

# What a Ride Home!

By Tom McSheehy

Riding my bike home from school on a beautiful fall day seemed like a good idea at the time. The sun was shining brightly, and the trees were vibrant with color. I love riding my bike with the wind gently blowing, and gliding down the street made me imagine I was flying.

But on this particular Friday afternoon, the warmth of the sun, the gentle breeze, and the spectacular colors put me into a dreamlike state. I was out of school for the weekend and pedaling mindlessly down a usually very quiet street. In the distance, Lake Monona sparkled in the sun. I knew the route and remembered I'd be making a sharp right soon onto a busy street, but the sights and the smooth ride were hypnotizing. I breathed deeply. Life was good!

Then, somehow, I sensed something coming at me from the right. I glanced quickly to spot a large dog with a very mean expression on his face running right at me. I pedaled faster. My heart was racing, and I was beginning to sweat. I had been attacked by a dog when I was younger, and the thought of being bitten again really scared me. As fast as I was pedaling, the dog was gaining on me, getting closer and closer. Suddenly he lunged at my foot. I lifted my feet and held them high above the pedals. Looking ahead, I saw the right turn approaching fast, and I knew that if I followed the road, I'd smack into the dog.

Picture it—me gliding on with my legs up in the air, stretched out like the wings of a bird, the street curving sharply to the right, the dog still lunging at me from the right. If I didn't turn soon, I was going to run head-on into the curb. I didn't know what to do . . . and then the time for deciding was over. Wham! I hit the curb and flew over the handlebars, bracing my fall to the concrete sidewalk with my hands. My wrists bend backward at impact, and I lay on the ground, disoriented and confused. Suddenly I came to my senses and scrambled to my feet, expecting to face a ferocious dog. But as I looked around, I saw the dog running toward a house across the street.

My hands and knees were scraped and bloody, but otherwise I felt okay, so I pedaled home. In the middle of the night, though, the pain in my left wrist woke me up. I woke up my parents, and my dad drove me to the hospital. After my wrist was x-rayed, the doctor reported that I had broken a small bone. Small or not, it was going to take a long time to heal. I'd have to be in a cast for three months and not be able to lift anything for another three. That meant no sports for 6 months! Tough news.

The next day, Dad drove me to the house where the dog had retreated. A woman came to the door, and after I told her the story of what her dog had done, and showed her what had happened to my wrist, she calmly said, "Fluffy? Fluffy wouldn't hurt anyone. He is a very nice dog." She closed the door, and that was that. My dad put his hand on my shoulder, and we walked back to the car.