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When Mac the Milkman was in a betting mood

When warm weather arrives and kid softball action pops up on vacant lots, Mac the Milkman comes to mind.

Older readers easily recall those friendly fellows who home-delivered dairy products from horse-drawn wagons. And those loyal steeds seemed to know exactly where each customer's home was located, and that's where they'd automatically stop.

MY HERO in the northwest Detroit neighborhood where I was raised was Mac. That's all the name any of us ever knew.

He ran a route for Borden's Dairy, which had a stable and milk storage area along Linwood Avenue, somewhere around West Grand Boulevard.

Originally Mac didn't deliver to our house. We were a customer of Detroit Creamery. But eventually I won our account for Mac, as did most of the neighborhood kids.

It all had to do with vacant softball lot. There was a makeshift diamond a block from our house, at Leslie and LaSalle. Almost every day when the sun shone, and often when it didn't, Marty Reddy, Danny Ashlin, Leonard Corcoran, Bob McGrath, Joe Druber, the Menzie brothers and I would play softball the way it should be played: No uniforms, no chalk base lines, no adult coaches.

What if the bat had been cracked several times and was miraculously held firm with black friction tape? What if the stuffing in the battered ball was

often showing? (Many was the time I borrowed Mom's turkey needle to sew the tired and tattered seams of a softball.)

We just stepped onto that sandy lot and started to play.

We'd begin about 8:30 in the morning and go until noon.

We'd finish one game, switch players and begin more action.

Pangs of hunger were about the only thing that really broke up those titanic battles.

Or the appearance of Mac the Milkman.

ONE OF US WOULD SPOT the Borden's wagon rolling into view and sound the alarm.

We'd keep playing. But our eyes weren't on the ball. We'd be watching until Mac, his horse and wagon rolled up and stopped at Williamson's directly across from the diamond.

"Hi, Mac," we'd shout, delighted in the knowledge we could call an adult by his nickname.

"Hi, kids," the milkman would holler back as he hustled to his customers.

We waited breathlessly to learn if this was the day that Mac would be in a betting mood.

WHEN HE WAS — wow! — that was living.

"Say, you guys," Mac would say when he was willing to wager, as he sauntered toward home plate (a jagged chunk of concrete we carefully had

buried near the sidewalk.)

"If you let me keep betting, I bet you a quart of chocolate milk I can hit a home every time I swing."

"Oh, yeah?" we'd jeer, immediately accepting.

Funny, Mac never mentioned what we'd have to ante up should he indeed complete such a feat. But we knew we were going to lose.

As Mac grabbed the bat, we scattered to our defensive posts. Lefty Bob McGrath would go into his underhand pitch. Wham, the ball would sail over the alley, between Leslie and Glendale, into the weed patch beyond. Marty Reddy would be in hot pursuit.

The Reddy relay to Joe Druber, to Dan Ashlin wasn't even close.

ANOTHER MCGRATH SLANT, another long blast by Mac.

This went on two or three more times. Mac would sprint those sandy paths each time, but with each homer his pace seemed to slow.

Then would come the dribbler off Mac's bat, with Jim Menzie's jubilant tag of Mac as he struggled to reach second base.

"OK, you guys are too good for me," Mac would pant, and we'd break for his wagon.

We'd all be sweating, hot and excited. Mac would extract a quart of chocolate milk from the cool confines of his wagon.

Off would come the circular cardboard cap. The

bottle would be seized first by one, then another of us, delicious gulps taken in between. In moments the quart was drained dry.

What a guy Mac was.

Could any mother refuse when a 10-year-old would plead, "Mom, can we get our milk from Borden's?"

WHAT PROMPTS ALL THIS was a phone call earlier this week.

Marty Reddy and I chatted. He's now vice president in charge of the administration department at the Campbell Ewald advertising agency. Marty lives in Beverly Hills.

With several others, Marty is masterminding a reunion. No, it's not that old gang of softball enthusiasts, but I sort of wish it were.

It's Marty's Class of 1939 at Detroit Visitation High School. The gathering will be at 7 p.m. June 15 in the Danish Club, Grand River at Lahser.

That's number 40 for Marty's bunch, which numbered 76 at diploma time. He's not certain how many old grads are coming, but the word is out that five Dominican nuns who taught at Visitation will be on hand.

Sounds like fun.

But probably not half as much as one of those sandlot softball games. Especially the days when Mac felt like betting.

Why a \$50 crown for a 'baby' tooth?

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: Our 6-year-old had a cavity in a molar. The dentist said she should have a silver crown (\$50). Was this necessary in a baby tooth? Why couldn't it just be pulled or filled?

Also, how often should a child be X-rayed by a dentist?

J.W.



Dr. Joseph DeFrancesco

DEAR J.W.: Decay in a baby tooth should be taken care of right away. After all, a youngster uses his baby tooth for chewing for quite a few years. Decay may spread from one tooth to another.

Baby teeth should be extracted (pulled) only as a last resort. The space left can cause other teeth to drift, thus changing the child's bite and perhaps actually necessitating orthodontic work (braces) later.

By having preventive dentistry done now, you may save much higher repair costs in the future.

Dentists use prefabricated silver crowns on baby teeth that are usually lost between the ages of 10 and 14 years. This assures that the teeth on either side do not close up the space.

X-rays can be administered as many times as required. Modern methods and safeguards pose no danger to the child's health.

Your dentist has been trained to prevent unnecessary radiation. Least exposure possible is used. The radiation used is less than that received from natural sources, such as cosmic (sun) rays.

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: When should tooth-straightening (orthodontia) be started?

W.S.

Dear W.S.: Usually about the age of 12 or 13 — sometimes earlier.

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: What toothpaste should I use?

A.F.

Dear A.F.: You can make your choice on the basis of flavor and price. There is no significant dif-

ference between pastes, powders or liquid dentrifices.

Dr. Dr. DeFrancesco: What kind of mouthwash should I use?

P.H.

Dear P.H.: Since the effect of a mouthwash is primarily that of a mechanical cleanser of the teeth and mouth, it makes little difference.

Warm salt water will serve as well as anything. The bactericidal effect of any mouthwash is dubious. Flavor, price and convenience may again be the guides.

The writer is a retired suburban dentist. Questions may be addressed to him in care of this newspaper.

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