

CUTTING BRUCE SOME SLACK

By John S. Halbert

Spring and Fall, 1959:

Bruce was an athletic guy; big-boned, rugged and muscular with large hands---just perfect for being a quarterback or a receiver. A natural, gifted athlete, he possessed great strength and power; at recess in the eighth grade, he could throw a football in his side-armed-style onto a pinpoint running target fifty yards away. But when he got to high school, even though the coaches tried to recruit him, he didn't go out for football, or any other varsity sports, preferring to refine his aura within the circle of us other less athletically-endowed types.

One day, not long after we started the ninth grade, to Bruce's mortification, his *mother* unexpectedly showed up at the high school! All day long she followed him around like Mary's little lamb, from class to class and to lunch. She even hovered around outside the gym while we had Phys. Ed. While big, athletic Bruce was in embarrassed agony all that day, we other guys had a field day at his expense. .

Even though I joined in the ridicule, I felt a little guilty, remembering that terrible day back in the first grade when my mother had taken me to school on a day I had the flu, and left me in the car while she had a conference with my teacher. Of course, my schoolmates soon discovered me hiding in the back seat and made fun of me through the windows. I even had to face my girlfriend, Eleanor, who witnessed my discomfiture.

In hindsight, we probably should have cut poor Bruce a little slack, but that was asking an awful lot from a bunch of high schoolers.