was a pretty good teacher, and I'm not one to go out of my way to brag about some dumb ol' teacher! But, Mr. Perriwinkle did make those stupid hours in school really zip by. And, I hate to admit it -- and don't you dare tell anyone -- but sometimes, I even did something bad in class just hoping I would have to stay after school and get to spend some extra time with him.

The best thing about Mr. Perriwinkle was the way he made you live the things he was teaching you. The way he did this was by getting everyone, including himself, dressed up for the subject he was teaching.

Mr. Perriwinkle liked clothes, and every day he wore a fancy outfit to school. He was always happy when people noticed what he was wearing. One day he dressed up like Huckleberry Finn when we read that book. To fit the part, he wore a big straw hat and suspenders to hold up his dungarees. Another time, he wore a space suit to science class because we were talking about astronauts and rocket ships.

The man was sort of a "Mary Poppins" in teacher's clothing, and all the tests and quizzes came with a spoon full of sugar. Learning was fun if you were lucky enough to be in his class. And the sugar everyone liked most, were the stories he told.

One of Mr. Perriwinkle's favorite stories was The Wizard of Oz. One day he might come in dressed as The Scarecrow, and the next, The Tinwoodsman. He wore his best green suit when he wanted to be The Wizard, and he let the kids decorate the classroom to look like the Emerald City. Mr. Perriwinkle even let the boys and girls dress up like the characters in the story, too. The boys wanted to be Munchkins, and the girls always came dressed as Dorothy so they could wear ruby slippers.

Everything went well with the story until it was almost finished. Then, one day, Susie decided to come to school with her Great Dane, and started calling him "Little Toto". The principal didn't like that, especially after the dog spotted what he thought was a mouse on The Scarecrow's back.

Toto decided to get the mouse, and raced through the lunchroom leaving a long trail of straw and about twenty overturned pizzas!

Wearing neat clothes sure made Mr. Perriwinkle feel good inside when he read a book. But, there was something else that made him feel extra special.

That something was softball. Mr. Perriwinkle loved it, and it made him feel young again.

Mr. Perriwinkle played a lot of softball when he was a

✓

Space
Suit

✓

Pizzas

little kid and even got to be captain of his team when he was in college. He wasn't a great hitter but his pitching was something else. He had all the motions of a ballet dancer and could strike out three tough batters in a row.

Just as school ended one warm day in April Mr. Perriwinkle made an announcement. "Tomorrow will be the first softball game of the season. Please come prepared," he said with a smile. And everyone knew exactly what to bring to school for the big game.

In the morning Mr. Perriwinkle found himself surrounded with a mountain of mitts, bats and balls. The kids were ready for Opening Day.

Everyone scurried to get into line when the bell rang for recess. The boys and girls carried their bats and balls and Mr. Perriwinkle took charge of the mitts. He put them in a red canvas bag then led the class to the playing field behind the school.

Mr. Perriwinkle came prepared for the big day. He had practiced his pitching all weekend to get in shape. And he made sure to wear his "lucky pants" from college, the ones he wore when he pitched the big game for State and won the championship for them. He knew they were a little snug because he had eaten too much spaghetti for lunch that day, but Mr. Perriwinkle still felt wonderful.

The girls were up first and Agnes was the first batter. She yelled to the pitcher as she picked up her bat. "No one ever gets me out, Wade."

"You wanna bet?" answered Wade.

Wade soon realized she was right. Agnes was real short and when he threw the ball it went way over her head. After four pitches Agnes waltzed down to first base.

Nancy was next. She barely hit the ball and it rolled down the third base line. It stopped just in time to be a hit; and Howard, the third baseman, and Melvin, the catcher, groaned when the ball didn't cross the foul line.

"Come on, Wade! Let's get these stupid girls out! We don't have all day, just recess!" yelled Melvin.

"I'm pitching the best I can!" hollered Wade. "I can't help it if the girls are lucky!"

Diane was the third girl to bat. She tapped the ball and ran to first as the ball took a surprise bounce over the second baseman's head. But Agnes couldn't get home to score because the outfielder was quick to throw the ball in to Melvin.

Poor Wade! The bases were loaded and the next batter was Mr. Perriwinkle!

Wade felt nervous. He had a strange feeling in his stomach. It reminded him of the time his mother made him play his violin in front of all of her friends.

"Okay, here it goes," thought Wade. He threw the ball hard and fast, it was a good one! But, Mr. Perriwinkle whacked it and the ball sailed toward the school.

"Run girls! I'm going to make a home run!" shouted Mr.

Perriwinkle as he huffed and puffed around the bases. Agnes, Nancy, and Diane all ran across home plate. But, one of the outfielders caught up with the ball and threw it hard to Melvin.

By the time Mr. Perriwinkle rounded third base his legs felt like rubber. He bounced toward home and ran straight into Melvin who was holding the ball. Mr. Perriwinkle was out!

"I tried, girls. I tried," called Mr. Perriwinkle. "My legs just couldn't go any faster." Maybe I should have stopped eating lunch after just three platefuls of spaghetti.

Next inning, Mr. Perriwinkle walked out to the pitcher's mound and stood there. He gave a mean look at the first batter, and then pulled the belt on his "lucky pants", one notch tighter. The spaghetti in his stomach rolled around looking for more room!

"All right, girls, it's time for some real pitching. No more "MR. Nice Guy".

As Mr. Perriwinkle warmed up, the boys heard some funny noises. The girls made a lot of racket with their chattering on the infield, but these sounds were coming from the mound and bothered the batters.

When Mr. Perriwinkle threw his first pitch to Tommy, one of his "Windmill Specials", the sound got even louder.

The count went to three balls and two strikes on Tommy, and Mr. Perriwinkle decided he needed an extra special pitch to get Tommy out.

Mr. Perriwinkle didn't notice any of the noises and decided to use still another special pitch, his "Hawaiian War Chant" sinker!

Mr. Perriwinkle's arms and legs flew in one direction and then another. His arms waived wildly and his legs and feet jumped all over the place. His hips shook back and forth like a hula dancer's. It sounded like drums were beating in the jungle, or maybe it was even an earthquake. Then, suddenly, everyone heard a giant RRRR-LLLLLLL-PPPPPPPP.

Mr. Perriwinkle stopped and turned white. He knew what had happened, and he collapsed in a heap on the pitcher's mound, looking a lot like a rabbit trying to get into his burrow.

"Help me, boys! Quick! Hurry!" shouted their frantic teacher. Melvin, Tommy and Wade rushed to the mound to see what was happening.

"Now I'm going to get up very carefully, and I want you boys to surround me when I do." And as Mr. Perriwinkle got up they could not believe their eyes.

Mr. Perriwinkle had a very large tear in the seat of his "lucky pants." "That's the biggest rip I've ever seen!" exclaimed Wade. "Why that's even bigger than the one my Dad got when he swung his golf club too high at the Country Club Open!"

But that wasn't all they saw. Mr. Perriwinkle's underpants were showing, too. And they weren't just regular white underpants. These were the kind decorated with red hearts and pink bunnies!

It all made sense to Tommy, now. "Those funny noises were

coming from Mr. Perriwinkle's pants!" said Tommy to himself as he tried to cover up where someone could see the tear in his teacher's pants and the red hearts and bunnies that were on Mr. Perriwinkle's underwear!

Mr. Perriwinkle, Melvin, Wade and Tommy stayed close together as they marched toward the school at a brisk pace. "I have to get to the Home Ec room so Mrs. Wilson can mend my pants," said the teacher. "Let's hurry, please!"

When the boys and Mr. Perriwinkle reached the school they all quickly ducked inside the door. Getting to the Home Ec room, however, was going to be tough, but they could do it, and they did. Once inside the room, a red faced Mr. Perriwinkle turned to the surprised Home Ec teacher. "Hi there! Just stopped by to say hello," said the embarrassed pitcher.

"Why, er, good morning," said a confused Mrs. Wilson. "How nice of you to drop by."

"So long! Gotta run. See you later," waived Mr. Perriwinkle as he dived into the closest closet he saw.

Mrs. Wilson wanted to know what was going on, and what it was that was so important in her closet. But it all started to make sense when Mr. Perriwinkle poked his arm through the crack in the door. His pants dangled from his pitching hand. "Please see what you can do with these," begged Mr. Perriwinkle.

"Oh my! Whatever happened?" Mrs. Wilson asked in astonishment.

"Never mind," pleaded Mr. Perriwinkle. "It's a long story and I must get back to my class. Please hurry!"

All right. I'll get these mended as fast as I can. But this is a very large tear, Mr. Perriwinkle."

While Mrs. Wilson sewed the "lucky pants", Tommy, Melvin and Wade sat down. All this secret stuff was making them tired. Meanwhile, all the girls in the class started to stare at them and they felt uncomfortable so near to the sewing machines. The boys hoped Mrs. Wilson would just hurry so they could get back outside.

Mrs. Wilson finished mending the pants and knocked on the closet door. "Here are your pants, Mr. Perriwinkle. They ought to hold for a while, but I wouldn't go and start doing a lot of exercise until you lost some weight or else bought a new pair of pants."

Mr. Perriwinkle stuck out his arm and took the pants. "Thank you, Mrs. Wilson," he said as he closed the closet door.

In a few seconds Mr. Perriwinkle stepped out. He motioned for the three boys, and they dashed to the back of the room, eager to get away from all of those sewing machines and girls. "Let's get back to the game, guys. The class is waiting for us."

The boys and girls in Mr. Perriwinkle's class stood in a big group on the playing field, still talking about their teacher's pants. "Here he comes," yelled Agnes when she spotted the teacher trailed by his three helpers. "Where were you?"

"Sorry, kids, the game is over for today. The nurse said I sprained my pitching finger and I have to give up the game for a

few weeks," announced Mr. Perriwinkle. "Or at least until I learn to not eat so much spaghetti," he thought to himself. "Now let's get back to the classroom."

"Maybe I better wear a splint on my finger tomorrow," thought Mr. Perriwinkle, "just in case . . ."

Later Mr. Perriwinkle heard a knock on the door. It was one of Mrs. Wilson's girls and in a very loud voice she said, "Mrs. Wilson wants you to have the thread she used to sew up your pants. You might need it again, sometime!"

"Aughhhh," cried Mr. Perriwinkle as he sat down and burried his head under his arms. His secret was out.

No one ever mentioned that softball game, again. Mr. Perriwinkle continued to play the game with his class, but there was one big difference. He never used his famous "Hawaiian War Chant" pitch again, especially when wearing his "lucky pants". He also decided he would only *have a salad* eat salads (one of them) for lunch!