

A letter from the PUBLISHER

Henry Luce III

AS anyone who has ever written a letter to the editors already knows, TIME's weekly contract with its readers does not end once the magazine goes to press. Every one of the 1,000 or more letters that arrive in the mail each week receives a reply from TIME's Letters Department, which is headed by Maria Luisa Cisneros and staffed by 13 assistants. The letters department also performs a less well-known task: answering the 150 or so letters a week from people requesting information—some additional bit of elaboration or an answer to a question. That is the demanding job for Marian Powers, Carla Lyddan and Mimi Olszewska, who find that unwrinkling readers' brows can put a furrow or two in their own. They do not, however, ghost term papers for students (January and February bring a flood of letters that start: "Please tell me everything about . . ."), help readers seeking financial advice or other special favors, or act as an answering service for every kind of request. If a request relates to TIME's news coverage, however, they do their best to help, whether that involves merely making a telephone call, digging in Time Inc.'s Bureau of Editorial Reference, or even querying a TIME correspondent half a world away.

A retired professor asked about Roman metal workers who wore face masks made from goats' bladders to protect themselves from dust and lead fumes (Roman Naturalist Pliny was the source). Three readers were baffled by the word glitch in one of our moon stories (it is a modernized term for World War II's famed gremlin); another was having trouble finding the word aelurophile (it is a variant of ailurophile, meaning lover of cats). Ofttimes the department is called upon to settle arguments—last year two college roommates quibbled about who makes more money, pro



LETTERS CHIEF CISNEROS

footballers or auto racers (the top stars are about even—in the six-figure range). Both lawyers—and prisoners—by the score request citations of cases referred to in TIME's Law section, and Medicine brings a flood of requests for further information on stories. Most new products we mention bring requests for further information; the current favorite is the all-terrain vehicle described in Sport last month.

"One of the most satisfying parts of our work," says Maria Luisa, "is simply putting our readers in touch with other people—so they can exchange ideas and even help solve a problem." She remembers a Hungarian agronomist who had read in TIME about a California farmer whose artichoke crop was being ruined by mice. We gave him the farmer's address, and perhaps, after all, he did have a better mousetrap.

The Cover: Cartoon by Willard Mullin. Although he has been amusing fans with his drawings of sport figures for more than 30 years, this is Mullin's first cover for TIME. To his nationally known roster of such characters as a mournful Dodger Bum, a cutlass-swinging Pittsburgh Pirate and a stein-hoisting Milwaukee Brave, Mullin, 66, has added a New York Met—looking a bit like a Little Leaguer but hustling along like a champion. And of course, says Mullin, "my favorite baseball team has got to be the Mets now. They are great, wonderful, exciting."

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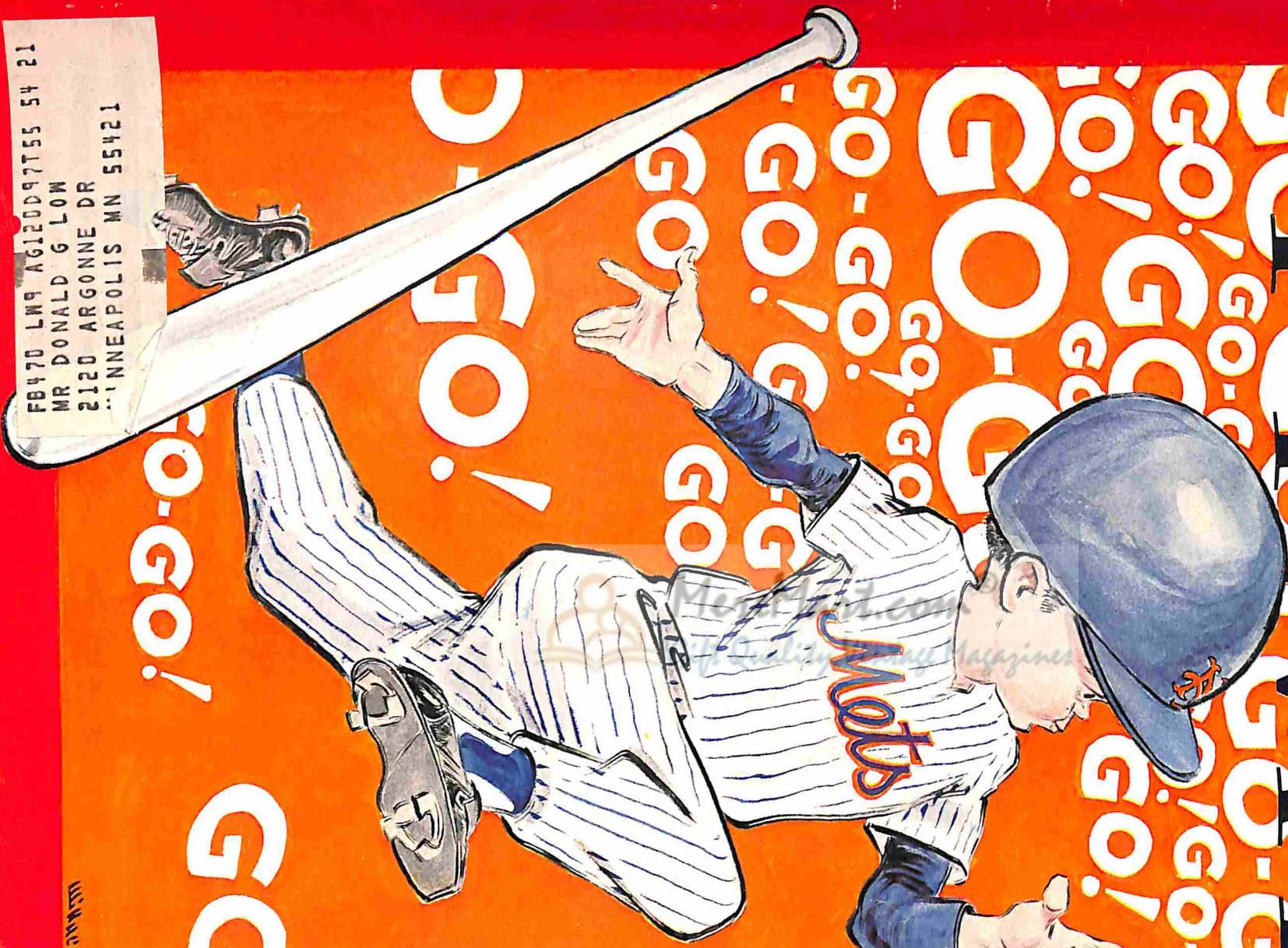
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