



Lily hypnotized by small fish



A diminutive fish netted during a South Padre Island dolphin watch/“eco tour” took the opportunity to hypnotize Lily. When she came to, Lily said she heard a voice in her head repeating the words, “Throw the fish overboard.”

Lily’s life remains centered around skating, which, counting bladed training and off-ice workouts, she does 19 times a week. Her distractions include school (fourth grade, to and from which she lugs a backpack heavy enough to stagger a burro) and piano, which her tiger-mom father nags her about constantly.

An avid reader, Lily’s literary tastes range widely, from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone to Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. When she finishes book seven, she moves

Oscar dubious of new look



While Oscar was thankful for the protection from harmful ultraviolet rays his new look afforded, he had his doubts that it reflected his inner complexity.

on to something entirely different, which is another reread of book one.



Lily’s artistic interpretation of how much skating costs

Girls, pals banished to asteroid



Frazzled parents exploited NASA’s new direction in human spaceflight; pickup scheduled for 2024.

Beacon redesigned

The refreshed Beacon combines an emphasis on curvilinear elements, splashy color and long-form narrative.

CAROL DIVERSIFIES HOBBY BASE

With Maya’s reentry into the world of figure skating, Carol has added skate-tying back to her long list of hobbies.

“It was a stroke of luck,” Carol said. “With Lily tying her own skates now, I was down to beading and playing the occasional game of Dragon Story on the iPad as far as acts of leisure.”

Carol continues to enjoy her work in SAP at Johns Manville, from where she sends Todd a daily email titled “Schedule” to clarify which child must be ferried to what destination on a particular afternoon.

“The daily husband email is specified in chapter 11, section 14 in the Skating Mom Bylaws,” she clarified.



Carol has a new-old hobby.

Box-house bigger than house-house

Lily and Maya built and decorated a structure that somehow exceeded the square footage of the Denver home in whose basement they constructed it.

Their father blamed this flouting of physical law on the Higgs Boson.



Great ‘Salt’ Lake surprises family



Abundance of flies, pungence of brine shrimp marred beach experience.

“This is the place – for our beach vacation!” Todd declared. But the beach and swimming quality of their central-Utah destination disappointed.

“Where is the jet-ski rental?” he wondered, as he searched for a piña colada cabana.

Maya back on ice

In keeping with family tradition, Maya decided to advertise a passion through a facial tattoo.

"It's a dolphin, for the Mighty Dolphins," she said, referring to her U7 girls soccer team.

A first grader at Lowry Elementary, Maya has returned to the figure-skating fold despite her parents' uncertainty as to the rigorous sport's fit with her somewhat unfocused demeanor.

Seeking to ease Maya back into skating after a long hiatus, her coach devised a routine in which the base of her blades never actually touched the ice.



Maya knee-skates.

"It's called knee-skating, Maya," Miss Jill explained to the skeptical child.

Her father's frostbite concerns were tempered by the prospect of skate-sharpening savings.

The Front Range Diet™ is Groovy

Poor taste in men foreshadowed



Maya, cetacean facial tattoo.

Hunger Gamers dismissive of girls' arsenal



Maya and Lily's found-stick, duct-tape-and-rope bows and arrows struck little fear in the hearts of Hunger Games tributes.

"They shoot like, what, three feet?" asked Cato, as he considered the business end of his razor-tipped spear.

Katniss shook her head. "These two make Primrose look like Brian Urlacher."

Todd unencumbered

Todd's life as a Kerouac-style wanderer continued unabated in 2012.

"Just me and the open road," Todd said from the minivan's driver's seat en route to Big Bear Ice Arena 1.2 miles from home.

His collection of soccer injuries has slowed with his pace on the ball. With only a stingy case of plantar fasciitis, a quirky lower back and various bumps and bruises, it's been a healthy year.



Having bought used road and mountain bikes, he has taken up road and mountain biking, in no small part as a soccer exit strategy.



Todd risks his neck in Fruita, Colo.

He did a TEDx talk in June and continues to freelance while working on a memoir juxtaposing world-traveler freedom (1998) with child-driven servitude (2008) wrapped around an improbable, multi-continent story of courtship.

It will be slightly less technical than his first book, which despite all the space-mission mumbo-jumbo won the 2012 Colorado Book Award for history.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!

TRAVEL REPORT

The highlights of the Neffs' 2012 travels featured visits from those faraway. Foremost was the arrival by the Pflanzes of Paris, who spent a good portion of July in the Mountain West. The Neffs and Pflanzes joined forces on a minivan-assisted secret mission for the French Resistance. Todd's 1985-1986 host brother Frederic, being German, was somewhat conflicted about the whole thing.



Neffs, Pflanzes at an undisclosed location on their secret Western mission.

During their Vail Invitational (skating) weekend in July, the Raleys of CT and the nomadic Elk family caravanned in for a day of mid-mountain entertainment.

The Neffs spent a warm spring week on South Padre Island together with Carol's folks and the girls' Auntie Kathleen, and a fine Thanksgiving long weekend with the Neff clan in Fountain Hills, Ariz., as well. Todd flew to Las Vegas and back during a single day to catch up with his old friend Lou Mercorelli. With expired passports finally renewed, who knows what 2013 may hold?

