



Bladelike appendages grow from Lily's feet



Lily's penchant for figure skating has had physiological consequences, in the form of bladelike appendages sprouting from the bottom of her feet.

While handy on the ice, they are wreaking havoc on the hardwood floors.

"We need to have them redone anyway," Carol rationalized.

Lily, a third grader at Lowry Elementary, skates whenever possible, going as far as trucking down to the Edge of the Universe Ice Arena, 18 miles across town, with her coach and mentor Lezlea Miller Zessin at 6:45 a.m. most Saturdays.

She is, per her father, able

Oscar's Hobbesian existence continues



Like an Amundsen sled dog fated for slaughter by design, Oscar grinds through another day of his hellish life.

to execute a variety of moves, including a "swan thing," a "spin-ster," and what he believes to be a sow-cow.

Lily otherwise enjoys school and is, just for fun, starting piano lessons, another grinding endeavor demanding superhuman discipline and the patience of Job.

Jimmy Buffet sues Lily for copyright infringement



Beacon cuts staff

Facing continued revenue pressure amid the rise of iPad-based competition, Beacon Media announced in December the paring back of certain copyediting and design staff. Spokeswoman Maya Neff assured investors that the Christmas deadline would hold.

"Quality is our number-one priority," Neff said, "and it will in absolutely no way be compr

CAROL NOW A 'SKATING MOM'

Carol has added 'skating mom' to her list of professional and personal distinctions. Her skating mom-hood, while formally established through her Alpine Skating Club membership, was de facto sealed by her Butter Braid sales efforts (on behalf of Lily) and her support of the Big Bear Ice Arena Holiday Exhibition.

Strangely, most 'skating moms' don't actually skate.

"Why is that?" Carol asked.

When not skating-momming, Carol enjoys, Pilates, yoga, and has taken up beading – going so far as to subscribe to *Bead Style* magazine, in which one can learn "50+ Ways to Cure Your Beader's Block."



Carol, with skating, non-skating progeny.

Housing slump triggers spontaneous beach buy

Shrugging off global-warming concerns, the Neff girls continued to bottom-fish a soft south-Texas real estate market, buying what they described as "a beachfront castle" on South Padre Island.



Pumpkin-littering suspects caught



Police in Longmont, Colo. have released a photo of suspects in a curious case of pumpkin littering on otherwise pristine cropland.

Pumpkin-strewers captured on hidden camera

Maya pulls out of Montessori, ending campaign

Maya's multi-year Montessori campaign wrapped up in 2011.

"Mission accomplished," she said, as she cut out hearts with construction paper and, using corrugated boxes and prodigious amounts of Scotch tape and yarn, proceeded to turn the basement into a Green Zone-like labyrinth.

Maya's departure coincided with the shuttering of the school itself, which without Maya, risked devolving into sectarian chaos. Maya started kindergarten at Lowry Elementary in August, where she and her sister have forged a power-sharing agreement.

Maya started playing soccer in the spring, with a team named The Mighty Dolphins by

popular referendum (though observers noted some polling irregularities). Her father coaches the squad. While Maya lacks Todd's bizarre enthusiasm for the game, she shows some aptitude for soccer and is a



Maya performs her trademark "towel on clothesline" maneuver. serious fan of postgame snacks and playground-with-teammates time.

Maya began gymnastics in the fall, where she hopes to leverage newfound monkeybarring prowess into Olympic gold. Her exceptional height and unexceptional weight work against this ambition, but her parents remain supportive and Gymnastic Plus offers free Wi-Fi.

Just Do the Front Range Diet™



Maya, paying homage to Cyndi Lauper

Mighty Dolphins Lead League in GAA



The Mighty Dolpins execute their trademark *goalenaccio* move

Maya's Mighty Dolphins soccer team led the U6 Girls fall league in goals-against average for the second-straight season, thanks to their trademark *goalenaccio* maneuver.

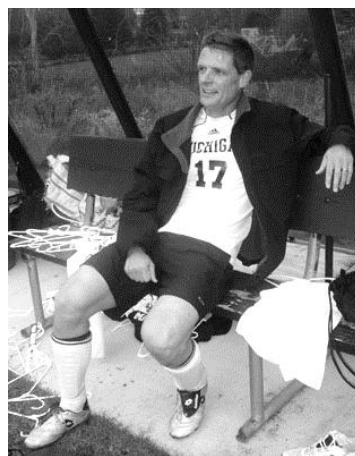
The team's record of zero goals against was offset somewhat by their scoring of zero goals, yielding a record of 0-0-6 for the season.

Todd too old for this

Todd's return to division-one college soccer for the 2011 Michigan Alumni Game left him feeling, as he put it, "old."

He found parallels with over-30 coed indoor limited to the roundness of the ball and the players' general bipedalism.

He is happy to report he breezed through 2011's relentless sequence of Bladium indoor seasons with only an epic bout of plantar fasciitis.



Todd, post not-so-triumphant return

His book, "From Jars to the Stars," was well received, with Booklist's reviewer noting its elegant use of the term "biaxial pointing control."

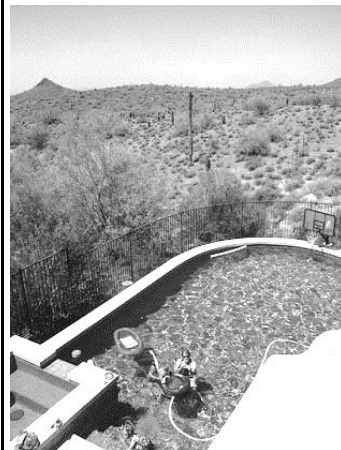
Todd's inaugural coaching experience, of five-year-old girls running amok on a miniature soccer field, he found thrilling, and he has signed up for more. His favorite practice was in a cold, driving rain, the girls playing hard as their parents shivered on the sidelines. Next up: slide tackling.



Man-eating mutt marks his quarry

TRAVEL REPORT

Trips to visit the girls' respective grandparents dominated the Neff 2011 travel agenda. In March, they beached on South Padre Island with the Eirichs, going so far as to contract a professional sandcastle builder. She taught them the great secret of world-class sandcastle construction: the availability of copious volumes of sand.



Girls discover, swim in mysterious desert water hole

In August, the Neffs met their new cousin Jacob on a joint Ohio-Michigan trip, and attended the Detroit Tigers game during which Jim Thome hit his 600th home run, which the girls missed because they were fighting over the kettle corn.

In November, they visited Fountain Hills, Ariz., for a memorable Neff family Thanksgiving.



**REMEMBER
THE NEEDIEST!**