

# 'Fudge' is as sweet as ever

Twenty-six years after introducing the wildly mischievous Fudge in *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, Judy Blume brings him back in *Double Fudge* which, like earlier Blume books, is a series of amusing anecdotes about the Hatcher family.

Fudge's older brother, Peter, narrates the book and continues to be driven crazy by his younger sibling.

Fudge is now 5 years old and so obsessed with money that he constantly talks, fantasizes, counts and sings about it. He even makes his own "Fudge bucks," drawing with markers on colored paper.

There is an edge to Blume's humor. She pokes fun at Fudge, but shows us how our materialism might be interpreted through a child's eyes. I was particularly struck by a passage in which Mrs. Hatcher tells Fudge, "Money doesn't grow on trees."

"I know it doesn't grow on trees," Fudge says. "You get it at the ATM."

Small children don't see us at work earning money. They don't understand the concept of banks. What they see is magic. You go to an ATM, put in a card, push some buttons and



— presto — instant cash.

Blume uses these opportunities to teach our children. Mrs. Hatcher tells Fudge about bank accounts and the need to deposit money before it can be withdrawn. New vocabulary words such as "deposit," "account" and "value" are introduced and defined in a child-friendly manner. What greater way to teach than through entertainment and humor!

The Hatchers decide to curtail Fudge's money madness by visiting the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, in Washington, D.C., learning "fun facts," including the fact that the bureau produces 37 million notes a day, about \$696 million. But it also becomes a turning point in the story.

Here the New York Hatchers meet eccentric, slightly obnoxious distant cousins from Hawaii, including twin girls, Flora and Fauna (nick-

named the Natural Beauties), and a younger brother, who shares Fudge's real name, Farley Drexel. This "mini" Farley tries to steal Fudge's nickname for himself — hence the book's title.

The cousins invite themselves to Manhattan to stay in the Hatchers' cramped apartment, taking over the entire living room floor with their sleeping bags and camping gear, where they slept "like a row of hot dogs in their rolls. All that was missing was the mustard and the relish."

Disaster follows disaster. Yet, in the end, everything somehow sorts itself out and life settles down — at least for a while.

Some may find parts of the book's humor mildly offensive (e.g., "The Panda Poop Club"). Such "potty humor" is realistic and in keeping with what children ages 8-12 find funny.

Blume's book is a delight for children and adults. There is an honesty about how family members relate to one another and the problems and challenges they face on a daily basis. We are reminded that the best things in life have nothing to do with money:



Family, friends, understanding and kindness are free to all of us.

Over the years, our family has developed a taste for "Fudge." *Double Fudge* is a particularly sweet treat which will surely be on my Christmas gift list.

Donna Marbach, a freelance writer and painter, attends St. Ambrose Parish in Rochester. She lives in Penfield with her husband, Joe Brennan, and their five children.

## Koufax bio probes elusive baseball personality

This well-researched account of the Los Angeles Dodgers star pitcher will appeal to both serious and casual baseball fans.

Jane Leavy, a former sportswriter with the *Washington Post*, takes on the noble challenge of profiling a sports icon who has been retired for more than 35 years and has generally avoided the spotlight. The Baseball Hall of Famer, now 66 years old, cooperated with the author, but was only briefly interviewed. Because he is not given to self-promotion — even Joe DiMaggio, another reclusive baseball legend, was known after his playing days as Mr. Coffee — Koufax's name may not strike immediate recognition among young or even

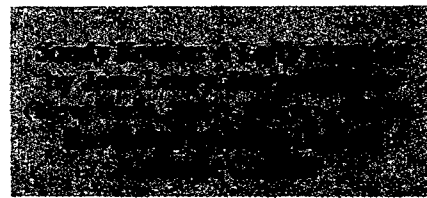


middle-aged adults.

Ah, but everybody loves a good mystery. Leavy brings the reluctant celebrity to life through interviews with numerous luminaries from the

baseball world. She depicts a man who, based on his supreme athletic abilities and Jewish heritage, found it impossible to maintain obscurity during his playing days.

The story is weighted mainly toward Koufax's athletic career, rather than his private life (he was married and divorced twice, and did not have any children.) Leavy notes that Koufax is still mobbed whenever he makes a public appearance. Part of this allure may stem from a career that's as mysterious as the man himself.



After posting a 54-53 win-loss record for his first seven seasons, Koufax had arguably the best five-year stretch in baseball history, going 111-34 between 1962 and 1966. He led the National League in earned-run average every year during this period, and also led in games won and strikeouts in 1963, '65 and '66. He abruptly retired after the 1966 season due to arm problems; he was only 30 years old.

Leavy frequently mentions Koufax's religious background, which he did not widely publicize but by which he was frequently defined in the media. A man of strong convic-

tions, he was sensitive to the discrimination his African-American teammates endured. His most notable statement on religious and social issues came in 1965 when he skipped a World Series start because it fell on a Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur.

Prior to the 1966 season, Koufax and teammate Don Drysdale took on the Dodgers' front office in a salary dispute. Though the issue was resolved within a month, Leavy credits Koufax's stance as setting the tone for increased player leverage with owners in the ensuing decades.

Leavy commendably portrays a fierce competitor who also had a quick wit, and few enemies in the clubhouse or anywhere else.

You may not learn much about the star from his words, but *Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy* shows that his actions spoke loudly — both on the field and off.

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