

# THE FAMLET MONTHLY



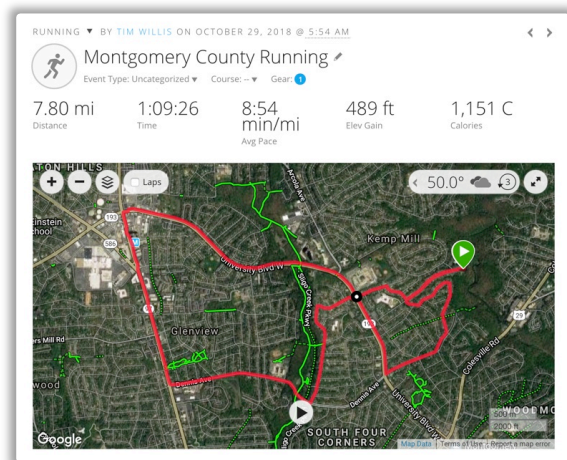
## Dear Family,

While driving Lucy to therapy last week, we drove past a large, flatbed tow truck on Georgia Avenue carrying what remained of a BMW X3 that appeared to have been violently rear-ended. Judging by its condition, the X3 couldn't have been heading anywhere other than the junkyard.

Whenever I see a totaled car, I can't help but speculate about what might have happened. My first thought in this instance was that the driver must have stopped to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk, and this unprecedented act of statutory compliance took the driver behind him completely by surprise.

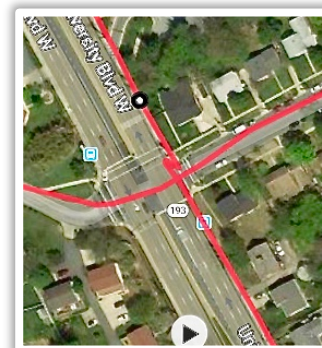
I spent a disproportionate amount of [last month's letter](#) recounting the perils of urban (and suburban) cycling. In the four weeks since that letter, I am happy to report that I have logged 334.7 miles of such riding without incident. I have been less fortunate as a pedestrian, however, having been struck by two cars (in the crosswalk) during that span.

Both incidents happened during morning runs. The first was at an intersection where I had both the green light and the little white man in the crosswalk signal. Admittedly, I seldom look both ways when crossing in this situation. (I should say I didn't used to—I do now.) The car that hit me was turning right on red. Like approximately 99.99999 percent of drivers (everyone except Sophie), the driver did this without stopping first. I surmise that the driver approached the



Above: The morning run during which I was hit (the first time). I was hit at the intersection where the red line crosses itself.

Below: Close-up of the intersection. You can see where I got shoved by a car from the crosswalk crossing Caddington around to the crosswalk crossing University.



intersection, looked left to ensure no *cars* were coming and then rolled through without checking for pedestrians entering the crosswalk from the right. The car pushed me around the corner—essentially from the crosswalk crossing Caddington Avenue all the way into the crosswalk crossing University Blvd. (You can actually see this on the map Garmin drew of my run—I’ll include a picture.) I don’t think the driver saw me until I started shouting and pounding on the car. I suffered some minor abrasions but was not badly hurt.

The second incident occurred on Colesville Road where it intersects the Beltway (via an overpass). The ramps connecting the two roads all have crosswalks ostensibly to protect pedestrians on Colesville. These crosswalks are a waste of white paint and universally ignored, particularly by drivers exiting the Beltway onto Colesville.

My standard move as a pedestrian at *un-signal*ed crosswalks (particularly when I’m running and don’t want to break my stride) is to assert my right-of-way. I do this only after looking both ways and judging that the cross traffic has time and room to yield, but I don’t actually wait for cars to stop before I go. (This is where Mom will point out that such behavior is irrational and I won’t derive any particular satisfaction from having “I had the right-of-way, dammit!” carved on my gravestone. Perhaps. But unlike Mom, I don’t always behave rationally.)

The second driver differed from first in that she had the nerve to honk before running into me. (She managed to slow down considerably before reaching me and I was not injured.) In Maryland, you get two points on your license for running a red light and one point for failing to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. This seems exactly backwards to me. Going through a red light is only dangerous when there is cross traffic. (I’m not advocating for red light running, but if no one’s coming I don’t understand why anybody really cares.) In contrast, failing to yield to a pedestrian is dangerous *100 percent of the time!* And *honking* at a pedestrian in a crosswalk ought to be 6 points and an automatic license suspension. (A day in the pillory would also seem appropriate, but I guess we don’t do that anymore here in gone-soft America.)

Anyway, I subjected the second driver to more verbal abuse than she probably deserved. I imagine her version of this story involves a deranged man jumping in front of her car from out of nowhere and screaming

Sophie (right) as Cecily Cardew in *The Importance of Being Earnest*” -  
16 Nov 2018



Lucy mermaid-ing off Maui - 10 Nov 2018



Lucy with Grandma and Grandpa, Maui, 11 Nov 2018





at her, and the heroic evasive maneuvers she took to avoid killing him.

Sophie, who, unlike most motorists, actually knows how to drive, played the role of Cecily Cardew in her school's production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* last weekend. She was great. Watching her quarrel on stage with one of her real-life best friends (Elaina Giaudrone, who played a character who initially thought she was Sophie's character's romantic rival but turned out not to be—it's complicated) was fun. You would have enjoyed it. Here's what the play's two Cappies reviewers had to say:

Review 1: "The moments when [Elaina and Sophie] were onstage together were easily the most riveting of the play."

Review 2: "The scenes with these two women together were especially strong, and the chemistry between them really helped show their character development."

One critic also praised the sound crew for getting the cues exactly right on one of the other character's off-stage fake piano playing. That praise was somewhat misdirected since it was actually Sophie backstage playing a real piano in live time.

You can read the full Cappies reviews on the show [here](#). I enjoy them, even though it's dispiriting to read high school students who write better than I do.

Lucy and Crystal missed the play because they were in Maui with Grandma and Grandpa Kent. This was the now-traditional "graduation trip" that they have instituted with their grandchildren. (You may recall they took Hannah and Noah on a cruise four years ago after their respective graduations.) Lucy was concerned about how her mental health would handle such a trip and thought it might be best if her mother came along. At least that's the story we fed Grandma and Grandpa, who apparently bought it. If we'd been a little quicker on our feet, we might have tried explaining that Lucy's condition required *both* parents to come along. They seem to have had a very nice 10 days together, and those of us who were left behind are mostly happy for them. The time apart also reinforced my long-held hope—even though Crystal is 15 months older than I—that I go first if we don't die together. Perhaps this explains my cavalier attitude toward running in front of cars.

Grandpa, Lucy, and a new 8-string ukulele. Maui, 17 Nov 2018



Uncle Matt and Lucy prepare a rocket for launch, 23 Nov 2018



I made the bed exactly one time in Crystal's absence. (It was the day I changed the sheets.) Someday, someone may be able to persuade me that making the bed every day is not a complete waste of time. It hasn't happened yet.

The play—particularly the frequent and long rehearsals at the end—appears to have been taxing on Sophie, who is also juggling a demanding academic load. She is finding AP Calculus BC (i.e., the hard one) especially challenging. She managed an A in the first marking period but attributes that primarily to the generosity of her teacher. She's had some tutoring—most recently from Brother Higgins (a math Ph.D. in our ward, and husband of the sainted Sister Higgins, who as noted in previous letters, has been a godsend to Lucy on multiple occasions). But I think Sophie is still feeling overwhelmed. She and Crystal are meeting with the teacher and a guidance counselor this week to discuss options. She may opt for one of the easier calculus classes, which would be fine. We'll see.

Thanksgiving brought the usual mass of humanity to Grandma's house. Grant and Jen's family spent the holiday with her sister in Chicago, which made the place a little emptier. But the void they left was partially filled by cousins Mike and Nadia Willis and their family, back in the area following a one-year Army assignment in Brasilia.

On the day after Thanksgiving Matt revived a more than three-decade-old tradition of helping kids build and fire off model rockets. We launched more than a half-dozen of them several times each, often too high to see, and miraculously didn't lose a single one, which has to be some kind of record. I felt like a 14-year-old at Scout camp again (in a good way) and it's always fun to watch batons get passed to the next generation.

Then, yesterday, Crystal, the girls and I went to *Anastasia* at the Kennedy Center. The 4:1 female-to-male ratio of our group roughly approximated that of the Opera House overall. The girls loved the show, and I thought it was okay. Things about it annoyed me, but that's not unusual, and we had a nice time together.

Speaking of annoyances, Amazon announced this month that it will build a new headquarters in Arlington, where I currently work. I don't actually believe that Jeff Bezos is a James Bond supervillain, but if he turns out to be one, I can't say I'd be surprised. Traffic is already unbearably awful in Northern Virginia—my hope is that the new complex will have no parking and the purported 25,000 new jobs all come with bikes.

Hannah was sick on Thanksgiving and it sounds like she and JT spent most of the day at home (after she worked a shift at the nursing home in the morning). We hope she's feeling better and look forward to seeing both of them four weeks from today.

May you get everything you want for Christmas. Love, Tim



Anastasia at the Kennedy Center - 24 Nov 2018

