



The Golden Intermediates, 1962

Back row from left: Jay Bob, Dude, Bruce from Aruba, Mr. Jaycox, Donnie, John, Pat.

Front row from left: Larry, Jim, me, Nelson, Paul, Richard

Bat boy: Nelson's little brother, Brian

Chapter 10

The Intermediates

Summer, 1962

Boys, sooner or later you will play on a team pegged as underdogs, but don't give up, things can change. I played Little League Baseball on a team that no one thought had a chance. We were horrible; no one thought we would win a game, including us. But, all that changed unexpectedly when a new kid moved to town. Here's what happened.

We were wrapping up the first practice of the season and already things did not look good for the Golden Intermediates. We couldn't hit, we couldn't field, and we didn't have a pitcher. Even our name was a disappointment. Apparently there were no more sponsors to be had when our team was formed, so we were stuck with the Intermediate name because that was the name of the age group we played in. Why no one at the Rec Department came up with something a little more interesting was beyond me. Couldn't we have been the Eagles, Golden Junior High's mascot? It was not a promising start.

A year had passed since I last played baseball. I played on the Clear Creek team with kids a year older than me for four years, but that team disbanded when the coach and his family moved away. Rather than try to find another team, I delivered papers and decided that would conflict with baseball games and practice, so I took a year off. But this season would be different. I wanted to play again. Due to the peculiarities of Little League age restrictions, this season I could play with my classmates rather than older kids. This was the pinnacle year for most Little Leaguers. If a team was good, it could advance to play-offs and maybe even to The Little League World Series, an annual baseball tournament for children aged 11 to 13 years old held in South Williamsport, Pennsylvania every August.

When my friends and I gathered for registration at the Rec Center, I learned that I would not be able to play with Bobby, Greg, Jimmy, Ralph, and Tim. They had played together for years and their team roster was full. Deeply disappointed, I explained the situation to Dad at dinner. He listened, then picked up the phone and called his childhood friend, Bill Jaycox. Bill was a good athlete and had played semi-pro baseball as a young adult. Knowing that Bill had a son a year younger than me, Dad asked if Bruce was on a team. Bill responded that he was trying to put together a team for Bruce and some of his friends, but they needed more players.

"Is Jeff interested in playing ball?" Bill asked. "And does he know anyone else who wants in?"

Dad confirmed my willingness to play and I started recruiting my friends who were not playing for the Golden Fire Department, the team with the full roster and all the good baseball players in my grade. I called Dude, John, and Larry, all close friends and none with much baseball experience. After some encouragement, they all agreed to play. And they all promised to reach out for more players.

So eleven players gathered for those not-so-promising, early season-practices including Richard, Paul, Jim, Bruce J., and another Bruce, a new kid, who had grown up in Aruba, an island off the coast of Venezuela. Mr. Jaycox found himself coaching boys with the widest range of skills. Some needed help learning to throw and catch; others had played a little before and had some understanding of the game. After four years of playing with older boys, I found I was one of the more experienced players. I hoped I could play some position other than right field.

The first practices concentrated on basics, the fundamentals of throwing and catching, fielding and hitting. Mr. Jaycox asked who wanted to play in the infield. Bruce J. lined up at shortstop, Larry at second, and Jim at first. Richard donned the catcher's gear but he was small and the gear overwhelmed him. I volunteered to play third base. The rest of the team headed to the outfield to shag fly balls my Dad or one of the other fathers hit in their direction.

Mr. Jaycox hit a soft grounder right at me, but fielding grounders was not my strong suit. Afraid of the ball, I turned my head and the ball skipped under my glove and rolled between my legs. Not to be outdone, everyone of the infielders managed to find a unique way to miss their grounders or, if someone actually managed to field the ball, the throw to first went high, low, or wide.

As I chased yet another grounder that bounced between my legs, I directed my attention to the outfielders. Their ability to catch a fly ball was no better than the infield's skill with grounders. They stood their ground and watched as balls flew over their heads or dropped in front of them. The coaches shouted directions to go back or run in, but few balls were caught on the fly.

Later on, Bruce J. and Richard tried pitching, but neither had much speed or control. I asked to try and while I could throw hard, I had no idea where the ball was going. After ten tries, and not one strike, Mr. Jaycox suggested I take a break. It was time for batting practice.

One by one, each of us took a turn in the batter's box as Mr. Jaycox lobbed pitches in our direction. While it wasn't saying much, we were better hitters than

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fielders. Some of us actually got the bat on the ball, but others stepped back from the plate, clearly afraid of the pitch. My experience paid off and I managed to hit a few balls deep to the outfield.

When the last hitter was finished, Mr. Jaycox called the team together. He told us we had a lot of work to do and encouraged us to get together and practice on the days we didn't have a scheduled practice. We could tell he was concerned. He ended the practice by telling us that a new player from Virginia would join our team for the next practice. His first name was Nelson.

As we walked home, Dude, summed it all up, "We suck!" He said in absolute misery.

John chimed in, "We couldn't hit the ground with a rock! We're horrible!"

Larry voiced what we all feared most, "The Fire Department is going to kill us! We'll never live it down."

We were used to competing with classmates. Dude and I played on the Celtics in the Golden Optimists Youth Basketball program. We went undefeated over two years, beating teams including the Hawks, whose roster included Bobby and Jimmy. Bragging rights came with those victories. We feared that was all about to change.

Feeling bad that I had drawn them all in I reminded my friends that we still had two weeks to go before the first game of the season and we would get better. No one believed me.

"Maybe the new kid will help?" I offered.

The conversation then focused on Nelson. We guessed with a first name like that, he was going to be very good or very bad.

Nelson arrived in time for practice the next Saturday. He was tall, lean, and very handsome. Better yet, he could play baseball! He could field, hit with power, and best of all, he could pitch. Nelson could throw hard fastballs for strikes and he had an incredible curve! As Nelson demonstrated his considerable skills, Dude, John, Larry, and I looked at each other and breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Mr. Jaycox was as happy as we had seen him since the beginning of the season. But he still had a problem with the lineup. Now that we had a pitcher, who would catch? Richard tried handling Nelson's pitches, but it was of no use. The gear got in his way and pitches routinely hit his chest protector or mask rather than landing in his glove. Finally, he had enough.

"I can't do this!" he yelled throwing catching gear in every direction.

“Anyone else want to try catching?” Mr. Jaycox asked.

Knowing that lack of fielding skills would keep me from success at third, I volunteered. I spent a few minutes sorting out the gear, connecting the shin guards with the elastic cords, putting on the chest protector and getting the fit correct and finally putting the mask on over my glasses. The next thing I knew, I was squatting behind the plate looking toward the mound and giving Nelson a target with the catcher’s mitt.

Nelson went through his full wind-up and fired a pitch right down the middle. I didn’t even have to move the glove. The ball slammed into the mitt with a resounding pop. I caught it, leaving my hand stinging. Nelson threw three more and I caught each one —pop, pop, pop. Next he threw a curve. It was the first curve I had ever seen. It started way to my left, and then surprisingly it turned toward my mitt as if it was a magnet and the ball was metal. Pop! I couldn’t believe my eyes! How did he do that? More surprisingly, how did I catch it?

Mr. Jaycox looked at Dad and said, “I think we found our catcher.”

Mr. Jaycox moved Richard to third, Bruce J. took short, Larry took second and Jim first. Dude played left field, John took center, and Bruce from Aruba took over in right. Our lineup was set. Two weeks to go before the first game.

Nelson fit right in. Everyone liked him and we all held him in awe. He told us about his team in Virginia. It was so good Nelson hadn’t even been the starting pitcher. He had played short and was the back-up pitcher. He told us about manicured fields with dugouts and grass infields and outfields. He let on that he was disappointed in our fields. We didn’t have dugouts. Our bench was sandwiched between two rows of chain-link fence separating it from the playing field and the bleachers. Parents hung blankets over the fence sandwich to protect us from the sun. We played on dirt fields, not a blade of grass in sight. The only difference between our infield and outfield was the size of the rocks.

We worked on fielding and showed some improvement under Mr. Jaycox’s careful tutelage, but it was clear that we were not going to win any Golden Glove awards. While I could catch most everything that Nelson pitched, throwing proved to be a challenge. I struggled with every throw, even the tossbacks to Nelson. Some went over his head while others hit the dirt in front of the mound. My throws to second were always an adventure; no one knew where they were heading, most of all me. Seldom did one of my throws hit the desired target.

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I wasn't the only one with a wild arm. Throwing the ball "round-the-horn" was something we rarely got right. If I managed to get the first throw to Richard at third, he would blow the throw to first. If it got to Jim at first, he would blow the throw to short. Bruce J. and Larry rarely got to touch the round-the-horn ball; one of us usually blew a throw before it got to them.

Sensing that defense was not our strong suit, we focused on hitting during the last two weeks of practice. Mr. Jaycox decided our best chance of winning was Nelson's pitching and our hitting. Mr. Jaycox was a great batting coach and everyone on the team started making solid contact. We were as ready as we were going to get. It was time to start playing games.

Our league included five teams, Arvada, Lakewood, Alameda, the Golden Fire Department, and our team, the Golden Intermediates. We would play each team twice, and the winner of our league would advance to the playoffs.

We played Arvada on their field for the first game of the season. Their field was much nicer than ours; they had grass in the outfield and while the infield was dirt, it didn't have any rocks. And they had dugouts. Being the away team, we batted first and put up three runs.

Nelson was happy to see the grass and his mood was good as we took the field. I donned the catcher's gear and took my place behind the plate. Nelson took some warm-up pitches and I managed to throw the ball back to him without any misadventures. Nelson struck out the side.

The rest of the game was more of the same. We put up more runs in every inning and then Nelson would throw strikes. The best Arvada could manage was a few weak grounders to second that would have been easy outs, but Larry booted the plays for errors. We ended up winning 12 to 0 when the ump invoked the mercy rule at the end of the fifth inning.

I was responsible for some exciting moments in those first-round games. If a catcher dropped the third strike, the batter could run for first. If he got there before the catcher could throw the ball to first, he was safe. I dropped a few third strikes and in a panic I would throw in the general direction of first. More often than not, my throw would fly into right field and the batter would move to second, or if I was having a particularly bad day, all the way to third. Nelson would sigh, walk to the plate to calm me down, and would then strike out the next batter.

My errors were not enough to give any team an edge. After our opening win, we beat Lakewood and Alameda to produce a record of three wins and no losses. The Fire Department was next. Their record was the same as ours, three wins and no losses.

The Fire Department boys were confident they were going to kill us. They couldn't understand how we had managed to win any games given the lack of talent on our team. They thought they had all the good athletes, and they were cocky. As a team, we decided not to discuss Nelson and his pitching skills publicly; he was our secret weapon. The teasing and insults would start whenever we ran into them in town. We gave it right back, but kept quiet about Nelson.

Many of the boys on both teams were Boy Scouts. Troop 234 met Thursday nights at the Episcopal Church and so the Thursday-night meeting before the Sunday game with the Fire Department was filled with tension. We were sitting at a long table practicing tying knots. Every Boy Scout had to master a wide variety of knots to move up in rank including bowlines, square knots, half hitches, full hitches, and many more few of us would use in our lifetimes.

"Hey Dude, when did you learn to play baseball?" Jimmy asked in a tone dripping with sarcasm. Jimmy was a big kid. He played first for the Fire Department and batted cleanup.

"Your sister taught me," Dude replied. "To thank me for the exquisite personal services I gave her." Dude was our grade's one-liner champ. No one ever bested him at trading insults.

Jimmy's cocky smile turned to a scowl. "Shut your mouth or I'm gonna shut it for you!" he threatened.

"Good comeback," Dude replied, while giving Jimmy the finger.

As Jimmy started to get up, Dude called to the Scoutmaster asking for help with a knot. Jimmy retook his seat but continued to look threateningly at Dude.

The insults continued as we walked home after the meeting. No one's mother, sister, or even grandmother was off limits. Jimmy's anger faded away as we all laughed at Dude's ability to create ribald jokes at everyone's expense.

We walked north on Washington Avenue, and as we came to the Clear Creek Bridge, Jimmy and Ralph looked at each other.

"Up and over," they cried in unison.

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Dude knew what was coming next. It wasn't his first up and over. Dude tried to run, but they grabbed him and hauled him to the railing. They locked their arms around his shoulders and legs, lifted him up, and hung him over the railing, head first. Water rushed around the rock outcropping twenty feet below Dude's head. As he was hanging over the bridge, Dude's glasses slipped from his nose and ears and fell in the direction of the water. Dude lunged and somehow managed to snag the glasses. Dude's lunge nearly caused Jimmy and Ralph to lose their grip on his legs and they struggled to hold on.

"Pull me up! Pull me up!" Dude screamed.

"Not until you say the Fire Department's the best team ever," Jimmy demanded.

"You're the best. Fire Department's the best!" Dude yelled, hoping to be spared from dropping head first onto the rocks and raging water below.

Satisfied, Jimmy and Ralph pulled Dude back over the railing and deposited him on the sidewalk. Dude put his glasses on and tucked his Boy Scout shirt back into his jeans. Once he had put everything right, he surveyed the situation and, seeing an 18-wheeler approaching, plucked the scout hat from Ralph's head and threw it in the path of the oncoming truck. As soon as he made the throw, he took off running.

"Fire Department sucks!" he yelled as he sprinted for home.

It was his best throw of the season. The hat disappeared under the wheels of the 18-wheeler. By the time Ralph recovered his flattened and tread-marked hat, Dude was several blocks ahead and out of danger.

"Wait 'til Sunday!" Ralph yelled.

"We're gonna kill ya!" Jimmy added.

The aluminum bleachers that stretched from the bench behind first to the bench behind third were filled to capacity. Golden was abuzz with anticipation of the game between its two unbeaten 13-year-old Little League teams. Everyone thought the Fire Department was the better team. Mel, the bartender at the Ace Hi Tavern, served as bookie in addition to drawing beers and pouring shots. He gave five runs to anyone foolish enough to take the Intermediates. The Ace Hi crowd overwhelmingly took the Fire Department, even if it meant giving up five runs.

The Intermediates were designated the home team, so the Fire Department batted first. I squatted behind home as Nelson started warming up. He took a full wind-up and let the ball fly, producing a resounding pop as the ball hit my glove. With

that awesome sound, everyone on the Fire Department team turned their attention to Nelson.

“Who is that kid?” they asked in amazement. I watched as they looked on with growing concern.

Tim led off for the Fire Department. The first pitch was a hard fastball for a called strike. With a look of astonishment, Tim backed out of the box. Tentatively, he stepped back in, and Nelson fired another fastball. Tim swung, but the ball was in my glove before the bat crossed the plate. Strike two. I called for a curve outside. Nelson let it fly and it appeared to be a slow pitch right over the plate, but broke hard to the outside. Tim swung and missed.

“Meet Nelson,” I said, as Tim headed back to the bench.

As usual, we blew the around-the-horn exercise. Greg, the Fire Department’s catcher and Bobby’s brother, stepped up to bat and the result was the same, three pitches, a strikeout, and another blown around-the-horn.

Bobby, the Fire Department’s best player, was next and he managed to hit a soft fly to short left field for a hit. Then Jimmy, the clean-up hitter, came to the plate. Nelson fired a fastball that Jimmy swung on but missed. Bobby headed to second, but, as I tried to catch him stealing, my throw sailed over our shortstop’s head into center field. Bobby took third.

“Nice throw,” Jimmy said to me as he stepped into the box with a count of one strike, no balls.

“Oh yeah?” I replied. “Let’s see you hit this one.” I called for another fastball. Once again Jimmy swung late for strike two.

“Want to try again?” I asked Jimmy.

He glared at me, then moved back in the box and dug his feet in. I called for a curve outside. The ball left Nelson’s hand and, just as it had for Tim, appeared to be a slow pitch down the middle. Jimmy swung with all his might as the pitch turned hard to the outside. Strike three.

Kirk took the mound for the Fire Department. Kirk had great control, a slow curve, and a mediocre fastball. Richard led off for us and hit a single to center. Bruce J. followed Richard with another single.

I was hitting third and stepped into the box. Kirk threw a curve that was headed right at me. I stayed in the box and watched it break over the plate for a strike. I knew the next pitch would be a fastball down the middle. Kirk delivered as expected.

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I swung hard and made solid contact, the ball flew off the bat and over the center fielder's head. There was no outfield fence and since the outfield was nothing but rocks and hard-baked clay, there was little rolling resistance. I crossed home before the center fielder caught up with the ball.

Nelson batted clean-up for us and he took Kirk deep to left for another home run. Before the inning ended, we were ten runs ahead. The Fire Department didn't know what hit them. Everyone on the Intermediates got hits, while no one on the Fire Department, except Bobby, could get on base. Dude, after getting his third hit of the day, stopped at first.

"Jimmy, you said you were gonna kill us. When are you going to kill us, Jimmy?" Dude asked in a mock serious voice. He had a goofy smile on his face and his glasses were askew, making him look comical and not at all like a serious ball player.

"How can this be happening?" Jimmy mumbled as he fumed and kicked the bag.

We were ahead 14 to 0 when the ump invoked the mercy rule at the bottom of the fifth. Later that evening, a solemn mood filled the Ace Hi as the majority of the patrons had lost their one- or two-dollar bets on the Fire Department team. Much grumbling filled the dark interior. No one could understand how this could have happened. One of the regulars had attended the game, and relayed the story of the amazing new kid who did the pitching for the Intermediates. Mel was a happy man, and even bought a round for the house.

The Intermediates were leading the league with a four-and-zero record as we moved into the second half of the season. But, just when we thought we were invincible, Nelson came down with the flu. He was too sick to pitch against Arvada and they beat us 12 to 8. He recovered in time for us to beat Lakewood and Alameda, both for the second time. Meanwhile, the Fire Department won all their second-round games, leaving us tied for the league lead with identical six-and-one records and setting up the last game of the regular season. Whoever won would go to the playoffs as league champ.

The tension before the second game was even greater than before the first meeting. The entire town of Golden was talking about the big game to be played on Sunday. Once again, the Ace Hi denizens placed bets, but this time the Intermediates were favored and Mel gave anyone taking the Fire Department three runs. Everyone expected this game to be much closer because Ralph, the Fire Department ace, was

pitching. Hoping to avoid any more up-and-over incidents, Dude arranged for his mom to pick him up after the Thursday evening scout meeting. He did, of course, offer some choice insults before jumping into the family Renault. His departure left Jimmy and Ralph cursing and threatening.

The Sunday game brought a huge crowd. The Rec department added bleachers along both fences deep into left and right fields. Even with the extra seating, the bleachers were overflowing and people were packed in. The crowd from the Ace Hi even took a few hours away from the gloomy bar to watch the game in person. They wanted to see the new wonder kid and expected a pitcher's duel. My family was there in force. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins filled the bleachers behind our bench. Seeing such a huge crowd, including so many family members, made me nervous. I didn't want to screw up in front of everyone.

This time the Fire Department was the home team, so we batted first. Ralph took the mound. Ralph had a good fastball that he mixed with a change-up and a curve. His control wasn't as good as Kirk's, but he was harder to hit. Three up, three down.

Mr. Jaycox was a fair coach and, knowing how we had dominated the first game, changed our line-up. We were not happy to learn that Richard would pitch, Nelson would catch, Jim was moved to third, and I played first. It was a better defensive line-up, but we all feared Richard would be hit hard and our fears were well founded. The Fire Department pounded the ball and we went scoreless over the first three innings. The Ace Hi crowd cheered wildly.

"We're going to kill you this time," Jimmy said as he ran past me at first after yet another hit off struggling Richard.

Without a pitching change, I was sure he was right. And at that moment and with Fire Department in the lead 6 to 0, Mr. Jaycox rose from our bench and walked calmly to the mound. Richard was happy to see him coming and gave up the ball without an argument. Mr. Jaycox summoned Nelson from behind the plate and called the rest of the infield to the mound.

"Time for you to pitch, Nelson," he said. "Jeff, you catch. Jim, back to first and Richard, you go to third." Nelson assumed the mound and began warming up. I glanced toward the Fire Department bench and heard Bobby say, "We're six runs ahead and they can't hit Ralph. All we gotta do is hang on."

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Over the course of the next three innings, Nelson did what only Nelson could do. He struck out the next nine batters. We managed to score one run in fourth and, as Ralph tired, five in the fifth to tie the game.

Fans on both sides were screaming for hits, but neither team could manage a run in the sixth. I was frustrated. I had hit two fly balls for outs, managed to drop a third strike, and made a throwing error in front of a huge crowd — including most of my family. Going into the seventh and final inning, the score was tied, 6-6.

The bottom of our order scored two runs in the top of the seventh. Then Nelson homered with two on, adding two more. I was up. As I walked to the plate, Fritz yelled, “Hit it out of the park, Chop!”

I had hoped I wouldn't hear that name again, but there it was. The Fire Department boys, sensing my displeasure, picked it up immediately adding “Hey Chop, Chop, Chop” to the “Hey batta, batta, batta,” chatter that was directed at every hitter.

With the bases clear, Ralph took a full wind-up and threw. The pitch was low and inside. I shouldn't have, but I took a golf swing and made solid contact. Thinking it was going to be another fly out I started for slowly first, when Mr. Jaycox yelled at me to get going. The ball, hit very high, headed to left when the wind caught it and it sailed over the Fire Department left fielder's head and started rolling. I rounded first, passed second, and was nearly at third when the left fielder caught up with the ball. He made a good throw to Bobby, the cut-off man, as I headed for home. Bobby relayed the throw to home, but not in time. I slid in safe. It was the second time Nelson and I hit back-to-back homers against the Fire Department. When the inning was finished, the score was 10-6 in Intermediates' favor.

We took the field for the bottom of the last inning with a four-run lead with Nelson pitching against the bottom of the Fire Department order. It seemed like a sure thing for the Intermediates. The Ace Hi crowd couldn't believe it. Their bets were looking bad. Mel was smiling. Yet another flask was being passed around.

The Fire Department's seventh batter swung on a curve and somehow hit a slow roller to third. Richard made a good catch, but his throw was late. The eighth batter leaned in to a slow curve that hit him softly on the shoulder, placing runners on first and second with no outs. Nelson bore down and struck out the ninth batter with three fastballs, bringing up the top of the order with one out.

Nelson was throwing hard. Tim, their lead-off batter, struck out on three pitches. Greg was up and hit a fly to center that John handled. The runners held. Bobby

came to the plate and swung and missed a curve, then did the same on two fastballs. A strike out, but I managed to drop the last strike and Bobby took off like a rocket. I threw to first, but my throw pulled our first baseman off the bag. Bases loaded, two out and the score 10-6 as Jimmy, the clean-up hitter and potential tying run, walked to the plate. The Fire Department fans and the Ace Hi gang were on their feet screaming for a hit. All the Ace Hi fans needed was one run for their bets to be winners.

Nelson summoned me to the mound. “Just relax,” he said, “We’re just going to play a little catch.”

I took my position behind the plate. “You can’t hit him,” I told Jimmy. “He’s too fast for you,” I said, as I called for a fastball. Jimmy swung and missed.

Jimmy turned to look at me. “Let’s see another one,” he said.

“Fastball on the way.” I told him, another swing and another miss, but just barely. Two outs, two strikes, no balls.

“One more!” Jimmy demanded.

I called time and walked to the mound. “What do you want to throw?” I asked Nelson. “I think he’s getting your timing, he nearly hit the last fastball.”

Nelson and I debated a curve, but we decided Jimmy would be looking for that. We decided on a change-up, an off-speed pitch that looks like a fastball but is much slower. Plus, it was an easy ball for me to handle.

“Right down the middle,” I said to Jimmy as I settled in behind the plate. Jimmy moved back in the box and swung, but he was way ahead of this pitch. He swung under the ball, hitting a towering foul just behind home plate. Looking skyward, I pulled off the mask but as I did, my glasses got hung up in the elastic bands and were pulled off. I threw the mask aside with the glasses tangled within.

Everyone, fans and players alike were yelling directions. “Go back, to the left, no your other left, no right, no go forward.” To make matters worse, the sun was directly overhead and in my eyes. I couldn’t see a thing. After circling for what seemed forever, I simply put the glove over my head to protect myself and to my surprise the ball landed in the webbing. I held on for the third out and the win.

I looked at the ball and then, as a huge cheer went up from my family and the Intermediate fans, I glanced to the Ace Hi section. Their heads were in their hands as they looked at the ground. No one even tried to hide the flask as it was handed from patron to patron. They had lost their bets again. Mel moved away quietly, a richer man.

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“Great catch, Chop,” Fritz yelled as everyone spilled onto the field slapping backs and shaking hands. We celebrated our victory, and then congratulated the Fire Department on a game well played. Mel, with newfound income told both teams to gather at the A&W drive-in. The root-beer floats were on him.

The Intermediates moved into the playoffs and the Fire Department showed up at our first game to cheer us on. With Nelson pitching, we beat a team from Arapahoe County, but had to play again the next day. It was a single elimination tournament, and a pitcher could only pitch seven innings in a 48-hour period, so Richard pitched the second game. We lost to a team from Adams County, 12 to 5, to end the season.

Boys, that summer playing for that team was the best time I ever had in sports. Playing with my underdog friends and beating my cocky friends on the Fire Department team was the best ever. We learned that you could win even when everyone thinks you don't stand a chance, as long as you have a cool new kid who can pitch and hit on your side.