

A Famous Change-Up

by Kevin Hodgson

Remembering now
all the zany rules
he'd shout at the kids,
the sound of his voice
off a pitching perch
at Arcanum Field –

Jim, rubbing the ball with dirt
and the bottom of his shirt,
fabric stained with sweat, as he
warmed up his arm, set to throw for
one - two - three hours, straight,
pitch after pitch over the plate –

he'd be calling out rules
off the top of his head, like:
all runs now score double, and
one-pitch inning - no whining, neither - and
fly ball in the trash can wins a Little Debbie, and
a catch over the homerun fence is an out, then
run the bases forward, in reverse, and, then
run the bases backwards, forward, and
on and on and on it went,
a laugh with every rule shift
– such a gift –

those kids, throngs of ballers
waking up early on Saturday mornings
just to play the game with Jim
– and a few other adults, too, but mostly,
they sleepwalked or pedaled there for him –
those players who went with the groove,
waiting for a famous change-up,
the one that kicked off an inning
on the field, in August