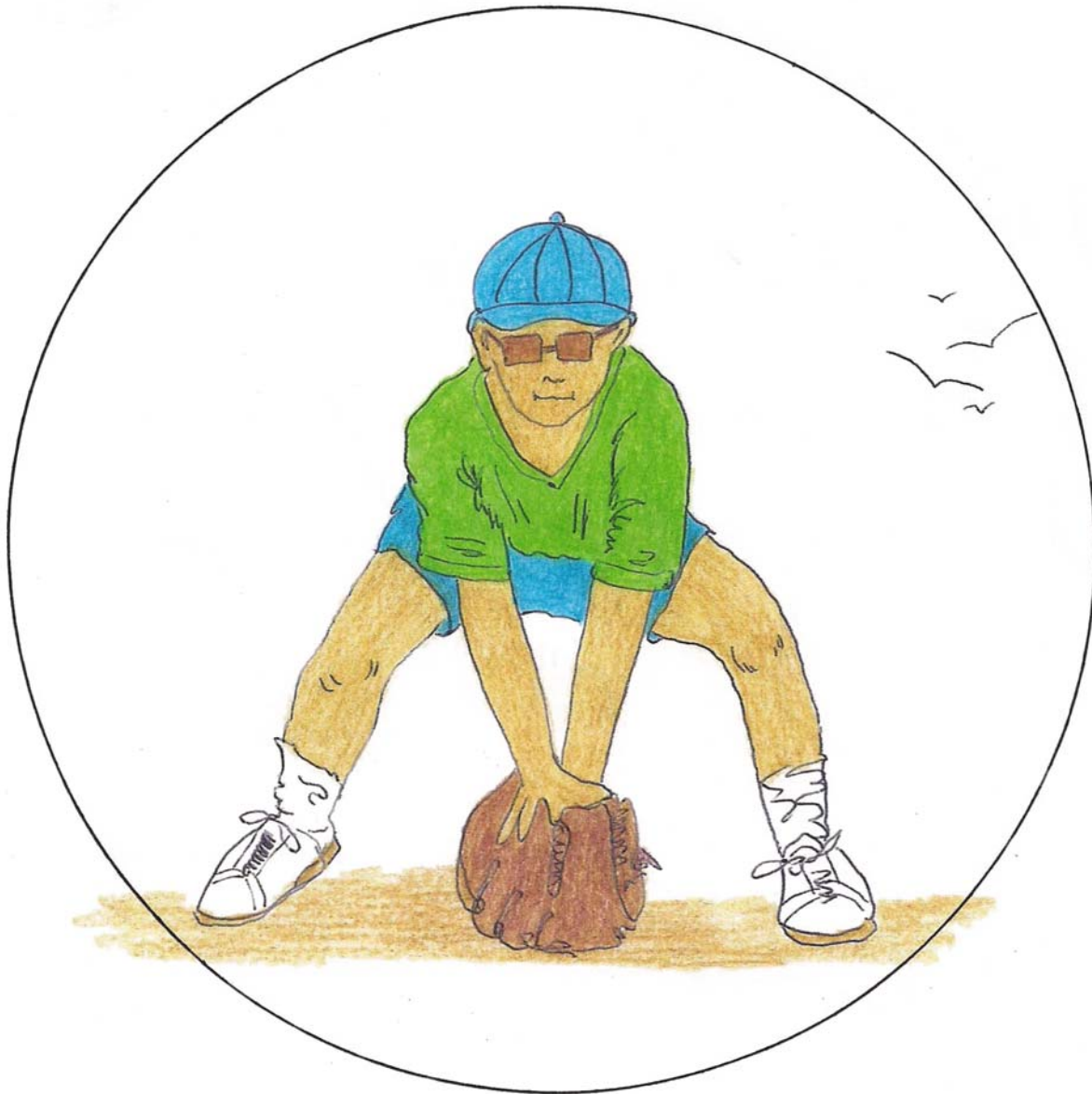


Toby's "Yep, That's My Thing"

*Story and Illustrations
by Nena Cristina Segal*



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Thank you!

To my children Sabrina and Samantha

To my grandchildren Alexandra, Gregory and Cristina

***To my husband Sabin for their inspiration, patience,
Support and love***

***A special thanks to Lynn, who made sure
I dotted my 'i's and crossed my 't's***

***"The world is full of ups and downs, how we handle
this makes us what we are."***

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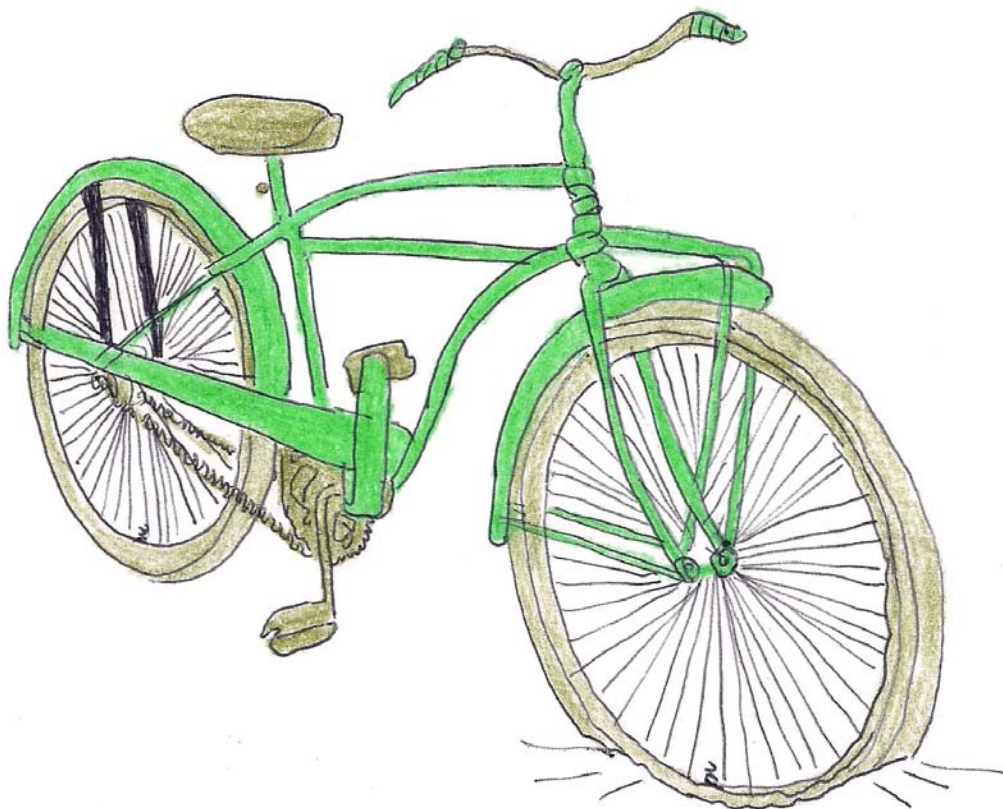
Toby lived in the city. He learned to play baseball on the streets of New York. He wasn't good at hitting the ball. He was fantastic at catching the ball and running bases. Toby was seven years old. He was the oldest child in his family. He had baby twin sisters, Amanda and Kaylee.



Toby's family had relocated to a southern town in the country. There were trees, cows, horses, chickens, cornfields and flowers. Toby had always lived in the city where there were cars, tall buildings and smog. Do they play ball in small towns or only milk cows?

He was going to be the new kid on the block. This was something he didn't look forward to. He remembered what happened to Eric. Eric had been the new kid on the block. Everyone teased him. They spilled his drink. They hid his lunch box. They knocked over his bike. They gave his bike a flat tire. They put bubble gum on his seat.

Toby waited in anticipation. He was nervous. What would happen to him?





Toby sat on his porch steps. He turned his baseball cap backward. He held his baseball mitt and ball. It was a sunny day. He put on his sunglasses. This way no one would see his eyes. No one could see his eyes roll and tic. He sat there pounding the ball into his mitt. He waited. Soon they would come. He would be in for it. He would be prepared for whatever happened.

A boy named Casey strolled by. He said “Hi, do you play baseball?” Toby’s heart jumped. What would happen now? “Yep,” he answered.

The boy said, “I’m going to the park to play, want to go?” Toby called to his mom “I’m going to the park, bye.”

They walked side by side. Toby rolled his head and twisted his neck. “Hey, that is a great exercise. Do you always do that?”
“Yep, that’s my thing.”



Casey rolled his head and twisted his neck too. His neck went crack, crack. "Great".

At the park Casey introduced Toby. "This is Toby. He plays baseball and he has a ball. This is Blake, Adam, Taylor and Kyle."



They ran around the field before they played ball. They did jumping jacks, sit ups, and leg lifts. They also imitated Toby's neck and head exercise. "Here it comes," he thought. It didn't come. They played until it was dark.



At dinner, Toby talked about the baseball game. He was so pleased. No one teased him.

The boys played ball all summer. They became the Baseball Gang. They were tight.



Toby's parents were going out. They asked the girl next door to baby sit. "Baby sitter, I'm not a baby!" Toby yelled.

Oops, he remembered his baby sisters needed a baby sitter. Jennifer, the baby sitter was going to college to become a nurse. She came to the house with a little black bag full of doctor things. She examined their ears. She made them stick out their tongues and say "Ah."



She took their temperatures. She felt their pulses and listened to their hearts. They all listened to their own hearts too. That was really awesome.

Jennifer was disturbed. Something was different about Toby. She didn't know what it was. She noticed that his eyes had a tic and he made little noises. She looked up his symptoms in her medical books. She finally found what she was looking for. Should she tell Toby's parents? Should she tell someone, anyone? What should she do?

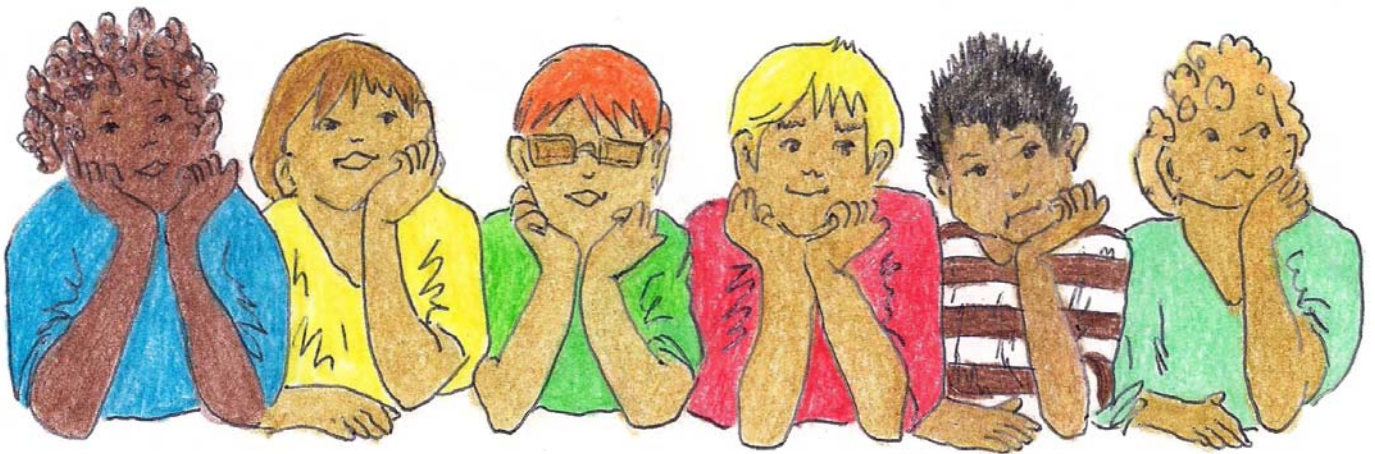


Jennifer decided not to do anything right then. She would observe Toby. Toby told Jennifer he never crawled. He stood up and walked. He told her his sisters were slow. The twins were great at crawling but they were not good at walking. They had to hang on. Mother said they will catch up. Boys are different from girls. You shouldn't compare them.

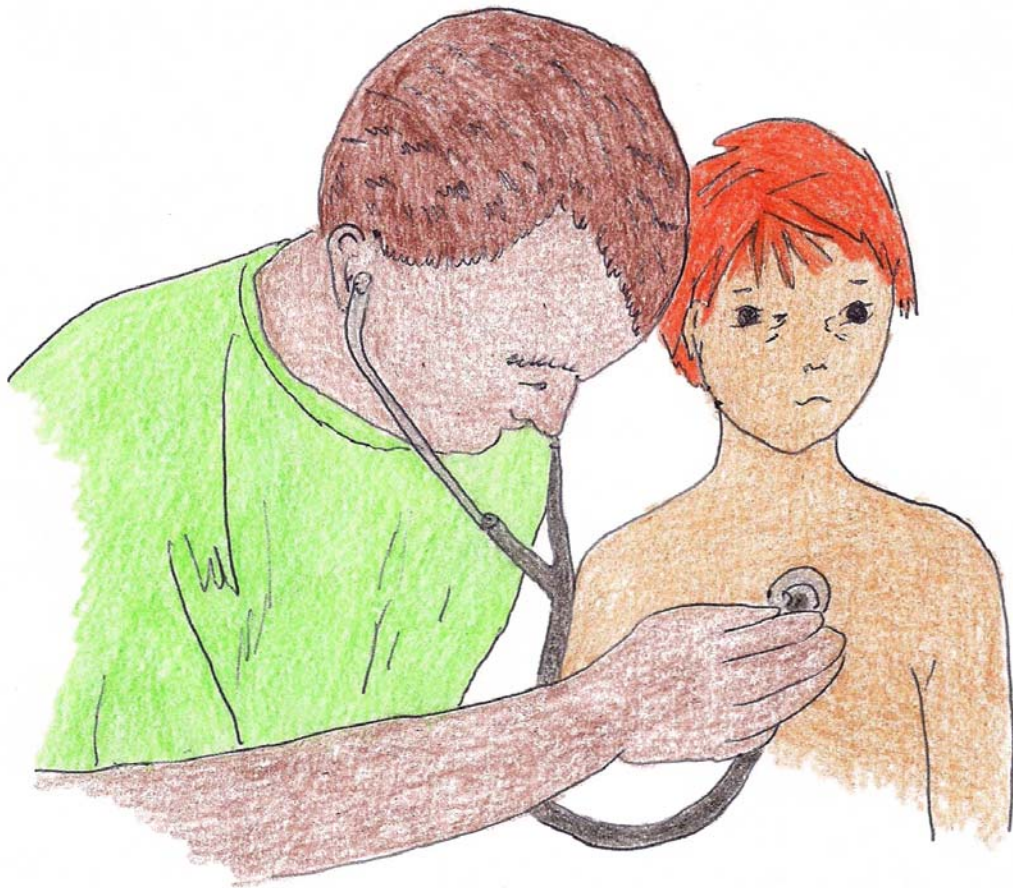


All summer Toby played with his new friends the Baseball Gang. They never teased him. Sometimes he made those little noises. They laughed and said he sounded like that tennis player who grunted and shouted when she hit the ball. They asked why he did it. He would say he didn't know. "Yep, that's my thing."

They grunted and shouted when they hit the ball or ran bases. They decided this helped them go faster and do better.



Summer was over too soon. School would open in a few days. Everyone bought new clothes, new shoes and new school supplies. To take P.E., everyone had to have a doctor's exam.



The doctor noticed Toby's tics and small movements along with little sounds.

The doctor informed Toby's family he wanted to give him more tests. Toby's parents said he always had those eye rolling things. They would tell Toby to stop it, but he wouldn't. He was so strong willed. The more they hollered at him, the more he did it. Sometimes when he was under stress, he would do it more. He didn't want to stop. He liked the attention. They stopped paying attention to him when he did things like that.

Later Toby's mother told Jennifer what the doctor said. "Is this doctor any good?" This was what Jennifer was waiting for. She showed Toby's mother her medical book. Jennifer believed Toby had Tourette Syndrome (TS).

The doctor explained to Toby's parents that Toby did have Tourette Syndrome, a neurological disorder. It caused him to make little sounds. It also made his muscles twitch. He had no control over these tics. His sounds and movements just happen.

Can the twins catch TS from Toby? Toby's parents asked the doctor many questions. The doctor gave them articles to read. He suggested they learn more information about TS on the internet.

The doctor said, "At this time there is no cure for TS. There are medications, but should be taken only under close doctor's supervision."

Toby's parents were heartsick. They had blamed Toby's actions to that of a willful child.

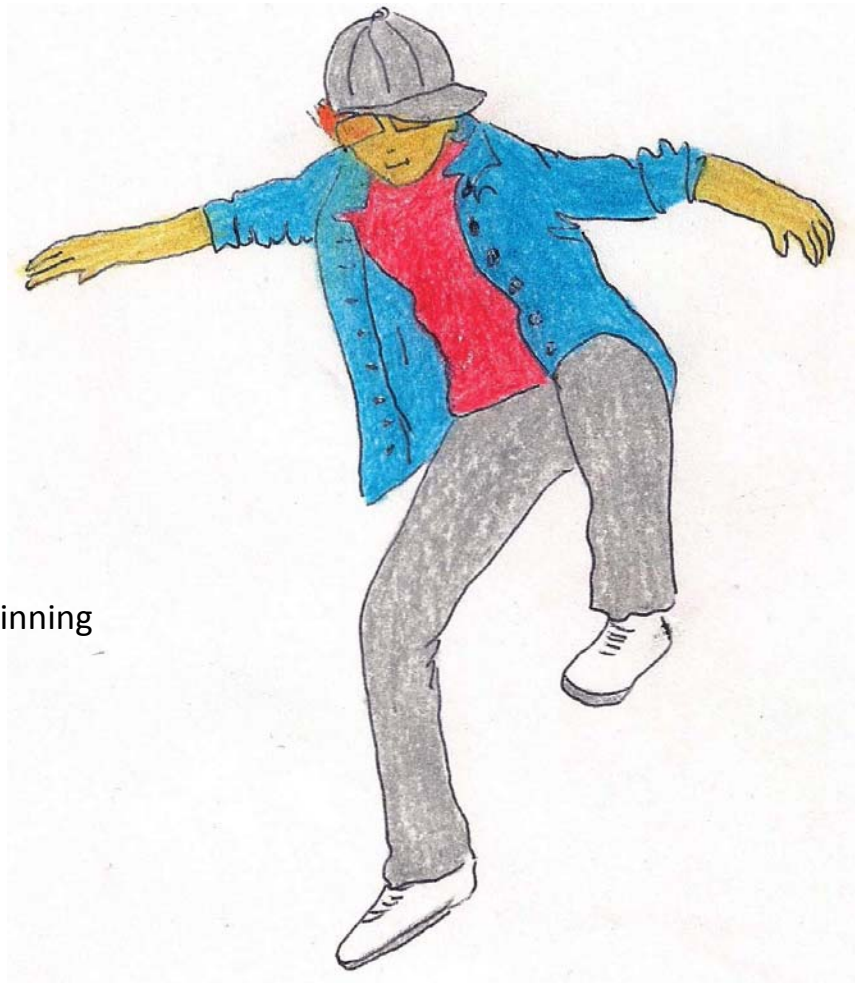
They now understood and would be more sensitive to his needs. They would create a calmer and less stressful environment for the whole family.

The doctor told Toby. If he felt a tic or a movement coming on, go for it. "Yep, that's my thing," Toby answered with a smile.



Toby jumped his first hurdle and landed on solid ground. The Baseball Gang would still play baseball. They would still be friends. They would find ways to help each other over the many obstacles they would encounter on their way to adulthood.

Toby's "Yep, that's my thing," became the Baseball Gang's thing to say.



The EndOnly the beginning
By Nena Cristina Segal

Nena Cristina Segal, Alias “Nena the story teller,” honed a lively imagination as a foster child. At an early age, Nena would escape to the land of make believe where fun-loving characters and innovative plots were born of a creative mind striving to understand the world around her. Having raised two girls of her own and several grandchildren since, Nena has dedicated a good part of her life to helping young people actualize their talents and overcome adversity.

Nena the storyteller has played host to charitable organizations such as the Easter Seal Society of New Jersey, the Garden State Games and others dedicated to enhancing the lives of American’s youth. Nena continues to write and share stories that revolve around the problems most children encounter during their formative years. Her style is metaphoric and her prose upbeat and expressive.

