

The resignation letter of May 21 on Facebook is over 600 words long, and will not be repeated verbatim here, but the board members of the Gallup Amateur Baseball/Softball Association held a lengthy interview on May 26 to further explain their actions.

Their comments were a reaction to a Letter to the Editor, published in the Independent newspaper, criticizing the efforts and actions of the board and/or coach toward her 10-year old son. Written by a parent, Cathy Covington, that slightly overstated her case, it became the straw that broke the back of the board members.

“We had stated before last year’s season that we would only run the league for two years,” said Doctor Lawrence Andrade, the vice-president of the league, which serves over 1,100 boys and girls. “Some of the members thought they might serve longer, three or four years, but the actions of a small minority of parents have changed their minds.”

“Some of the parents have become very aggressive and belligerent and have indulged in personal attacks against board members, the schedule, coaches and umpires, and even to concession stand workers,” said Kevin Menapace, president of the league. “It’s not like we didn’t expect some opposition to certain rules, but not like this. Now we have five to ten complaints every night and some of them get ugly very quickly.”

Everyone knows that some parents always try to shift responsibility from themselves and especially their children when it comes to unfavorable decisions, but face-to-nose confrontations are not the mature was to handle these problems.

We have options written into the by-laws that have not been used, three strikes and you’re out. Some parents have already been dealt with five or six times,” said Andrade. “It wears on you,

but we don't like to punish the kids for the actions of the parents, which the option would do."

The interview broke down to individual problems the board had experienced, including one that had an irate parent confront one of them at his job, where he was waiting on a customer. Others involved parents screaming obscenities at the umpires and the coaches, sometimes using the open portion of the dugouts to express themselves better. The players pick up on this sort of bad conduct, and see nothing wrong with using vulgar epithets on the field, against their own coaches, teammates, and umpires. "Monkey See, Monkey Do" is the first adage that comes to mind.

The extreme, very extreme, decision would be to ban ALL parents from the game, but that would hurt the players, too. Many of them delight in showing their baseball/softball skills to family and friends.

"We have been getting a lot of support from most of the parents," said Menapace. "We pay full attention to legitimate complaints."

"We worked hard to get baseball and softball back in Gallup," added Andrade. "All of the board members have 40-hour plus work weeks to make a living. We added at least one team to every division this year and we have 200 more players on the field. The kids are wonderful. In Mickey Mantle (15-18 year olds) we have kids from the two public schools in some instances playing against others that they play with in the school year. They are having a lot of fun."

Recreation leagues in many sports across the nation are having to withstand assaults, such as mentioned above, but that does not make the pill easier to swallow. Parents, quite simply, need to allow their children a chance to play and improve without embarrassing them in any manner. The only actions parents should indulge in is to smile, mutter an OK or yeah, or moan, depending on the action on the field. Occasional applause is also appreciated for your own child's team.

Kids learn every day, in ways that parents don't always understand. But it is some parents who need to GROW UP! Registration dates and times are announced and it is the responsibility of the parents to respect those times and dates. If you expect to be the exception, you may be disappointed. Likewise, game times and dates are scheduled far enough in advance for parents

to make the decision as to whether their child can or cannot play.

Even more mature are the parents that volunteer to help in any way they can – not the screamers with no solutions except those that benefit their own kids – but ones that actually do what they can in a positive way.

The season ends July 2 with a Regional Pee Wee Reese tournament here, from July 8-12; and a Regional World Series here from July 22-26.