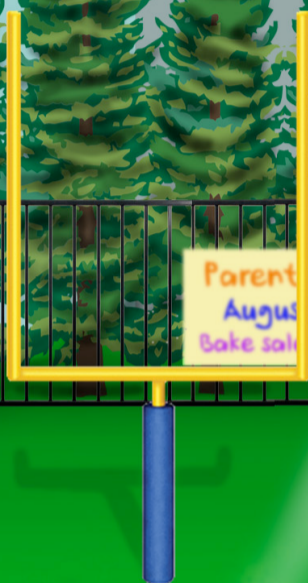


WRITTEN BY
ERIN O'CONNOR

ILLUSTRATED BY
MIKE GOLDSTEIN

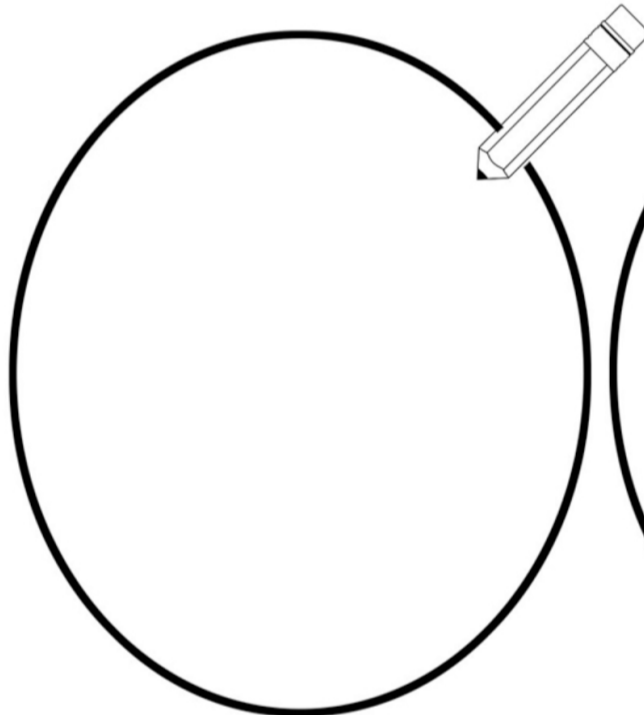


KICKER

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Author
Erin O'Connor



Reader
This book
belongs to:



Illustrator
Mike Goldstein



Since I was a little girl

1. I've loved to kick and jump and twirl.
Sitting still was not my thing...
Moving gave my heart its wings.

My Mama worked real hard each day

2. And could not watch me as I played.
But Daddy drove a cab at night.
He cared for us throughout daylight.

By us, I mean my 2 big brothers

3. To tell the truth, there were two others...
We had a dog whose name was Bill.
We had a kitty cat named Jill.

My daddy watched the five of us...

4. He kept us safe, which is a must!
He taught my brothers many games,
For me...he tried to do the same.

But, I had feelings in my feet

5. And Daddy said, "Be free my sweet."
So while he played ball with the boys
I danced and kicked...my greatest joys!



When I was barely two years old

1. I kicked pebbles down the road.
Big ones, small ones...it didn't matter
I'd kick and kick and watch them scatter.

When I was 3 and 4 and 5

2. This pebble kicking was my life.
I got so good with kicking skills
My neighbors marveled...they were thrilled.

That this girl child, who would be me,

3. Could play alone, happy to be
So simply and well entertained...
I just loved my kicking game.

But Mama worried 'bout all this...

4. "I want my baby not to miss
All the things that young girls do."
I must admit this sounded true.

So Daddy signed me up for art

5. And free dance classes at our park.
Then, while my brothers played football,
I'd draw and dance...I'd dance and draw.



The most exciting thing for me
1. Were pink ballet shoes...they weren't free.
But Nana said, "My grandbaby
Was born to dance," and paid the fee!

The next few years, in my spare time
2. I studied dance...all types and kinds...
Tap, ballet, jazz, ballroom, too.
There was no dance I could not do.

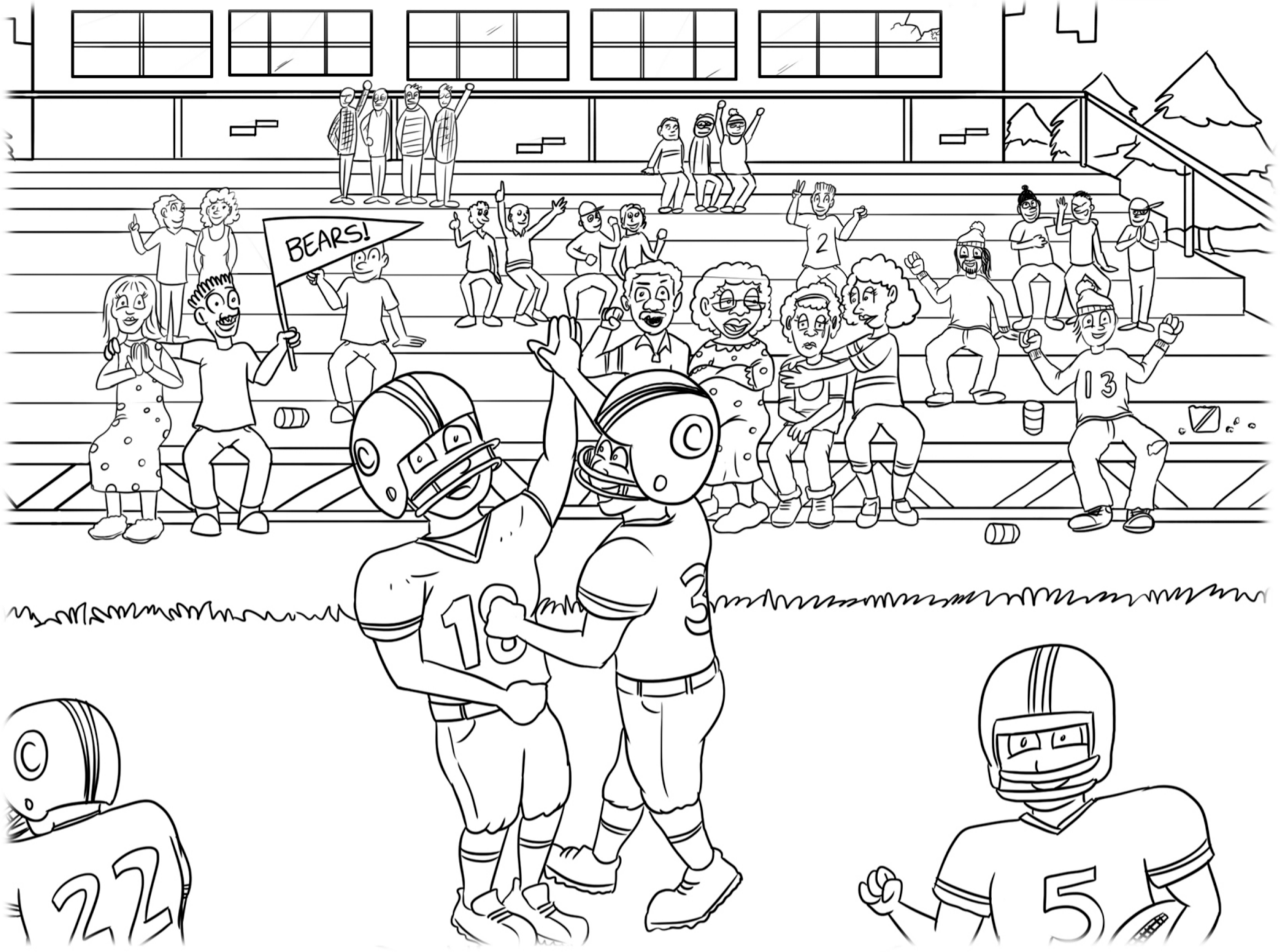
And dancing gave me lots of friends.
3. Life was, for me, so great...and then
My dance class gave a big recital,
And I won, "The Best Kicker" title.

"Your leaps are great...your twirls are, too."
4. But no one kicks as well as you!"
These words came from my many friends,
And family members...this was when

My thoughts grew wings. They became dreams...
5. "Famous Dancer...Spotlight beams!"
Hard work, discipline and luck...
Became my goals for growing up!



- But, in the spring when I turned 12,
1. My luck did change... my dream was shelved.
While kicking high, which was my gift,
And springing up into a lift,
My partner did a slip and fall
2. And down I came...toe shoes and all.
My teacher gasped, my partner tried
To comfort me...I cried and cried.
3. To keep this long, sad story short,
My foot shattered...eight bones broke.
For all of spring, and summer too,
There was nothing I could do.
- I read a lot...I drew, I painted
4. While my foot healed...I just waited.
Then the doctors spoke this news...
"Your dream will not be coming true.
5. Too much damage has been done."
I lost my joy...they'd crushed my fun.
My heart was broken then and there...
For this there would be no repair.



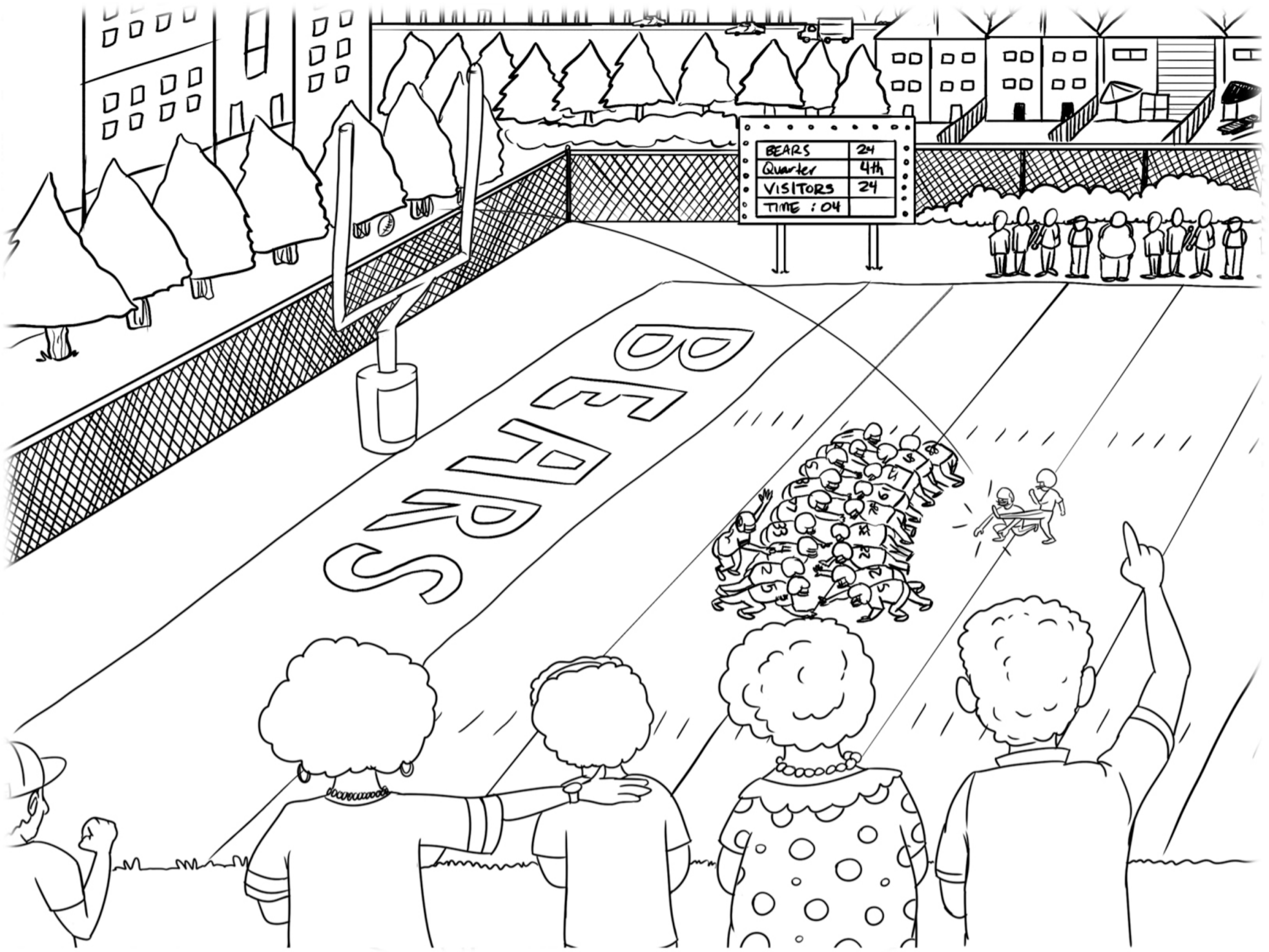
A year went by, I was so moody.
 1. Friends were kind, but I stayed broody.
 My loyal pets, sweet Jill and Bill,
 Could not even break my chill.

3. Mama, finally hearing this
 Hugged me... then gave me a kiss.
 And said, "Be happy for your brothers.
 Now, watch the game and cheer with others."

My brothers...their lives were fantastic!
 High school football made them magic.
 2. Touch downs plenty, cheers galore...
 "But what on earth was my life for?"

Nana, with her wisdom shining'
 Spoke up, too, about my whining.
 4. "You know baby, life isn't over...
 There're good things comin' round the corner!"

5. Suddenly the spell was broken.
 "Why was this" I bet you're thinking
 Whatever stopped my heart from sinking?



What happened? Well it's really stunning,
 1. The score was tied, and time was running
 Out...when on the field there came
 Our kicker...Could he save the game?

With just 4 seconds left to play...
 2. And the goal posts far away...
 The kicker found that golden touch...
 When toe met ball it was a rush!

My brothers, parents, Nana too
 3. Were so excited it is true...
 My brothers' team had won the game.
 "A perfect kick" it was proclaimed!

And, in that instant, yes, I knew
 4. Exactly what I now would do!
 Though my left foot was kind of worthless
 My right foot had a newfound purpose.

"I can do that!" I told my daddy.
 "I will do that!" I said to Nanny.
 5. "Um 'hmm I surely think you will!"
 My mama chimed and I was thrilled.



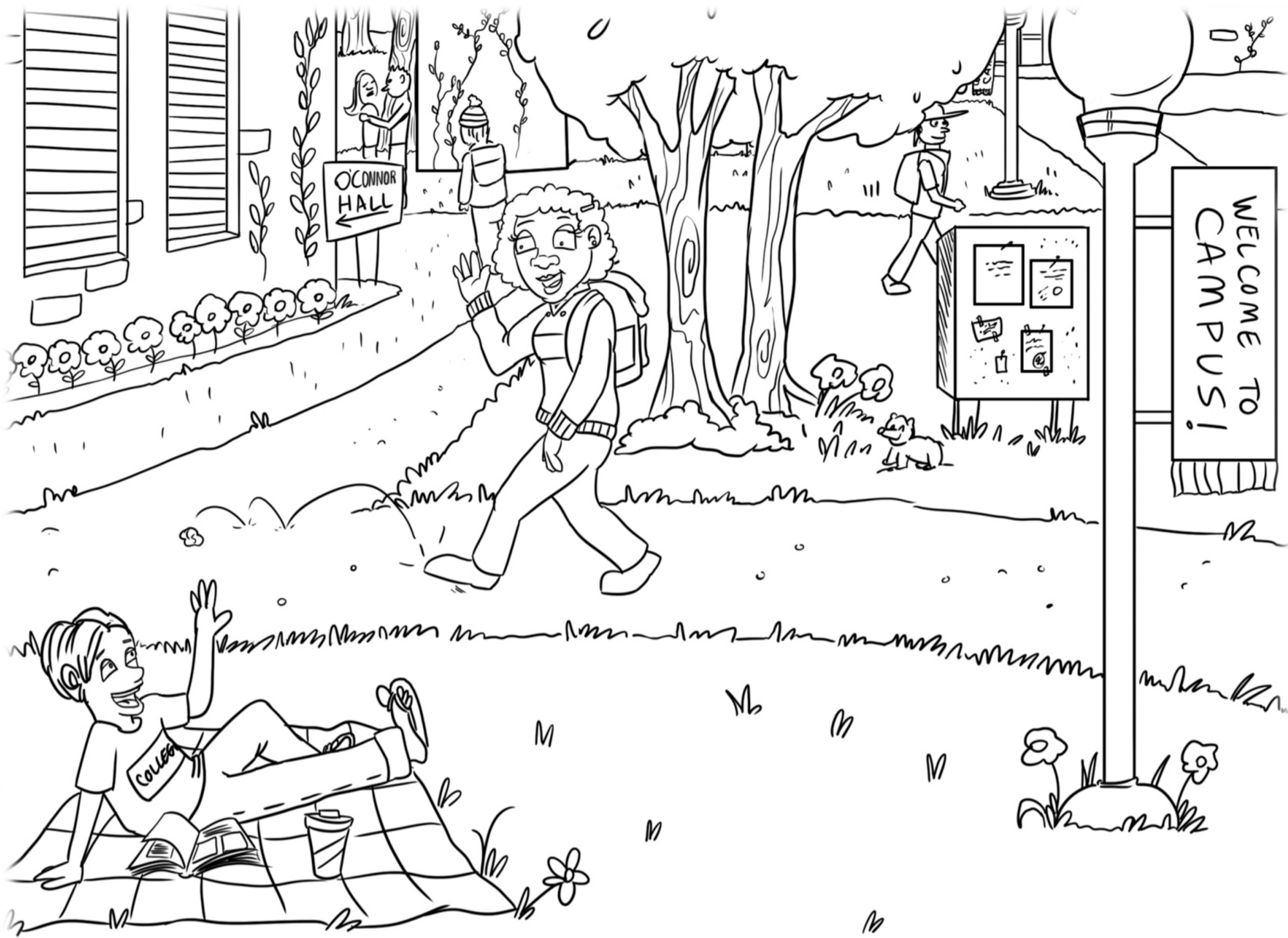
1. The next two years were uneventful
I practiced hard and was real hopeful.
My daddy made up lots of drills
My brothers honed in on my skills.

2. All that kicking I had done...
When a girl child, just for fun,
Was the foundation for it all!
The only difference was a ball.

3. My mother said, "You are obsessed!
It isn't right to live like this!
Outside of school your life's that ball.
Your friends are gone. They never call."

4. I said, "Now Mama, don't you fret...
It isn't right to get upset!
I know that what I now am doing,
It's meant for me to keep pursuing..."

5. This newfound dream of mine is right.
So keep your worries out of sight.
Have faith in me like I do you
And watch me make my dream come true."



And, so it was, at age sixteen,
1. I tried out for our football team.
Then...a unanimous decision
I would kick for our division.

That is just what I did do.
2. I rarely missed...my kicks were true.
The only girl with this achievement...
Scouts came from everywhere to see it!

And at my high school graduation,
3. I earned amazing commendations.
Not only for my kicking skills,
But for great grades...I was so thrilled!

Today I am a college girl
4. Though second string and without frills
I practice hard to make first string,
'Cause kicking's still my favorite thing!

“Where do the ideas for all your books come from?” This is a question I have frequently been asked.

For me, the kernels for all my books come from my own life experiences. *Song of a Little League Pitcher*, *Annabelle’s Growing Pains*, *Howie*, *Granny’s Hands* and others are based on true events which I have embellished or altered only to create a more colorful read.

Kicker, however, came from thin air. I knew I wanted to tell the story of an inner city girl actualizing a dream. And, while walking my dog Sophie, it blossomed forth in my mind. The poem, *KICKER*, took flight.

I am a cartoonist and have taught this art form in after school programs for many years. In addition, I have several private clients to whom I teach this technique.

As a struggling artist, I am pursuing my dream as an animation filmmaker with my partner and twin brother, Lee. While our most recent pilot is still being pitched, we have converted it into an adult coloring book and are finding success in this venue.

When I saw Mike’s and Lee’s book, I immediately thought *KICKER* would make a perfect story/poem/coloring book. And so, another O’Connor/Goldstein collaboration was born. We both hope you will enjoy it lyrically and artistically.

