

I am fond of my nickname. It brings back a sunny, playful, summer memory. It recalls the triumph of being reunited with one's friends... I hear it calling me now... back to my hometown... back to my adolescence. **HR** My Junior year of highschool was set against the backdrop of a country torn apart. The whole nation was out of joint. The backbone of the country was still supporting the undeclared war in Viet Nam, but the nations youth were like a spastic left arm. **HR** Our urbane counterpart, Princeton High was still deeply in the throwes of violent race riots. We didn't have enough blacks to mimic them, besides our black families had been going to Montgomery schools since kindergarten, and had seniority over most of their classmates. We didn't rate too well with Princeton academia, we weren't even "townies" we were from "the sticks." We didn't admit it, of course. That was a label we reserved for Hillsborough. **HR** Emulating the divisions in the society-at-large, we drew lines along the jocks, freaks, greasers and nurds. There were cliques within the categories for the true elitists. Mostly they were based on such things as what letter you were going for, how deeply you had gone into the drug scene, whether you were a Ford or Chevy motorhead or whether you were already accepted by an ivy league school. **HR** The whole thing was rather sad to me. I happened to be a freak, or head, and in my tenure (being in the clique-crossing elite group that had been in Montgomery schools since kindergarten) I watched us go from a collection of rural school buildings to a unified school district. We were a farm community, uncomplicated, with dirt roads and without snow plows or police force when I began going to school there. As the housing developments brought us more tax payers, we began building new schools. It almost seemed as if they were building them for me. When I got to eighth grade, we had a new junior high. At ninth grade, we had a million dollar high school and no longer sent kids to Princeton. **HR** We kind of grew into the class barriers, and I remember the loss when I realized Mark Cavanaugh had become "The Kid" and was going out for soccer. It was the coaches and cheerleaders that kept those roles rigidly defined. Cheerleaders felt they were selected for some sort of moral virtue for their role in the school, and I assume that since they were putting out with the jocks, they felt impelled to make the freaks immoral. A damaging blow to my ego was finding POTHEAD scrawled on my locker. I later learned Patty Mulinos had branded me because I had offered to get my old buddy, Hump, stoned. I think Hump was into wrestling at the time. I now wonder how much of a threat those girls felt from the braless, giggling hippie girls. I suppose they could have been justly afraid of the consequences of drug abuse, but it seems to be awfully sophisticated reasoning for the times. **HR** I wasn't sure how the jocks felt about it, but I didn't think our differences were that great. The freaks were fielding some excellent Frisbee players, who would run non-stop for hours. The jocks had taken over Nick's milkhouse and were drinking and getting high. We just weren't mixing... victims of some unseen barrier. **HR** It was that summer between junior and senior years of highschool. That one final fling with adolescence, in the face of the cold, hard reality of working for the rest of my productive life. I was busy saying no to my parent's society and yes to the counter-culture. I believed in harmony and decided it was time to reunite the fun-loving elements of my childhood. I decided that the flower children from the Meadow, would meet the jocks on their own turf, the playing field. Anticipating the jock's resistance to playing just for the fun of it, and yielding to their pride of competition (some of these boys were all-state baseball champs by then), I challenged them to a game of softball, with the loser paying for the keg. **HR** It was quite a task for me to field a team, and overcome the natural reluctance for hippies to be involved in anything so structured (as to be in a particular place at a particular time). The freaks did not take naturally to energetic attempts at goal-directed behavior. As it was, I was still rounding up volunteers at the appointed game time. **HR** When Old Blue, my '66 Chevy wagon, finally rolled onto the dirt field about an hour late, the jocks had already tapped the keg, and were busy hitting fly balls to each other. This would later prove to our advantage. **HR** A few impromptu agreements were made, to make this a truly sporting event. First of all, the majority of the freaks did not have equipment. It took some diplomacy for us to get them to yield their gloves while they were at bat. We also had to make special provisions for the fact that some of us had no shoes. The jocks solemnly agreed not to spike the basemen as they rounded their bases. Watching Rodney gaze down at the grimy feet of one of our players, I could almost see the gears shifting in his head as he came to realize that we were not the enemy on the diamond... we wanted to play with the jocks, not against them. **HR** It looked initially as if it was going to be a slaughter. They were hitting everything that came across the plate, and were running hard. Most of the freaks were more into pot than beer, but the jocks were drinking hard under the summer sun. The breaks between the innings began to last longer. People who had often passed each other silently in the hallways in years prior were finally talking to each other, as they exchanged mitts. Pretty soon we were passing joints, without regard to team status. Of course, not all of the jocks present smoked, but those that did, did so without recrimination of their peers. We were beginning to live and let live. We had no umpires in this game. **HR**

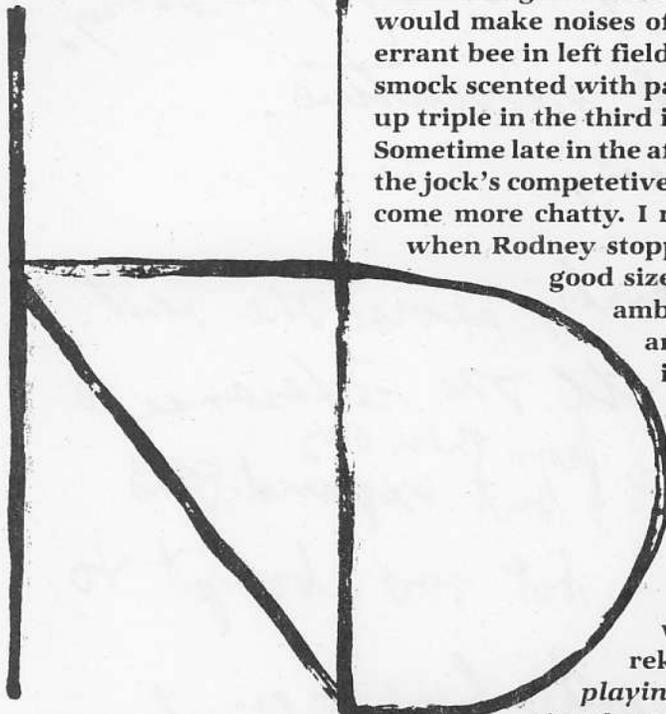
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I think our girls caused the jocks some consternation initially. The guys would make noises of exasperation as the game was held up for an errant bee in left field, perhaps enchanted by a flower-print peasant smock scented with patchouli oil. But when Carol cracked that stand-up triple in the third inning, I overheard some grudging respect. **HR** Sometime late in the afternoon, the beer and friendship had mellowed the jock's competitive nature. They were pitching softer, and had become more chatty. I realized the situation had gotten much lighter when Rodney stopped the game from third base. He had found a

good sized snake in the grass. It was mostly males that ambled over in curiosity as he picked the thing up and swung it around his head... forcing it to vomit its most recent meal. One of the girls from the Meadow went out, in sympathy, and removed it from the playing field to the edge of the woods, and play continued. **HR** Something had changed in our attitudes, I remember musing as I squatted in the dry grass. Each of the factions began to appreciate individuals in the other faction with merit, or at least as individuals. Friendships long dormant were being rekindled. Winning wasn't everything, but not playing the game at all had denied us, too. The barriers between us were our own creations, they were not

not performed well throughout the game. I did not know how many outs we had, nor how many people were on base when I took my turn at bat. I remember my old friend, Mark, yelling from the outfield, "Hardesty's up, everyone move in" and watching him stride forward and lower his mitt for a grounder. I probably fanned a couple of times, but then I got my pitch. **HR** I can see it now... in slow motion. The dull thunk as that sluggish old softball lifted off my bat. I can feel my heart rising up in my throat as the son-of-a-bitch rose higher and higher. I dropped the bat as I saw the sphere become smaller and smaller. I began running when I realized that this was not just another pop-up to shortstop. As I rounded first I saw Mark with his mouth hanging open... no longer was he looking up, his head had begun to turn. It was going over him! I put my head down as a euphoric feeling ripped a smile across my face. After running in my erratic lope, all of the way to third, I stopped to turn around. I was distantly in touch with a lot of yelling from both sides. I was waiting for the runner in front of me to get home. I turned to see Mark, "The Kid" way, way back against the elementary school building. It seemed like miles away. His butt was sticking out at me and he reminded me of a dog, rooting in the grass. He was frantic as he cocked back his arm for the throw to third. I watched that throw as I skipped toward home plate... it went bouncing across the outfield. I beat the pickoff throw home to find out that the bases had been loaded and the game was over! I had skipped all the way from third base. **HR** I don't know what happened to the keg, for it was a long way from being empty. I am pretty sure we took it to the Meadow, and initiated the jocks in the forbidden fields of free love. I do remember being introduced by Mark as "HR" a little time later. When I asked him why, he replied, "For that Home Run you hit in the game between the Milkhouse and the Meadow, my man." Pretty soon the jocks were showing up at our parties, and they casually dropped hints to the freaks as to where they were partying. From then on, the jocks referred to me as "HR." **HR** By the time our senior year started, we were a little more cohesive as a highschool. Jocks, freaks and greasers sat side-by-side in the hallways to close down the school during the Moratorium following the Cambodian invasion. I was as proud as any student when we took all-state soccer title. Although the rift between young and old was to continue, we began to understand our peers. **HR**

imposed upon us by coaches or codes of counter-culture conduct. We began to choose to let our barriers down. **HR** The beer had affected the jocks to such an extent that their lead had narrowed as we went into the last inning. There was something to be said for the natural synchronicity the freaks developed when stoned. It gave us a certain "jazz." Maybe it was that we had gotten the hang of the game, and had overcome our reluctance to perform. Our fielding had improved and we retired the jocks with their three run lead intact. It was the top of the ninth. **HR** I was not well endowed with hand-eye coordination or in the strength department, and had

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since its phrasing lacks the colorfulness of your previous section - it's more suited to an essay (over) this last clause is a bit of a let-down