

The Picnic Crashers

By Michael Groetsch

“Ewald, what happens if someone wants to know who our parents are?” his younger brother Chalin asks.

“Just point towards a couple who look like they may be our mother and father,” Ewald responds. “Make sure they have dark hair and eyes though. Being dark ourselves, if you point towards a couple with blonde hair and light eyes, the picnickers may get suspicious.”

This is the third year in a row that Chalin and Ewald have crashed company picnics in Abita Springs. They can’t enter through the front gate because the owner of the property, Ms. Morgan, knows them well and will chase them away. Instead, they climb the back fence and mix with the crowd as if they own the place. They attend the picnic for the games and races. If caught and ejected, they will simply crash another picnic a week later.

“Hurry up, Chalin! I told you that we should have gotten up earlier this morning. They’re already getting ready for the first race. Which age group do you think that is?” Ewald asks.

“I don’t know, Ewald. The runners seem to be your height. Hustle over there and get in the race. Those kids are probably two or three years younger than you, but what makes the difference. No one’s going to ask for your birth certificate.”

At 10- years- old and small for his age, Ewald easily blends in with the kids preparing to run the 100- yard dash. As a man drops a red flag, Ewald crosses the finish line before the others realize why it was dropped.

“What’s your name boy?” a man asks while awarding him a prize.

“Ewald. Ewald Groetsch,” he responds to the applause of those in attendance.

“Hey, didn’t that kid win a bunch of races and prizes last year?” someone mutters in the crowd.

“Yes. You’re right! And I think that he raced in the same age group for the last two years,” another picnicker replies.

Ewald walks over to Chalin and warns him that a couple of people seem to be getting suspicious. He suggests they consider leaving before being busted.

“No way!” Chalin responds. “They’re getting ready to call my race. My group seems to look even smaller than they were last year. This is my chance to make a sweep of all the races. No way! I’m not going anywhere!”

“ And now for the eight and nine- year- old boys,” the man with the red flag announces, as 12- year- old Chalin rushes over to the starting line. As the red flag is dropped a second time, Chalin crosses the finish line before the other kids know what’s going on. He is awarded his prize and asked to state his name.

“ Chalin Groetsch,” he responds, as the same two people who seemed to question Ewald’s victory enter into a huddle.

“Hey, Chalin. Hurry up and get over here!” Ewald yells excitedly. “I think that they are on to us.”

Ewald and Chalin quickly run towards the back fence but are approached by the man with the red flag. “Where are your parents?” he asks.

Without thinking, Chalin immediately points to a woman with bright red hair.

“That’s not your mother!” the flag man responds.

“How do you know that, mister?” Chalin replies.

“Because that’s my wife and I’m certain that you’re not my son!”

As Chalin and Ewald jumps the fence with their prizes in hand, the sound of someone calling for all eight and nine- year- old boys to line up for the sack race can be heard in the distance.

“What do you think, Ewald? How about if we go back home, change our clothes and put on a hat. Then maybe we can climb the fence and finish the races!”

“What do I think, Chalin? I think that you’re crazy. But let’s go to the house and see what Mom has in the closet. Maybe you can wear one of her dresses and enter the races as a nine- year- old girl. But next time, if asked, make sure that you point to someone who looks more like us.”