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October 6, 1975

Bob Goldwin -

The attached was directed  
to you in the President's outbox.

Jim Connor

# Houseball and Mikolajczyks ✓

By William F. Gavin

ARLINGTON, Va.—For years I have had a fantasy. I sit at the head of a long conference table. Around the table are the publishers and editors of the top newspapers and magazines, the heads of the television networks, all of the prestigious liberal columnists and the leading liberal politicians. I rise and say:

"Ladies and gentlemen, you have been recently writing and reporting and making speeches about people you call 'ethnics' or 'blue-collar' or whatever label is now fashionable for middle- or working-class, Roman Catholic urban inhabitants who share a socially and morally conservative philosophy. You don't know what you are talking about.

Then I would go on to say that I've been away from the Lafayette section of Jersey City for many years. Yet at one time, in the late 1940's, it was the entire universe for me. There were dozens of worlds within twenty or thirty city blocks. None of us had ever heard of the word "ethnic." But Lafayette had Mikolajczyks and Guggiardi and Whritenours and Greenblatts—and the intellectual elite of Lafayette was the Madison family who were Negroes ("black," at that time, was considered insulting).

Diversity was the rule even in street sports. On Van Horne Street we played houseball as God intended houseball to be played: You stand close to the wall of the building, bounce the pink rubber ball off the ledge and run to your right toward first base in the middle of the street. But on Woodward Street, a block away, they ran to their left.

To fill up the time between important things like houseball games and Friday night at the Tivoli movie theater, we went to school.

In All Saints grammar school, I learned that (a) man is a creature composed of body and soul, (b) this life is not the only one, (c) there is a moral law that can be discovered by human reason and (d) the United States is a good country.

We spent most of our time "hanging around." This is an urban art that defies both analysis and description. It is the art of standing, slouching, crouching, or aimlessly walking about on a street corner. To the untutored eye it might seem like a waste of time, but to the person hanging out it is a social necessity and a way of life.

I have often thought that one of the difficulties keeping many urban conservatives out of the Republican party is that it is all but impossible to communicate with, say, a Midwestern Protestant Republican who is a hard-line free-enterpriser if you have spent quite a bit of time in an activity his upbringing condemns as probably sinful in its toleration of "doing nothing."

After high school, you went to work; nobody went to college. In 1953, I got a job at the Westinghouse Corporation's Elevator Division on Pacific Avenue. It was all anyone could ask for: \$48.50 a week—to start, mind you.

And there it is. Family, neighborhood, church, school, work. All we have ever wanted is to be left alone, to build our own lives, to make sure our kids got a little better break.

But the 1960's changed all that. We became guinea pigs for the experiments of liberal-intellectuals and politicians. They bused our kids. They made radical, unwanted changes in the liturgy of the church we love. We begged for law and order. The liberals sneered and said we were racists.

We asked for nothing but a chance to work and learn, and the liberals gave us the affirmative-action quota

system that discriminates against us in employment and education. We wanted to save a few bucks to take care of our future. We got inflation. When our kids went to college the liberal professors either ignored or mocked the values we had taught them at home and in our schools. We've been used, manipulated and scorned—and now liberals want us to come back to the fold.

It's too late. Some of us have survived and transcended a liberal college education. We learned, the hard way, that those simple truths of an All Saints education have a legitimate and firm intellectual basis.

We've discovered something about ourselves. We have minds. We have ideas. We have a philosophy.

We are not Archie Bunkers. We are street corner conservatives. We are in every city and suburb in this country. We have seen—and endured—the future as liberals would have it and we know it doesn't work. We're sick of having elitists doing our thinking for us. We love this country and we want our kids to have at least the chance we did. We used to depend on you for guidance. But now we know we can depend only on ourselves. And that's just what we're going to do.

William F. Gavin is author of the book "Street Corner Conservative."