

Cottonwood Fall (Pages 160-161)

Grandma's First Football Game

Danny is a devoted admirer of Jase's Grandma Compton. Occasionally he tries too hard to impress her, especially when it comes to subjects that are outside of his area of expertise.

Since we were early, we had our choice of seats. But Grandma was extremely fussy. She didn't want to be up high. Too easy to get the *vapors* up there. Whatever that meant. She didn't want to be too low. Too easy to see disturbing things if a player were hurt. Didn't like the north end. Too noisy with people milling around the refreshment stand. Didn't like the south end. Too near the river. She didn't swim. Finally, we selected three seats, right on the fifty yard line, about halfway up or halfway down, depending on your viewpoint.

As soon as we were seated, the stadium began to fill around us. We heard the drums of the Riverton High band marching toward us from the high school. You could feel the excitement in the air. Both teams were on the field doing their pregame warm-ups. We saw Jim, wearing a letter jacket, baseball cap with a big *R*, and neatly pressed trousers. His entire wardrobe was a tasteful mixture of blue and gold, Riverton High's school colors.

"If this is a Riverton High School game, why is the county's name on that sign down there by those big clothes poles?"

Next to the goal posts on the river end of the field stood a scoreboard to record the scores of *Chippewas* and *Opponents*. After the *clothes poles* remark, I knew we were in for a long night. But Danny evidently saw Grandma's ignorance of the game as an opportunity to endear himself to her.

"*Chippewas* is the Riverton team's nickname. The Owosso team's nickname is the *Trojans*, like the Greek wooden horse guys. There's lots of Greeks in Owosso. Lots of Englishmen too. But *English* doesn't work too well as a nickname. It's better as a *class* name. Like *English class*, you know. And those aren't clothes poles, they're flag poles. See those little flags tied to the tops? They tell everybody which way the wind is blowing."

I was relieved to know that Grandma was in the hands of a real football authority. Danny didn't stop there. "See that little brown ball down there. That's a football. When the game starts, they'll play keep-away with that. If you got the ball, you run around the field so all the other guys can't whack you. If you don't have it, you get to whack anybody you want. Those men in black and white shirts are the umpires. When somebody whacks somebody the wrong way, the judges throw rocks at them. Their rocks are tied to little

flags, so they can find their rocks later and hit somebody else with them.”
Danny sure knew his football, all right.

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