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THE











Dear Family,

Something happened to me this month that brought to mind a line from an otherwise forgettable 1987 *MacGyver* episode. After dragging his reluctant friend Pete Thornton on a ski trip, the day ends with MacGyver nearly dying in an avalanche. This prompts Pete to ask him, "Are you willing to admit now that skiing is dangerous?"

"Skiing's fun," MacGyver replies. "Avalanches are dangerous."

It's a clever response that has the distinction of being simultaneously true and nonsensical. I'll get to what triggered the memory later. (Because if I lead with that story, it will fill the whole letter, and I do not wish to deprive you of other vitally important news.)

I played a number of sports in high school—none of them particularly well. But the one I worked hardest at (and ultimately became most proficient at) was tennis. I went to tennis camps in the summer and spent countless hours banging balls against our garage door year-round, in all sorts of weather. I was never great, but I was competent, and I liked it. Unfortunately for me, Moorestown High School in the late 1980s was home to some of the best tennis players in New Jersey, and I never came close to making varsity.

Which is why I was more than a little jealous of Sophie this month when she was able to trade her *Sister Act* nun's habit (see <u>last month's letter</u>) for a tennis racket she hadn't swung in years and walk right onto





Sophie: Serving, and all smiles after losing 6-0, 6-0

Northwood's varsity tennis team. Not just onto the team, but playing *singles*! (I never rose higher than second doubles on Moorestown's J.V. ladder.)

Before we get too carried away here, I don't think Sophie's actually won any matches for Northwood. In the one match I was able to watch, Sophie lost 6-0, 6-0 to a girl from Bethesda-Chevy Chase H.S.—a school in a wealthier part of the county where the girls all have multiple rackets, actual tennis shoes, and matching uniforms (tops and skirts—our girls just wear matching t-shirts). I was focused on Sophie's match, but it looked like all four Northwood singles girls fell 6-0, 6-0 to their B-CC counterparts. (Sizing them up from the other side of the fence, I think I could easily beat the girls playing third and fourth singles for B-CC. But their top two players looked like they could give me some trouble...probably.)

I believe Sophie, who turned 17 this month, is currently planning to attend two proms with nice boys who are appropriately deferential to me. The prom dress that she ordered on Amazon arrived from China a couple of weeks ago. It set us back all of 42 bucks, including shipping. I can't imagine there's ever been a better time to be alive.

There came a point this month when it appeared that Sophie might collapse under the load of her various academic and other commitments. Crystal suggested she take a couple of days off from early-morning seminary to catch up on sleep. (This was interesting counsel coming from the seminary teacher.) But Sophie, who hasn't missed a class all year, protested, claiming, "But seminary is the best part of my day." And so she soldiers on. I don't think it's possible for a person to be grittier or more determined than Sophie is. Or it could just be that I'm incredibly lazy and Sophie's average efforts appear Herculean to me in comparison to my own. It's really impossible to say.

I can see why she enjoys seminary, though. Crystal is better than most when it comes to breaking down a text and leading a discussion about what to make of it. The class is just about through the Doctrine & Covenants, including most of the interesting sections near the end. I'd forgotten all about Section 129, which helpfully explains how to determine whether a person claiming to be a heavenly messenger is who he purports to be. (In case you've forgotten: Ask him to shake hands.) I seem to recall learning this in Sunday School as a kid and thinking at the time that it was a



Left: Lucy and jellyfish.

Below: Lucy and her teacher's dog,
Asher.



Sophie and Grace on Easter morning

very important piece of information to have. I have not had any use for it to date. But perhaps someday.

Speaking of people who work harder than I do, Hannah recently picked up a new job as a research assistant for one of her professors. She juggles this with her hours at the nursing home and her full academic load. I don't know how she keeps so many balls in the air, but I guess this is what women have been doing forever.

Lucy, now 8 weeks into her 10-week PAWS program in Baltimore, was unable to join the rest of us on our spring break camping trip to Lake Anna. We had fun. I was going with our ward's Scout troop anyway, and the Scoutmaster didn't object to my bringing Crystal, Sophie, Grace, and Ceres along. The boys didn't seem to mind having a couple of teenage girls (and their mom) in the campsite next door, and they loved having the dog around.

The lake was still fairly chilly, though not bad for April. Crystal and I brought our wetsuits so we could do some open-water swimming together. But I was limited by my sprained shoulder—a lingering aftereffect of my encounter with a hit-and-run driver on April 4th.

I was riding my bike to work on the southbound side of 16th Street NW, just south of Blair Circle, perhaps 100 meters inside the DC line, when a small, red SUV with Maryland license plates sideswiped me—knocking me to the ground—and continued driving southbound down 16th.

Before I even had a chance to stand up and get my bearings, I was surrounded by two women who seemed to appear out of nowhere. One had already dialed 911 while the other helped me get up and move my bike out of the street. We were joined a short time later by a third woman who had caught up with the offending vehicle at the next red light. She asked the driver whether she knew that she had just struck a cyclist. The driver reportedly replied that she was aware of having hit me, but that I had cut her off. [I did not cut her off—I was simply occupying the lane. There's a longer version of this story that I'll tell you sometime, if you're interested, that could explain why the driver may have felt like I had cut her off. The lane tapers in an odd way right where she hit me. But at any rate, nothing I could have done would have justified her leaving the scene.] The light turned green, and the driver left. But not before the third woman got her license plate number.





Top: Sophie's \$42 prom dress (black jacket not included)

Bottom: My Number-one girl!

The first woman handed me her phone with 911 on the line. I explained what had happened and relayed the plate number from the third woman.

The first emergency vehicle on the scene was a large DC firetruck. Three firemen/EMTs examined me and took my vitals. They offered to take me to the hospital, but I told them I didn't think that was necessary. Nothing felt broken, and apart from some really bad road rash on my right palm, left elbow/forearm, and left hip, and a couple of gnarly contusions on my shins, I mostly felt okay. And so the firemen left and the police arrived.

I gave the police officer my version of the story, assured her that I could get home okay, emailed several work colleagues to tell them I wasn't going to make it in, (garnered a truckload of sympathy from the office), and started pedaling home up Colesville Road.



Crystal (second from left) and the championship squad

(Miraculously, apart from some minor cosmetic damage, my bike seemed to come through it okay. The car struck *me*—my left shoulder and torso—rather than my bike. Which is good, since bikes don't heal themselves.)

It was only while riding that I noticed how bad the road rash was. I concluded there was no way I was going to tend to it properly myself, and so I rode to the urgent care clinic at University and Colesville. They patched me up, gave me a tetanus shot and a big bag of replacement bandages, ointment, etc., and I rode the rest of the way home. My shoulder was still bothering me a couple of weeks later, and so I went to an orthopedist. He diagnosed a sprain, prescribed physical therapy, and told me I could swim if I felt able to. I've started swimming again, but I'm now even slower than usual, and it doesn't feel great. It'll get better eventually. I hope.

DC's Metropolitan Police Department has been in touch with me a couple of times since the incident. Hit-and-run is a felony in the District—the driver could go to jail. But they'll have to find her first. They've sent a letter to the vehicle owner, but the owner has not yet responded. MPD told me on Friday that they will send a "more threatening" letter after 30 days. I don't know what will happen if she ignores that one. I guess we'll find out. Stay tuned.

So I was hit on a Thursday. I stayed home on Friday. But on Monday I was biking into the office again—along the same route. When people ask why I persist in this practice that seems dangerous to them, I channel my inner MacGyver and reply, "Road cycling is fun. Cars (and the idiots who operate them) are dangerous."

I think about it this way: I ride my bike most days and been hit by cars while doing so three times in three years. Two of those times, I suffered no injuries at all. And the injuries I suffered this most recent time turned out to be fairly minor. I was literally able to ride my bike home from all three incidents.

Crashing and falling (with or without the aid of a car) is part of cycling. It happens to every rider and it usually hurts. And yet we continue to ride. How much pleasure and fulfillment must we be deriving from this activity that we are willing to subject ourselves continually to the risk of suffering pain? Jump on a *good* bike sometime and find out. Life is a sea of risks and trade-offs. This one's worth it.

If you don't believe me, ask Crystal, who also knows how to bike in traffic and what it feels like to crash. She also took a pretty strong elbow to the lip yesterday while her team of Silver Spring Stake ringers brought home the Washington DC Stake women's basketball championship. She gets more bumps and bruises from basketball than she does from cycling, but I don't think she has any intention of quitting either thing. Ain't mortality grand?

Love, Tim, et al