

# GROWING UP GOLDEN

A STORY BY DBTRYON

## CHAPTER 4

### May Day

A long, long time ago, in small town in the Midwest, lived 5 little boys. It was the late 1950s. The town was Glidden, Iowa. A beautiful little town right in the middle of corn country. The story is about friends, classmates, families, community and an America that seems to have faded away.

The 5 little boys, age nine or so, were Ricky, Dickie, Jimmy, Stevie and Fritz. Friends and Classmates. They all lived a block or so apart.

We played and played and played. Snow ball fights, Ditch'em on our bikes, Kick The Can, King of the Hill, Annie-Annie Over, Kickball, Apple Fights, but especially sports. Baseball, Basketball, a little golf in Willey's pasture, but the most fun was football.

Sometimes we got into a little trouble, but in those days there was no air conditioning (except at the movies). So every family seemed to have a porch, where the adults would sit and smoke and watch the world go by. Talk about a neighborhood watch program. If you broke a window or were picking on the smaller kids or even walking down the street, swearing or God Forgive, smoking, yourself....Some Mom would call your Mom and let her know and Man, would you "get it". Especially when Dad got home. Our town did not need cops walking a beat, we had Moms and neighbors snitching. Plus it seemed everyone had large families....an older brother would look you up and straighten you out or your little sister would tattle....Seemed like you had to Walk The Line.

We loved to play "tackle" football on the large area in front of our school. No one ever got hurt. It was more like grab and wrestle them down. One goal line was the cement sidewalk and an out of bounds like was a long, sidewalk, too....Sounds scary, but no one ever got hurt.....The Tryons lived a few houses North on Main Street and I remember my Dad standing in our front yard, wearing one of those wife beater t-shirts, yelling at us. "You're NOT playing tackle are you?" .....Who? Us?....Oh No.....No One Ever Got Hurt.

Sometimes we played a game called Smear'em.....someone had the ball and would toss it to one of the others and the rest would chase after him trying to Smear'em.....then the tackled player would toss the ball to another....and we would take off again.

Another trick, invented by Ricky. He would let the ball carrier run around him and as he was chasing, he would time it perfectly by diving at the back foot and slap it sideways. The foot would go behind the other leg and the ball carrier would flop....right on his face.....I got to doing that move, too.....The ball carrier would be angry, thinking he had a touchdown.....and would usually get up and throw the ball at Ricky.....

We did have a major problem, however.....There were 5 of us and we were always looking for another player. Six would be a much better number...3 on 3....Well, next to Ricky, lived a cute little girl, named Peggy.....She would play some games with us, occasionally, but we only let her play football a couple of times....She was a great classmate, but not real athletic.

One Christmas, some of the parents got together and four of the gang got little Pee Wee football uniforms....so cute....I did not get one.....I think I got a potato that year.....(just joking) ten kids in my family....sometimes I would get a hand shake.....(still kidding)

When my birthday rolled around, I did get a plastic football helmet....I loved it.....It was Athletic Gold, just like the Green Bay Packers.....but it was WAY Too Big.....I found that when I was running, the helmet would start to rotate on my head and I would have to look out the ear hole.....(not kidding)

One summer day, the gang decided to host a BIG FOOTBALL GAME.....We would sell tickets. (25c each) We would build bleachers. (one plank with a couple of bricks)...We would have lights in Fritz's backyard. Dave, an older boy neighbor, would be the referee. We would invite the parents. Our sisters could be cheer leaders. We could sell popcorn and make a fortune. LET'S DO IT!

I remember jumping out in the middle of main street and scaring a pickup driver to death. I stood on the running board and tried to sell him a ticket to the big game.....He bought one!!.....Oh, the only one I sold...or anyone sold...but we were worried there would way too many fans for our bleachers.....and what about parking?

But that old problem came up again.....One team would be Jimmy, Stevie and Fritz.....they were all next door neighbors...(and the home team)...then Ricky lived on my block and I was a half block further away.....and we only had two on our team.....Ricky and I were not real thrilled about having Peggy on the team.....we liked her, but did not want to get trounced.....So we looked around and found another girl, who lived about a half block away. Her name was Nancy.....

I will never forget our first practice.....Nancy was a year older than us.....We gave her the ball and had her punt it.....BOOM.....it soared WAY farther than Ricky and Dickie's.....We lined up to race and see who was fastest.....Nancy SMOKED us!!....Wow, we have a ringer here.....She had no helmet or shoulder pads or anything like that.....she and I took a magic marker and drew a number and logo on our white tee shirts.....

The night of the big game.....we had the Star Spangled Banner played.....we introduced the players...spotlight and all.....The home team kicked off to our team....We had Nancy deep.....She took that ball and went right up the middle.....her knees churning high and forward like a locomotive.....Jimmy, Stevie and Fritz hit her, but they stuck like Velcro....and she carried all three across the goal line.....Wow.....Next time they punted, Nancy carried them on her back.....they could not tackle her.....we kept giving her the ball.....Halftime, the score was

like 79-0.....We went into the porch for water.....Fritz was crying in the corner.....his Dad came in and said, "let's make a rule where Nancy does not get to carry the ball, every time....".....the game was a massacre....but remember Nancy was a year older and us 5 boys were all skinny, little guys.....

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## The May Basket Story

You will understand why I went into detail about the football game.

Back at this time in America, in the Midwest, May Day was kind of a big deal.....This was before the communists took over the holiday.

Here was the unwritten rule:

Little kids and Mom would make May baskets out of construction paper and fill them with little candies. Pop corn, Candy Korn, Red Hots. M and Ms.....things like that.....They would give one to every kid in class and maybe a playmate or so.....We would usually not go out to the farm kids, who kind of did it with each other....So a class of 24....maybe half live on the farm, you would go around town and deliver a dozen or so may baskets.....The schools in those days had nothing to do with this.....

Procedure was to go up to the front door, knock, ring or yell...."May Basket" and then run like heck.....if the girl caught you, she could kiss you.....if it was another boy, and he caught you, he would knock you down or give you a noogie or something.....some kids would hide and some were not even home, they were delivering baskets.

I used strategy.....Always thinking!!

If it was a girl that I did not like, I would get about half way to her door and then throw the basket like a grenade, yelling May Basket, then turn and run.....not very sporting, but effective.

One time, I was using this technique and the girl was hiding around the corner....Oh Oh....I threw, turned and ran.....I just made the car.....BUT MY OLDER BROTHER HAD LOCKED THE DOORS.....Boy, was I mad.....

Another time, there was this very pretty classmate that I ,and everyone else, had a real crush on. She was so nice and so cute.....I walked up to her door, knocked and yelled, "May Basket" ....She came to the door. I turned to run and low and behold, I TWISTED MY ANKLE.....yes, I was little liar, even in those days.....She took one look at me and turned and walked back in the house.....I was crushed.....

So I went back home.....depressed.....maybe scarred for life.....I walked into our house and my Mom said I one more May Basket To Deliver.....No, I checked my list and I saved my dream, sweetheart for last....."NO, you have not given one to Nancy" .....Oh, no....she is not in my class....she is a year older.....and besides, she is a faster runner than me.....No Way....."but she plays football and basketball with you boys, sometimes, You must do it" .....Geeze....

So I walked very slowly up the back alley.....hiding behind every bush, garbage can and tree....frantically trying to figure out a strategy.....this was serious.....I decided the only way was for me to use stealth.....

Nancy lived on a small hill.....as I approached.....I got down like a soldier would, crawling under barbed wire....crawling on my belly.....I put the basket between my teeth...and crawled like a snake...I popped my head up.....and Oh Oh.....there was her brother Joel, sitting out front, on the patio, reading a newspaper....

He saw me.....I slowly stood up and put my finger to my mouth and tried to SHHHHH him....QUIET.....and tip toed toward the house.....

Joel then yells out, "HEY NANCY, HERE'S ANOTHER MAY BASKET!"

My God.....I almost wet my pants.....I saw a sight that even today, gives me nightmares.....Nancy had REMOVED the pane of glass to the front door.....and she hurdled thru it like one of those Kentucky Derby horses breaking the starting gate.....I turned.....took ONE STEP.....and was tackled from behind...it knocked my wind out.....We rolled down the hill.....She pinned me down like a UFC fighter grounds and pounds and she kissed the heck out of me.....I was like a turtle on his back.....her brother was laughing and laughing.....Nancy was laughing.....and I was crying...tears were flowing.....using every cuss word that I knew....I got up and started throwing rocks.....and humiliated, I walked slowly back home.....I was so upset.....scarred for life upset.....I opened our back screen door.....walked up stairs.....

AND THERE WAS MY FAMILY

THEY HAD CALLED NANCY AND JOEL, TELLING THEM I WAS ON THE WAY...

Every May Day.....I think of that moment, it is frozen in time.....

## **THE EPILOUQUE**

Sorry for rambling to long, but there IS a point to my story.....

In the fifties and most of the sixties....our town had ZERO girl's sports, except swimming, which was not associated with school systems.....Glidden had great, swim teams....

Glidden had great female athletes that were never allowed to play.....Nancy could have been college athlete...She was an All State Swimmer and still swims competitively as a senior.....my Junior year, our school added track and my senior year they added golf....but no softball or basketball....all of these great athletes were never given a chance to play....that is what it was back then.....things people today take for granted.....

I ended up at the same small college as Nancy....for a couple of years....She may have been the most popular student at the college. Everyone liked her....She ended up marrying the star basketball player.

The 5 Back Alley Boys were all very talented.....(my opinion)

Jimmy loved baseball and became a minor league umpire and a very active member of the Church of Latter Day Saints.

Stevie was drafted and became a chaplain in the Army...he later became a long time minister in Colorado.

Fritz, an outstanding musician....maybe the best and coolest drummer GHS ever produced. He then went on to study art Drake.

Ricky entered the Marines and became an honor guard member and successful businessman.

Dickie became a high school football coach and US History educator deluxe.....

And we were all pretty darn good athletes.....

So I end this rambling tale trying to honor my classmates, my teaching colleagues, all the students I had in class.....and to all of the old families and the entire community of Glidden.....

The greatest people, the greatest time and greatest place to grow.....America!

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