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**MY RED HAT KEEPS  
ME ON THE GROUND**

**By  
B. W. Kelly**

Magic, & Miracles, and Goodness

# My Red Hat Keeps Me On The Ground!

**The exciting adventure of two kids who got a lot of help  
from a magical Red Hat**

This is possibly a true and possibly a not true story of a young boy with a younger brother who worshipped him. The older brother was given a magical Red Hat, which in many ways is the essence of this story. Was the hat magical or were the things the Red Hat seemed to be able to do that are explainable in the natural world.

This story is written as if it is true but only parts are true. The other parts may also be true if you believe in magic. This book takes the young reader along with the older reader on a journey that is orchestrated by a magical Red Hat that has as much good Karma as the best of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism. And Taoism.

It is as tasteful as well flavored Chinese food. Just kidding! Even if you do not believe in Karma you will love this story. It's like as if Santa is running around disguised as a Red Hat, whose mission it is to help every child be a better child and a good swimmer to boot.

Not all stories – even stories including Karma and Santa end well. This incredible story will not disappoint any reader once you learn about this family and their wonderful neighbor and a Red Hat that if given the chance would be willing to save the entire planet. The ending is outstanding.

Even if you do not believe that this story might possibly be true, it still makes a great story—even a great Christmas story if you buy the book at that time of year. Since for some it may be true, it makes it even more special, especially for me. My family is highlighted in this fine uplifting story. Thank you for reading it. Enjoy! Merry Christmas!

**B R I A N W . K E L L Y**

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Author: Brian W. Kelly

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# If all of this happened at Christmas



My name is:

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# Dedication

**Special Thanks Are Extended:**

*To My Brothers*

*And Sisters,*

*Ed, Nancy Flannery, Katie-K Daniels & Cornelius-C*

*Plus*

*My Children, Brian, Michael & Katie*

*Plus*

*My best buddies Dennis Grimes and Gerry Rodski.*

*You all have been bugging me for years to write a book such as  
this.*

*Thank you all for being so kind!*

*A special dedication to Wiley Ky Eyeley!*





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# Chapter 1 The People in this Story



The picture above shows where our family lived—47 Perfect Street. Forty-Nine was the left half of the white double block and Forty-Seven (Our Home) was on the right.

In this picture, the house was dressed for Halloween.

The English Tudor home on the right side is where the Bees and the Pavlovs lived. The Bees moved in right next door to us on the left side at 45 Perfect St. and the Pavlovs lived at 43 Perfect Street.

I'm telling everybody who reads this the big story about Darragh (means Oak in Gaelic) Petru. He is the

major character. He is also my older brother and he is a world star and a hero as far as I am concerned.

Besides mom and dad, he is the nicest person in my life—who has ever lived.

I am Liam Petru, the fourth child of Brunic and Petrinka Petru of Perfect Street in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

I was born on May 10, 2026. I am about 3 and a  $\frac{1}{4}$  years younger than Darragh.

I have the distinct pleasure of telling this phenomenally incredible story about my older brother Darragh.

The facts in this story come mostly from Darragh himself. Some come from my mom Petrinka Petru, my dad. Brunic Petru, and my grandparents, Smoke Trosky. Skippo Trosky. Edward J. Petru, and Irene M. Petru.

I even add a few facts of my own as I also lived parts of this story but first of course, I had to be born.

I can't wait to tell you this story.

By the way, since all the bedrooms were taken when the Stork presented me to mom & dad, my crib was placed outside my brother Darragh's room in the upstairs hallway. He is a great brother.

I can recall for years thinking that I had the biggest and skinniest bedroom of all the Petru kids. Lots of people walked by my crib all the time. Most were headed to the bathroom.

Darragh Petru (pronounced DA-ROW) was born to Brunic and Petrinka Petru on February 18, 2023. It was a cold day in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Cold as it might have been, it was a warm day for Brunic and Petrinka and their twin children, my brother and sister, Cornelius-C, and Katie-K.

The twins had just turned three on January 21st of that year.

My dad, Brunic was a jokester. He chortled about having twins right after they were born.

He said that if the Petru's had the good fortune to have triplets, he would have named the third baby Jesus—pronounced Hey Zeus.

Mrs. Petru did not find the joke amusing at all. The Petrus were very religious and Mr. Petru, my dad, loved the idea of Jesus, Mary & Joseph being born in his family.

Since there was no Jesus born with the twins, dad agreed the names for the twins could be Katie-K, and Cornelius-C. I don't know why mom insisted on that dash but she did.

Life was good for the Petru family. Brunic had a great job as a band leader for the Brunon Kryger Orchestra in Wilkes-Barre. He had become an acclaimed musician and he commanded nice fees when he conducted or played.

The orchestra itself had several hit tunes. The Petru family actually could have afforded a nicer home with an inground pool in an exclusive area of Wilkes-Barre such as those by Passeri's Exclusive Ristorante.

However, Grandpop and Grandmom Petru lived right down the street. Additionally, when the Bees moved in next door, they became best friends with our family.

Besides, Mrs. Petru, my mom, did not want success to affect our lives negatively. For years, mom and dad rented our home.

Mom and dad put off buying the Perfect St. home for years. Instead we paid rent, not wanting to commit. They closed on the home right before the twins were born.

The plan at the time was to be there just a few years but it was lots longer. We stayed on Perfect Street for fourteen years after mom & dad were married.

Having twins put the Patrus way ahead in the family planning game. When my older brother, known for years as Little Darragh was delivered, he was healthy as a horse.



That's all that really mattered to the Petru's.

By the time Christmas, 2023 came around, Darragh was about nine-months old. Darragh Petru was zipping around his walker like it was a go-cart.

Mom and dad knew that he was so strong he could probably walk but he did not take a step by himself until the day he turned 1 year old on February 18, 2024.

The Petru's had to place foam padding on all the corners of all the furniture so when that little savage Darragh was off on a good walk / run around the house, he would have a tough time hurting himself.

Brunic's dad Edward J. Petru lived just down the street at 18 Perfect Street. My grandmom Irene and my dad's older brother Ed Jr. also lived there.

Dad's mom (my grandmom) who grandpop called Biddie loved coming up to visit the three Petru babies. She liked me too.

Both she and Mrs. Skippo Troski, Petrinka's mom, always loved babysitting the three tykes especially when Brunic and Petrinka would go out for pizza on Friday date nights.

I know from listening to my mother's secret conversations that I was not yet even in their thought process at this time.

Darragh occupied most of their time in the early days. He had his nights and days mixed up as I have been told. He did not like it at all when mom and dad were asleep.

Mr. Troski, who I eventually called Pop Trosk, never liked to use his real first name. He preferred the name *Smoke*. The kids called him GrandPa or Pop Trosk.

I always wondered whether he smoked a lot or he like smoked kielbasa, which he always served on the major holidays. Regardless, *the Smoke* liked me

During the spring of 2024, Brunic's friends Mike Kurman and Romanov Shed, an immigrant from Rozzev, installed a nice sized (18') round Muskin Pool in our back yard.

I have always lived in a home with a pool since I was born in 2026. They tell me that Little Darragh took to this pool like a "like a duck on a June bug."

After we lived on Perfect Street for a while Mr. Joseph Bee and Barbie Bee and their three kids moved in. Mr. Bee was a real character of a man. When he was formal, he called himself Joseph Bee.

To me, he was always Mr. Bee.

He was burly and strong but very kind. The Bee's first-born Son was David (Davey), and they had two

girls named Kimmathee Arthur (Kimmy) and Dawnwoo (Dinder).

Dinder was the same age as the Twins and Kimmathee was two years older than Dinder.

Kimmy was thus the Bee's oldest girl. Dinder and Kimmy were great athletes and they grew up to be "health nuts." They now jointly own and operate an exotic produce market and Vitamin Store in the Pocono Mountains of PA.

The Bee's older son named David (Davey) is about five years older than the twins. Davey is a great athlete even today but he retired from pro sports a while ago.

Davey can run and play ball like his athletic sisters. He played semi-pro basketball for many years for the Wilkes-Barre Barons.

Then, Davey became a very successful Blackjack dealer at the Moven Sun Casino in Charburg, a little town outside of Plains, PA.

Joseph, Barbie (aka Wheeze), Davey, Kimmy, and Dinder Bee have been best buddies with members of the Petru family for years with many more years to come.

Joseph Bee loved kids and whenever he had time, he was with several of the Bee Brood. He also took to the Petru clan like a well-loved uncle.

Mr. Bee liked many different types of nectars and he always had the finest. My dad said that sometimes Mr. Bee even made his own nectar.

Mr. Bee also loved to make different Fondues, especially cheese fondues. He baked bread which made the fondues even better. Mr. Bee was kind.

He often shared his nectar and Fondue with my great dad, Brunic Petru especially after the Saturday afternoon touch football games on Perfect Street.

With such nectar, the kids knew the adults at least would all remain quite healthy.

Life was good on Perfect Street for sure.

After Kurman & Shed installed the pool, it was a focal point for both families from then on. Of course that was from mid-May (OK—early June) through the first part of September.

When Darragh first spotted the new Muskin Pool when Dad opened it in late May 2024, he was in wonderment. Dad had it ready to go earlier but the water was too cold for anybody. Memorial Day was the day.

Yet, cold as it was, Darragh longed to get in the pool. I never had such longings for swimming as Darragh when I was growing up. All I wanted to do was play ball—basket, base, and foot (all balls).

Right after the pool opened, the three Bee kids came over to swim. Their pool which they brought when they moved in, was old and it had stopped holding water. Mr. Bee came too but had to leave for a bit.

The twins got to know the Bees first and they liked them all. Katie-K and Cornelius-C tell a story that they were in our pool with the Bee kids that first day. The twins could not swim.

So, they went down the ladder and were holding on to the seats on the side. The Bees could swim well for being younger kids. They assured Katie-K and Cornelius-C they would be OK in the pool.

I do not know where my mom and dad were when Cornelius-C and Katie-K went swimming this time because I don't think my parents would have let them in the pool without an adult.



## Chapter 2 The Red Hat Makes Its Appearance on the Scene

Some Dragnet music is appropriate folds—Dun Da Dun Dunt! Mr. Bee came back to the pool wearing his Red Hat.

The twins tell a story that Mr. Bee let them wear his Red Hat for about an hour each while he was teaching them how to swim. The three Bees encouraged the Twins to try it.

When Mr. Bee took his Red Hat back after a little over an hour each, Katie-K, and then Cornelius-C actually were able to stay afloat and swim a bit.

They kicked their way around the 18 foot pool without holding on to the side at all. They were immediate pros.

Several weeks later in late June 2024, Mr. Bee came over again wearing his Red Hat. Most of the time he wore the hat. He said he was going to give the Hat to little Darragh.



Mr. Bee was in a very good mood. He said he was going to teach Darragh how to swim and then give his Red Hat to Darragh. But he did not get to do it that day.

Everybody knew the hat was not new but it always looked like it had just come out of a new hat box.

Mr. Bee said that he had found the hat and he said everybody in his family wore the hat when they were learning how to swim.

He said sometimes he would let his kids wear the hat when they were trying to do something they never had done before.



Before he could give the hat to Darragh, he was called into work at the Park where he was the Park Captain. He had a problem to solve. Darragh would have to wait for his Red Hat and the swimming lesson.

All the Bee kids were older than the Petrus and they were all great swimmers. Before he left for work, Mr. Bee told my dad, Brunic, that Darragh would be able to keep the hat when he got back.

Darragh seemed to understand but other than being able to say “Mr. Bee,” he had no vocabulary. No “Da Da” or “Ma Ma” came from Darragh. He could say only “Missa Bee.”

Mr. Bee did not come right back and so it was a while before little Darragh saw the Red Hat again.

The Bee pool became completely unusable that year. There was no patching it. Mr. Bee had to dismantle it piece by piece. It took a long time.

When he had all the metal from the pool in one place, he sold it to Solomon’s Junk Yard a few blocks away.

With the money he got, he bought some nectar and he made a great Fondue for everybody to enjoy. Our families were celebrating together. Dad told him to use our pool whenever he wanted.

Mr. Bee became a regular in our pool for the rest of the summer. He was a wonderful man. His wife Barbie Bee was a wonderful lady.

She and my mom, Petrinka became best friends. There was often nectar, cold and gold, by the pool in the summer of 2024.

## **Evacuate the Pool!**

Darragh pressed the edges for mom. She wanted sometimes to not be checking diapers yet had to. When Darragh got into the pool with mom, he had a habit of doing his habit right out of the diaper and into the pool.

Mom would be holding him. While she was holding him he made his habit. Then we would all have to evacuate the pool for an hour. Mom got the strainer and another bottle of bleach before we could go back in.

Before such an excretory event, Darragh would always hold a little tighter onto my mom.

That would end the swimming but after an hour the rest of the kids and Mr. Bee were right back in the pool. Mom never let Little Darragh in the pool alone.

For a while that summer, it seemed that Mr. Bee had forgotten about promising Darragh the Red Hat. Katie-K and Cornelius-C thought he might have changed his mind.

My dad, Brunic, was often in band rehearsals trying to make the family funds much better. He had become sort of a music star but did not want to take out-of-town engagements which would separate the family.

Thankfully his recordings with Brunon Kryger were selling so well enough that we could keep living in our wonderful house on Perfect Street without much worry.

## **Darragh Gets His Red Hat!**

Before Darragh got his Red Hat that summer, one day, Mr. Bee was in the pool by himself. He was wearing his Red Hat so he did not get sunburned.

As Darragh tells the story today, nobody from either family seemed to be anyplace. No children or adults were in either of our adjoining back yards.

There seemed to be no noise in the neighborhood at all.

Suddenly, Mr. Bee heard a big splash from the high ground side of the pool. (The above ground pool was partially dug in so the high side and the seats were less than a foot above the earth.)

Darragh had somehow climbed up on the pool seat on that side undetected. He had his toy duck with him.

Mr. Bee saw little Darragh's yellow ducky on the seat of the pool right after hearing and seeing the splash. Mr. Bee was relieved when the water got still for his worst fear was not realized.

Out of nowhere, a little hand came out of the water and grabbed the seat of the pool. Immediately, little

Darragh pulled himself up just enough to get his nose out of the water.

He was OK, thank God. He started screaming for his ducky!

Mr. Bee took his Red Hat off and placed it on Darragh's head. He then gave Darragh his favorite ducky.

Mr. Bee could not believe that his Red Hat actually fit on Darragh's head. Wearing Mr. Bee's Red Hat, Darragh rose up in the water several inches above his belt line. He did not sink.

Mr. Bee was amazed. Darragh was so young.

Mr. Bee was very happy. He held little Darragh's hand and then picked him up with his huge muscular arms. He rested him on his chest, which served as a walking shelf for Little Darragh.

Darragh was OK. Thank God. He was wearing the Red Hat. How did that happened? Nobody knew. Darragh was fine.

Mr. Bee put Darragh on the deck and then went looking again for the ducky. Within a short while Darragh wanted to be put back into the water and Mr. Bee did exactly that.

Mr. Bee knew Darragh would be OK because he was still wearing the Red Hat. To be even more sure, he

reached onto the deck and put a tube on Darragh and he stayed right next to him.

Darragh was happy but not paying attention to holding onto the tube. He slipped out of the tube and went under.

When he came up, for a split second he seemed to be looking for the Red Hat. But, he had the hat on.

Mr. Bee scooped little Darragh out of the water and held him for a few minutes. Then, he put him back on the deck again. He did not want to take any chances with a one-year-old.

Out of nowhere, Mr. Bee again heard a giant splash again but there was nobody other than Darragh who could have made the splash.

In a few moments, unexpectedly he saw Little Darragh again about three inches higher than he should have been above the water line. You guessed it. He was wearing what had been Mr. Bee's Red Hat.

Darragh was fine and since nobody including the twins nor mom nor dad were at home, Mr. Bee decided to see what was what. He took Darragh into his arms and he tossed him gently about a foot into the air.

In a few seconds, Darragh's head was above the water line and he was trying to catch his breath. Mr. Bee did not see the Red Hat fall off but it had.

He then scooped the little guy up to find him trying to get more air.

Mr. Bee instinctively put the Red Hat on him and Darragh began to breathe normally. The Red Hat made a big difference. What if there was no Red Hat?

The almost final test before anybody else was home was to let Darragh jump in from the deck with the Red Hat on. Darragh made the jump and kept the hat on. He was fine.

The two stayed in the water for an hour in total swinning around, puttering with stuff, and playing with the ducky too. After that hour with the Red Hat, Mr. Bee figured Darragh could now swim.

Theoretically at least after an hour with the Red Hat, from Mr. Bee's experience, Little Darragh should now be able to swim.

Mr. Bee recalled that Davey, Kimmy, Dinder, Katie-K and Cornelius-C all had kept the Red Hat on for just over an hour before they no longer needed it.

Now, Darragh had it for over an hour and Mr. Bee learned that he too could now swim like a champ. Well, he could tread water at least.

FYI, I learned the formal definition of treading water: "Maintain an upright position in deep water by moving the feet with a walking movement and the hands with a downward circular motion."

I was the only one in the family who could not swim. But, then again, I was not born yet. Hah!

Darragh was about 1 ½ years old and could barely walk but he could now swim. Mr. Bee kept the Red Hat on him so nothing bad would possibly happen.

Just like all the Bee Kids, and the Twins, Mr. Bee knew that Darragh would be able to swim from then on, even without the Red Hat. But, he did not want to take any chances.

As soon as Mr. Bee set Darragh on the deck again, without his Red Hat on his head, Darragh jumped in the water unexpectedly. He went under but then he sprang right back up.

He started to move his arms and legs and he soon was in the middle of the pool. He was not sinking. He was “swimming.” Success!

Darragh instinctively knew how to tread water. He did not go down. He waddled back to the ladder where Mr. Bee had been and gave out a big yell: “Whee!” Darragh was now a swimmer.

Darragh and Mr. Bee spent the whole afternoon in the pool. By the time everybody came home, Darragh had learned the side stroke and the freestyle stroke and he was swimming like a one-and-a-half-year-old champ.

Darragh could swim without his Red Hat. Still, Mr. Bee let him keep the hat. That was the first time

Darragh, just a tyke at the time, had any clue about the magical properties of his Red Hat.

One thing for sure. Thanks to Mr. Bee, he did not ever need the Red Hat again to go swimming.



## Chapter 3 Darragh's Second Christmas



Petrinka Petru, my mom, had a great day shopping while Darragh was learning how to swim. She put her bags of stuff away and came out to the back pool where Darragh and Mr. Bee were drying off.

She took Darragh's Red Hat upstairs and put it in his dresser drawer and asked everybody to come in and have some Abe's Hot Dogs which she had just brought

home. I bet the dogs were great! The family did not see the Red Hat again for another four years,

Christmas that year was quite special as little Darragh was almost two years old and he had developed a great love of calculators, which he called “kuh-shah-shun.”

Dad put up the train again and Darragh and Katie-K were mesmerized as in the picture.

We had Dad’s old TI-99 computer with a voice synthesizer. Dad brought it out of the archives and he hooked it up to the big 128” thin screen TV in December so the Petru kids and the Bee kids could all enjoy it.

Darragh loved the math games more than anything else.

## **TI was once the in-home computer champ.**

A long time ago, TI made the neatest little computers for families. TI (Texas Instruments) parts are still on the inside of a lot of today’s technology. The company was not very good selling in retail stores however.

I read about them in an old book I found called Thank You IBM. My dad had it in his bookshelf. One day I found it. Dad read me some great stories about TI.

I learned that TI was one of the first companies to make digital watches in the 1970s. And we thought that Apple had done that.

He said they made neat stuff. But nothing was as interesting as the TI/99 4A home computer. In the early 1980's dad said you could buy one for just \$50.00 in Wilkes-Barre at a store known as Boscov's.

At the time, the TI/99 and the 4A version had been available from the late 1970's. For as good as the machines were, TI could not sell them.

When released in 1978, the TI 99 sold for \$1150.00. Later the 4A sold for \$525.00. That is still a lot of money.

It was called the TI/99-4A. Introduced as an enhanced version, this newer machine was more affordable. At \$50.00, they were literally a steal. That's how much TI wanted to get rid of its inventory.

The "99" and 4A used the same TI-developed speech synthesizer chip unit that would work with many of the TI/99 game cartridges.

## TI 99 4A Hunt the WUMPUS!



The cartridges were available for kids and adults back then. Does the term: "Hunt the Wumpus" ring a bell? It did then—said Dad. It was TI's big game for years, and it was a lot of fun for families to play together.

Of course, some of the game cartridges were not game cartridges at all. They were clever little programs which made kids think that learning was fun.

Darragh was one of those kids. With the TI, he thought learning was a lot of fun. His love of calculators from when he could barely speak carried right to the TI home computer.

My dad told me about how thrilled Darragh was with his second Christmas.

During the 2024 Christmas season, at almost 2 years old, Darragh had begun to speak much better than

just “Misser Bee.” and he had become a whiz with his calculator.

Darragh loved the calculator, which, before he had begun to speak properly, was his “kuh-shah-shun.”

That’s the phonetic spelling, of course. Eventually, he could say calculator, just like you and I, but mom and dad kept using “kuh-shah-shun.” because they thought it was so cute.

### **The TI/99 4A Speech Synthesizer was neat!**

Anyway. Darragh made much use of the family’s home computer complete with its speech synthesizer that Christmas. He even got mom and dad and the twins to Hunt the Wumpus with him.

He fell in love with it the unit. It was in the family room a few rooms away from the tree. Dad had a big LGB train running around the tree platform.

That was also neat and he said Darragh was just awe-struck. So was I the first Christmas that I recall.

Darragh had an excited look in his eyes the first time he saw the TI 99 running *Hunt the Wumpus*.

Before mom and dad knew it, he was sitting down in front of the biggest TV in the house, working one of the math cartridges for kids.

He had found it in the box, read the title and put it in the machine himself. Mom said he was smart like her and Dad said he was smart like him. Hah!

For some reason, Darragh selected the hard problems. They started off with the machine speaking: "Two plus four plus one equals." When it finished, it paused and in a deep, slow voice said, "Your turn!"

Darragh quickly "plugged-in" a "7" and the machine rewarded him with a series of happy sounding tunes and small happy fireworks images on the TV.

Then the machine said "Twelve plus seventeen plus nine equals." Again, the machine said, in that same deep voice: "Your turn!"

Darragh thought for a while and then as he plugged the number in, he heard a buzzing and a loud unhappy whirring sound and the screen was flashing rapidly.

The TI 99 went black and then started the problem problem again and this time whowed Darragh the answer... "38." Darragh had taken too long.

Darragh already knew the answer but was too late! He had not entered it in time. That would never happen again to my brother Darragh!

The 2 year old paused the machine and left the room. He came back in less than a minute with... you

guessed it, his “kuh-shah-shun.” The next time the machine said: “Thirteen plus fifteen plus seven,”

Darragh was plugging the numbers into the “kuh-shah-shun” as it spoke. When the machine said: “Your turn” He plugged in the value “35” right from the display on the “kuh-shah-shun.” He was never wrong again!

We all loved the TI home computer. It seemed like a toy but now I know that for its day, it was as much a computer as the big machines that business people worked with in their client offices.





## Chapter 4 The Red Hat Slept Next to Darragh's Bunk Bed



Darragh's bunk bed was right by his dresser. That Red Hat was most often in the third drawer. It was as if the Red Hat slept in the dresser drawer while Darragh slept in his bunk bed.

Darragh always knew the red hat was there though he did not see his mom store it there after that exciting day swimming with Mr. Bee.

Other than knowing about the Red Hat, until he was seven, when he got clothes out of the third drawer, he never saw the Red Hat. I stuck the hat on the bed just to remind us in the picture that the Red Hat was there.

Over the years that the Red Hat was in the third dresser drawer, sometimes at night, Darragh saw little sparkly things almost like Tinker Bell sparklies. They seemed to escape from the third dresser drawer.

They would form various shapes such as round balls and basketball nets and baseball bats and even choo-choo train engines. Darragh would look on in wonderment.

Funny as it may sound, the reason I say the Red Hat slept by Darragh is because my brother told me one day that he also heard some snoring coming out of that drawer. Who knows? That one is hard to believe!

Sometimes the sprinklies and sparklies would come right to Darragh's nose and up his nostrils and they would make his nose itch. Whenever Darragh felt this he would reach to rub or scratch his nose.

Then, it would all go away! All of a sudden the room would get dark with no sprinklies or sparklies. just like when he had gone to bed earlier in the night.

Darragh always wondered if it was a dream. When the itching stopped, he always knew he was awake. Sometimes when he would wake up, he had to go down the hall to the bathroom to make #1.

Then, for sure he knew he was awake.

My sister Katie-K, the twin, told me that there were times she heard what she thought was a small friction

toy in Darragh's room and then she would hear him quietly say, "Oh!"

Every now and then she heard him go to the bathroom and he was mumbling stuff underneath his breath like, *wow!*, *dream!*, etc.

Darragh didn't tell anybody about this until he told me the story.



## Chapter 5 The Bond Between Darragh and Liam



Darragh never had baby fat like all kids seem to have and which my dad Brunic says he still has. Darragh was solid as a rock. He could not figure it out at first.

He loved chocolate milk and ice cream, candy and cakes like everybody else, and he always ate as much as he could since he loved food.

Darragh had no idea where his muscles and his strength came from and he wondered why he was not chubby because of all he ate.

When I was born in Mercy Hospital on May 10, 2026, and I came home soon after, I was too young to

have an idea what was going on. I got to use Darragh's old crib.

As I told you already, there was no room in any room so they put the crib right outside his room in the hallway, That's partly why Darragh got to know me a lot sooner than I got to know him.

In the summer of 2026, Darragh still loved to swim. He was much more athletic than anybody his age. He was a kind brother to all of us.

He was smarter and much more powerful than our twins, the oldest of the kids. Darragh knew it but never let Katie-K and Cornelius-C know his abilities.

Darragh loved the twins to pieces. He also loved all the Bees and Mr. Bee. He had no idea why he had gotten so strong but later to me confessed that he thought it was the Red Hat.

It was as if he had picked up a part of the superman gene from the Red Hat.

I recall, as we both got older that we did a lot together. Eventually, I got the lower bunk in his room and we put the crib back into storage just in case.

Darragh taught me how to play ball and ride a bike and he told me lots about life.

Yet, all the while we were growing up right until he started to play T-Ball, he never brought out the Red

Hat from his dresser to help me swim. I never saw the Red Hat until 2030.

I still do not know why and the best thing he can tell me is that he wanted to see if he could help me swim without even needing the Red Hat.

Darragh was the best brother any young kid could ever have. He not only respected the power of the Red Hat, he also seemed to fear it because he was not sure whether it was a force for good or bad.

I loved the twins—Katie-K and Cornelius-C also, but they were mostly off into older kid stuff while Darragh always had time for me.

For a long time, my room had been the crib room or the hallway room and his room was the middle room right across the hall from my crib in the widest part of the hallway.

Sometime in 2028, mom told me that I would be moving into the lower bunk of Darragh's room and it would be our room. Mom had already asked Darragh and he was fine with it.

I moved to the bottom bunk. My clothes were already in another dresser in the room. When I went upstairs and my crib was not there the first time, I felt like I was getting older.

Darragh and I were now roommates in the big Petru house. The hallway room was no more.

Soon I would be big enough to play ball.

As soon as it got warm in 2029, Darragh took me out on the lawn to play catch.

We threw a whiffle ball around in the front yard and we played every day that it was nice throughout the summer.

In the beginning, I could not throw very far and I could not catch well. A few sessions of catch, and Darragh brought out the whiffle ball bat too. I hardly ever hit the ball.

Darragh was afraid of hurting me so he did not let me pitch the ball to him. We would be too close. He stood the length of the lawn away and he would throw the ball in the air and hit it with the bat all by himself.

He was very good at it. Boy, could he hit a ball.

He could hit that whiffle ball far and it would move fast. When it was not windy, the ball would fly over my head. He was good. I would get the ball and run it back to him. It kept me in good shape as a little tyke.

When it was my turn, he would gently pitch the ball to me and tell me when to swing. I stunk. One day he found a huge red whiffle bat for me to use so I too sometimes could hit the ball.





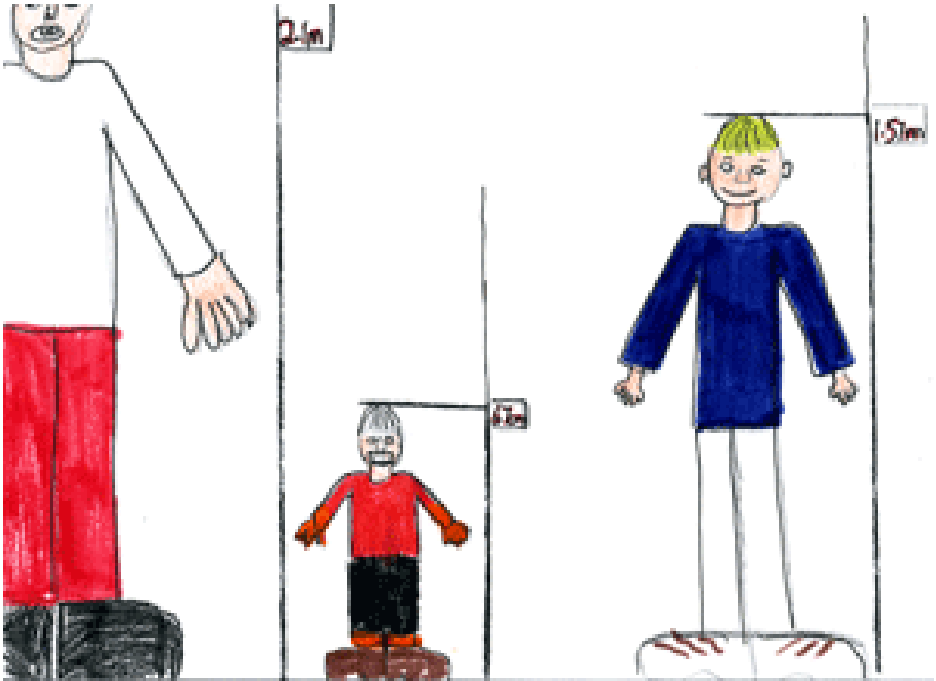
By the end of the summer, I could hit the ball most of the time but not too far. Darragh was still afraid to bat close to me so he did not let me pitch to him. Then came football season.

He and I would go out on the street and he would throw the football in a spiral the whole length of our house. I could throw the football only a few feet. It was so heavy.

Mom, dad, Katie-K, Cornelius-C, Darragh, myself and most of the Bee kids went to high school football games that fall. I really enjoyed watching those extra big guys play football in person instead of on TV.



# Chapter 6 The Bigger You Get, the Better You Play



## Play Ball!

In March 2030, just about four weeks after Darragh's birthday and about a month before T-ball tryouts began, Darragh and I began to play baseball again after the winter break. We were both bigger and stronger.

Every day when Darragh got home from school and I got home from pre-school, we would go over by the trestle to play ball. We played in between the big pylons.

Mostly we played whiffle ball in the beginning. It was great fun. The trestle had huge concrete pylons so no matter how bad we threw the ball or hit the ball, it would typically stay between these huge pylons and not go out on the street.



The bridge over the river had been blown up. The bridges on top of these pylons were removed at some time after this picture was taken and before we began to play here.

No trains went by as the track were gone. There was air not track above us. The trestle itself was originally right by the park where Darragh would play official T-ball The tracks and the trestle were gone.

When it hit 40 degrees in March 2030, Darragh said that was his signal to get out and play ball. I knew I was a little bigger and stronger than last year. Mom and dad granted both Darragh and I new permissions.

We were permitted to go the block and a half down the embankment to the trestle but we could not go alone. We had to go together.

I had no idea if I had improved in baseball or if Darragh had improved. We figured we should be better ballplayers than 2029. It did not take too long for us both to know for sure

Darragh figured a way in which he and I could play ball and there would be no danger. We would position ourselves between the two huge pylons that he picked out just off of Gordy Avenue by the Park.

He said the Wilkes-Barre City workers hired older kids every year to cut the grass so the whiffle balls, hard balls and soft balls and rubber balls would not get lost.

Darrah said: "It would be a perfect place for us to play ball." It sure was.

Darragh said "Liam you bat first. I'll pitch. Keep your eye on the ball." He gave me one of those yellow skinny bats to hit with.

So I picked up the yellow bat, not the big red bat. The picture below shows us sizing up the bat at home.



Darragh stood half-way between the pylons. He threw an underhand pitch that seemed very high. I kept my eye on the ball. It seemed forever then it got close. I was watching that ball as I swung.

I hit a fly ball over Darragh's head. We were both thrilled. I stood where Darragh had been so I was sure I could reach him when he batted.

I could actually throw a real pitch. Darragh thought he would put the ball up by himself and hit it but my pitch, though not very far, was almost perfect.

Darragh swung upward so he would not drill the ball at me. Without a wind, the whiffle ball traveled over the pylon behind me and over the pylon after that.

Since the grass had just been cut, we were able to find the whiffle ball and two other whiffle balls and a hard ball without the cover. Not a bad find!

Wow! We both had gotten older, bigger, and more powerful than we were in 2029. Wow!

Just in case, Darragh brought two baseball gloves and another old hardball without a cover that he had found the prior year.



Darragh told me he had found the black ball near the pylons last year. Dad said the two gloves, a dark leather one and a light leathery looking one were his as a kid.

Darragh said: "Let's play catch Liam." I said "Sure."





My brother started out by throwing underhand to me and he showed me in slow motion how to catch a hardball. The T-Ball league used hard balls that I think might have been softer than those used in Little league.

I threw the ball up a bit a few times to myself until I learned about how to work the baseball glove. It had a huge thumb and a web and four huge fingers.

When the ball and my fingers closed the glove. The ball wanted to stay there. That's how I learned to catch.

We were at it for a long time. About a half hour before it got dark, we had moved back to about where we were when we started with the whiffle balls. Darragh then showed me how to throw overhand.



I wasn't too accurate but most of the time I reached him. He was pleased and so was I. What a nice experience with a wonderful older brother.

Darragh asked me if it would be OK if he and I could stand by the inside of the first pylon. He wanted to take the hard ball and pretend he was pitching against a batter standing against the second Pylon.

He did not want to cut me off from the fun we were having. I said sure!

He had no idea how the ball would ricochet against the other pylon so he asked me to stand by him so I would not get hit.

I was not sure what was going to happen but Darragh seemed to think he would not only reach the other pylon with his long pitch but that he might actually throw it hard enough to come back to us.

It had been a while (Summer 2029) since we had played ball together and we were testing our new abilities now that we had both grown over many months.

We had the whole winter to grow more physically strong. I knew that I had gotten stronger but Darragh wanted or at least he felt he needed another test.

I told him that if the ball did not come back to us. I would fetch it so he could get ready to throw again. That afternoon we had just the one hardball with its bare threads.

The one we found was all wet and sloppy and as my dad liked to say, “It was not ready for prime time.” We planned to clean it and dry it at home and maybe put some white or black tape on it.

Darragh saw that I was next to him and he took the ball and threw a few softies to the other Pylon. I fetched them. It was actually exciting watching my older brother take on the other wall.

After we did that enough times, Darragh said that he was warmed up. I figured he knew what that meant but I certainly did not. He said this would be his first hard throw. He said it was his fast ball.

It looked like he had thrown the ball but I thought he had not released it until I heard a loud thud on the pylon wall. I then saw a black hardball rolling towards me. Wow! Darragh could really throw.

He threw about ten or twenty more balls like that each ripping off the wall.

The pounding by the wall created a bunch of loose strings on the old dry ball. The ball was not very pretty but it became uglier with strings all around it. It had gotten pretty stringy and shabby.

We did not take a photo. But, I do have a picture of a ball before it became a string ball. Boys would hit balls forever and the threads would break. Here is a ball about to become a string ball on the next page:



There is no mom or dad or tailor that I know who could ever sew up one of those hardballs once the cover started to rip off.

After playing so hard, it began to get a bit dark so neither of us could see the black string ball coming back. Darragh said it was too dangerous to keep playing and we needed to stop for the evening.

A hard ball could hurt a young kid bad.

Darragh did not often talk big kid talk to me but today he did. He said he loved the Red Hat and that he thought it was magic. He was a dreamer as I am. He said he really loved his Red Hat. He wasn't kidding!

## T-Ball Was the Game for Seven and Four Year Olds

In the summer of 2030, I was four years old and Darragh was seven. Darragh had begun playing T-Ball at the St. Trez League a few blocks from our house. I never missed one of his practices or a game. It was fun.



At the end of every day, after we had eaten and were tired, we went up to our room and eventually we went to sleep after “chewing the fat” for a while.

I found this picture of our cousin Mikey that we had from when we went to his house for a picnic. Mikey had a real Tee. Darragh loved whacking the ball off that Tee.

One day at practice before the season's games began I heard one of the other T-Ball coaches talking to Mr. Liddon and Mr. Bird, Darragh's coaches.

Ronny Liddon, the head coach's son played on the same T-Ball Team with Darragh as did Tony Weiss, a very handsome ball player, who was Ronnie's cousin.

Darragh's team was called Gerry's Pizza. Gerry always sponsored a bunch of other teams at St. Trez's.

This other coach whose name I still do not know told Mr. Liddon that all the T-Ball coaches were talking about how well Darragh did when he came to the field to show the T-Ball coaches what he could do.

Gerry's Pizza was very pleased that Darragh was playing on their team. Gerry himself did not care but the coaches loved having Darragh on the team. Gerry was just a kind guy who gave back all he could to the kids.

The other coach said that all the coaches had met to see if they could make an exception so that Darragh could play in the Minor League. They thought he was too "mature" for the T-Ball league.

They figured he would do well in a league where they actually pitched the ball. Sometimes they pitched by hand and sometimes they used pitching machines.

They asked the higher-ups in T-Ball and they ruled that Darragh could not play higher than T-Ball because of his age.

Each of the coaches had said Darragh was way good enough to play in the other league but rules are rules.

He might have been good enough to play in the actual Little League. Wow! I told my dad and mom but they said we would keep it to ourselves. So, I did.

## Chapter 7 The 2030 T-Ball Season



Even though T-Ball itself had been out for about forty years, league officials seem to have kept official adjustable T-Ball Tees under wraps. My cousin Tommy somehow had one but they were rare.

They were either unavailable or much more expensive than an ordinary baseball glove.

Therefore, even my older brother Darragh could not get one cheap even though he had saved his birthday money.

Baseball gloves and old balls were easy to come by but the Tees that were for sale at the stores were all

chinchy—looking like they were made for two-year old's. They were not cheap; they cost a million dollars.

## **The Tee in the Chapter Picture is first class**

So Darragh and I built our own Tee from a mostly split log in the back yard and we played there almost continually in between Darragh's practices and T-Ball games. Darragh never wore his Red Hat.

The Tee was too heavy to move so we played in the back yard. I hit a few good ones but mostly I had to chase the huge hits that Darragh drove out of our ninety foot stadium yard into the neighbor's yards.

Dad did not mind as long as we did not hit the tomato plants.

The neighbors all liked me so we were OK. Dad had put up the fences to keep the dogs in. Often the balls hit the fences but sometimes Darragh's whacks sailed right over.

Darragh's T-Ball coach, Mr. Liddon let me come to practice and sometimes I could sit in the dugout for games. With Darragh's training, I now could throw and catch as well as most boys and girls on Gerry's Pizza.

Mr. Liddon put Darragh first in the lineup. I heard him tell Mr. Bird one day that he wanted Darragh to bat as often as he could.



## The First Game Date Finally Came

Before we went to the park, I came back up after breakfast to our room. I was so surprised. He had his third dresser drawer open and he had the Red Hat on and he was looking into his mirror.

He had his T-ball uniform on but when I saw the reflection in the mirror it was as if he were wearing a Yankees uniform and he was all grown up, and he was talking to somebody.

When I shook my head, that image disappeared.

When I said, “Hey, Darragh, when we going to the game today,” the image in the mirror was Darragh’s, not a Yankee. He had on his Gerry’s Pizza uniform with its orange hat.

His dresser drawer was closed and he said he was ready to go to the game. So, we left.

The other team, the Nippers from Nanticoke batted first against Gerry’s Pizza. Darragh was standing behind a protective net where the pitcher in the Minor League or Little League would play.

I watched him closely. He was my brother and I wanted him to do well. I was bothered by what I had seen in our room. What’s with the Red Hat?

Once the game began, any ball that has hit in front of the pitcher’s protective net or to the side of the

net, Darragh would swoop up and throw a strike to the First Baseman. O-U-T!

He seemed to know from practice that if he threw too hard, the First Baseman might make an error so he had to throw at just the right speed.

All three balls that first inning were in front of the net. It was three-up, three down. In Tee Ball there is no pitcher but it seemed the “pitcher had gotten the sides out.”

Darragh threw the ball so nicely to First Base, that Tony Weiss, a very talented and especially handsome first baseman, had no problem catching the three perfect throws for outs. Yeah Tony!

Darragh was the first one up in the bottom of the first. He held the bat tightly like I knew he would and he made sure the stamp of the bat was up.

Then as he did with our makeshift Tee, he swung as hard as he could and hit a rocket that his coach called a “line drive.”

The ball hit in the middle of the outfield and bounced quickly right to the fence. Darragh was fast. He rounded the bases and scored the first run of the season for Gerry’s Pizza. Yeah Gerry’s. Gerry’s won the game 24 to 18.

The T-Ball team played ten games that year. In mid-June, there was one game left. My dad told us all

that he had retired from the band and had received a big payout. I was not sure what that meant.

Dad planned to treat us all by paying for a huge cross country US trip with a new van that he had just bought but had yet to pay for. He said with his bonus, both the van and the trip were paid for.

Dad figured he would work again but was in no hurry!

Mom had not yet gone back to work after having all the babies and all. So the family was free to go except for Darragh who was in the middle of his T-Ball season. Dad said it was up to Darragh if we went on the trip.

Darragh asked if it were OK that he stay behind with Mr. Bee since he was told he had made the All-Stars and their games were to begin in a few weeks. Darragh knew that Gerry's would be the champs.

Dad figured out how we all could go and Darragh would be back in time for the All-Stars. He asked Darragh what he thought.

Gerry's Pizza was 8-0 and would be 9-0, after that last Saturday game with Darragh playing by the mound.

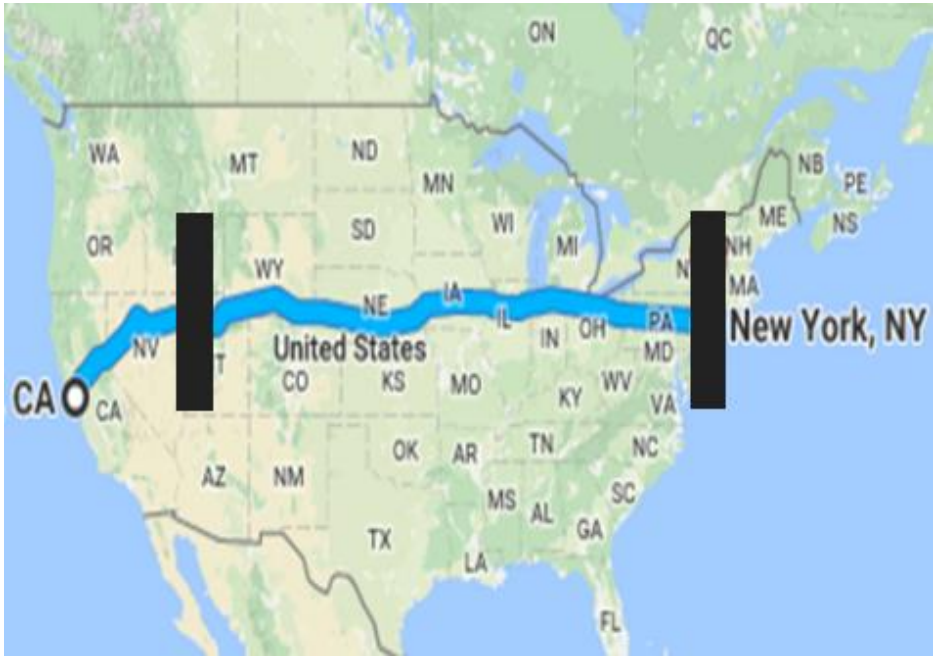
Right after the game dad asked if it would be OK if we were to leave for our cross-country van trip after the ninth game—hoping to reach the west coast—maybe.

Dad promised Darragh we would all be back for the All-Star game as scheduled.

Dad talked to all the coaches and they all knew Darragh would miss the last game with Gerry's Pizza.

But, he would be back for All-Stars. He got the OK and the coaches told Darragh to go on the trip but be back to play All-Stars. Darragh was a loyal team member and that was enough for him. It was OK!

## Chapter 8 Our Cross-Country Trip



### The Bees Agree to Watch the House.

Dad dropped the bomb on the Bees suddenly that we would be gone for two weeks or so. Mom gave Mrs. Bee the keys to the house. Our trip was from Wilkes-Barre, PA to Salt Lake City.

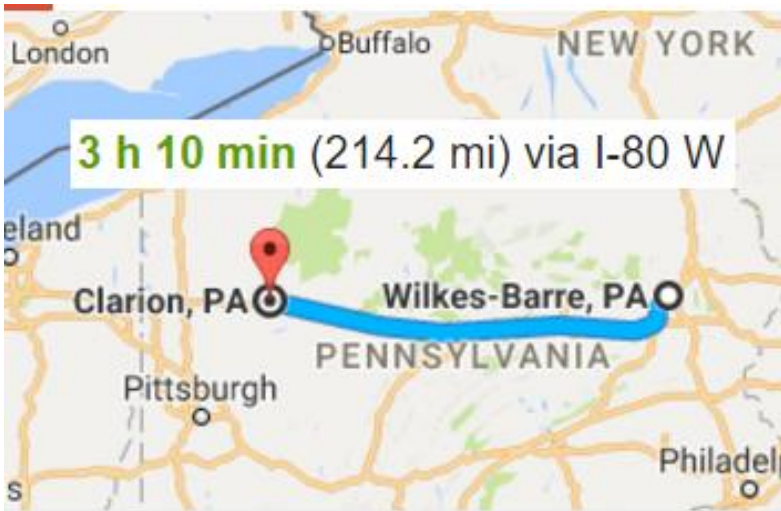
On the way, most of our route was above this on Route I-90. The route shown on the map above is our return trip. The big black bars is the route we followed. One day we may be able to go coast to coast.

Here are two nice pictures of our Mark III Conversion Van right before our trip. It was steady as a rock on the whole trip—both ways.



## Clarion or Bust!

Once in the van, at 4:00 PM right after Darragh's ninth T-Ball game, we prayed for a safe journey.



Clarion PA was our first stop. The Motel/6 room was just \$29.00. We all had a great swim and got some burgers.

## Madison or Bust!

We arrived ten hours later next day at 6:30 PM.



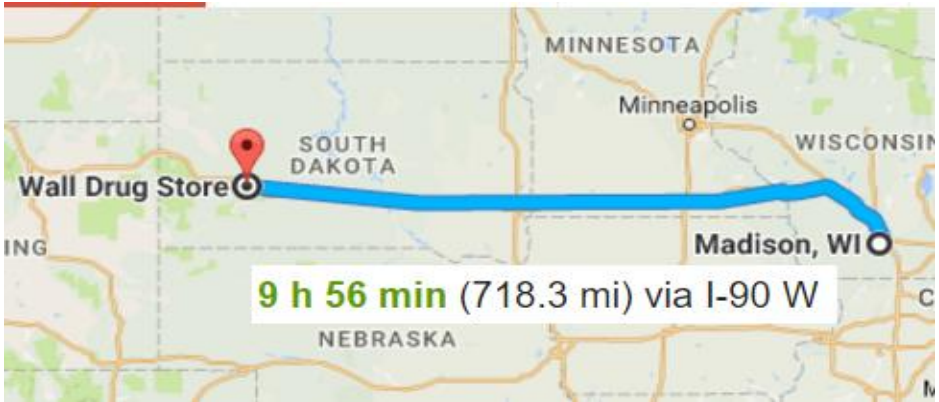
## Wall Drug Before Rushmore

We were on Route I-90 from Chicago on. Wall Drug signs were everywhere.

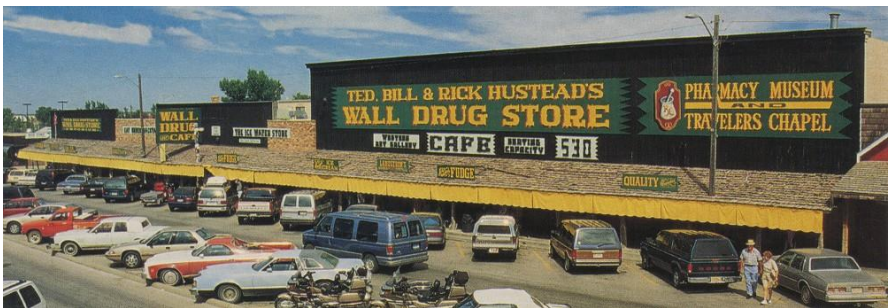


The more Wall Drug signs we saw, the more the four of us were bugging Mom and Dad to make sure we stopped there. They had free ice water and 5c coffee and it just looked like a lot of fun.





Wall Drug had built an 80 foot dinosaur right off I-90 to attract people to take their exit. What a place.

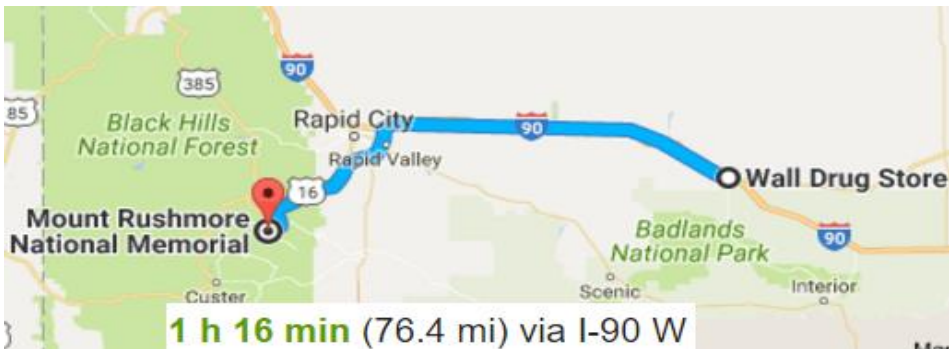


Mom needed to buy some batteries for her cell phone which we were using at the time only as a camera. We told everybody we did not take a phone.

Check out this handsome Cigar Store Indian in the picture.

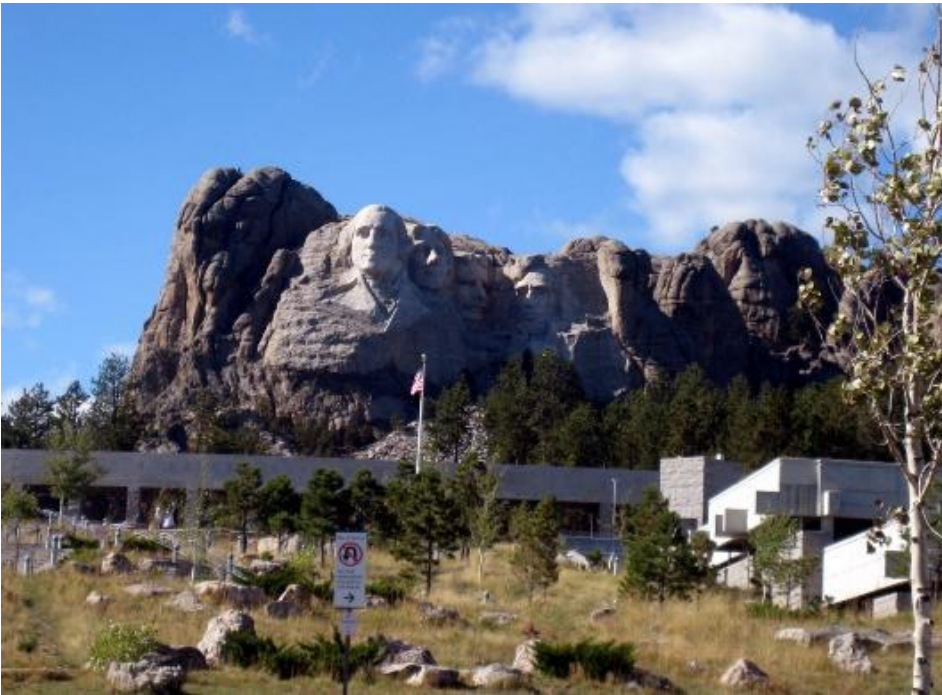


**From Wall Drug to the Black Hills; Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse & Deadwood**



There are several different caves run by different families in the Black Hills. The Rushmore Cave is just one of many. When weather was not good enough (cloudy & foggy) to see Mt. Rushmore, we took the cave tour. It was great.

When we woke up the next day, you could see all four Presidents straight away.



Before we left Mount Rushmore, Darragh started bugging dad to see how Breezy our dog and Tabby our cat were doing after so many days of no-contact.

Mom called the Bees who were watching the house and the animals. Mr. Bee said everything was fine but he did add that he had heard a noise in Darragh's room coming from the third drawer in his dresser

He said he had addressed the problem and not to worry.

Mr. Bee said that it was nothing but just in case, he took the Red Hat over to his house where there was a lot more continual activity with the Bee kids enjoying their lives.

He also brought our dog and cat over so the little critters would have their own special vacation.

We had just 16 miles to travel from Mt. Rushmore to arrive at the Chief Crazy Horse Memorial. It was another grand carving like Mount Rushmore but still incomplete.

Crazy Horse Monument Today





## Crazy Horse Monument as Planned for the Future



This conceptual illustration by artist Eugene Christopherson is inspired by an earlier master plan for Crazy Horse.

Crazy Horse was awesome. Now, it was time to travel back to I-90 to resume our journey. Right off I-90 was a great western town known as Deadwood.

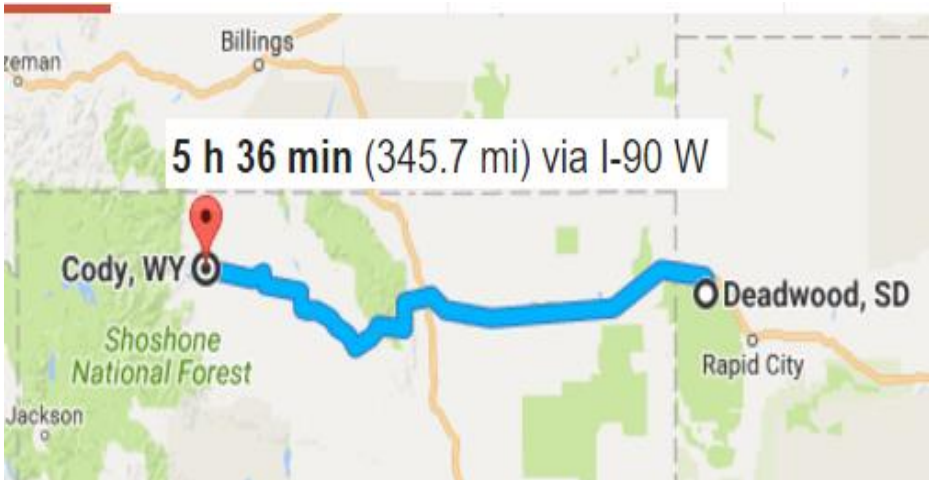
I



We pulled into Deadwood exactly one hour and eight minutes later. We ate at this great western saloon and we kids got to play the slots.



**Say Good-By Deadwood, Hello Cody!**



Dad said it is time to go. We all wanted to stay in Deadwood because we could do adult things with our parents and nothing was illegal. We had another 350 miles or so to go from Deadwood to Cody, Wyoming,

## Looking for a place to stay – A frequent theme

We stayed on the left side of the picture you see on the next page. It had a laundry right by our room. Mom said we needed fresh clothes.

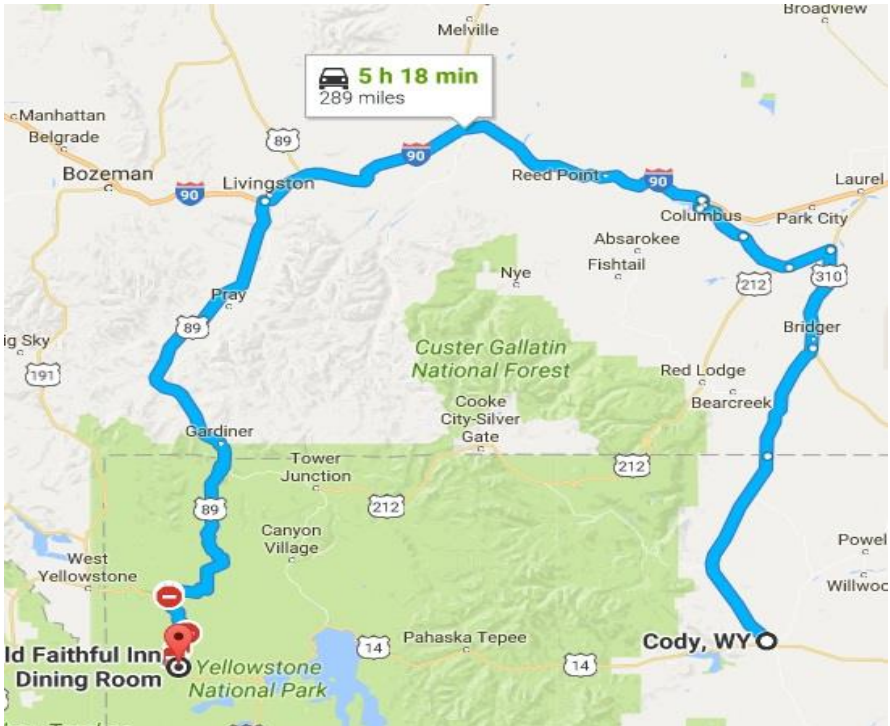


When you come into Cody Wyoming, you almost cannot miss what I would call a museum but, which is technically the Buffalo Bill (Cody) Center of the West. There is a picture on the next page.





## We're Going to Yellowstone National Park





After Cody Wyoming, our itinerary said we would go to Yellowstone National park, one of the greatest of US National Attractions. It was worth the ride.

### **First Stop—Old Faithful**

Dad had plotted our route to Yellowstone. Our first stop was to be Old Faithful, the trusty geyser.

Dad asked mom to see if possibly Katie-K, who has a big urge to go, could hold out for just a few more minutes once we reached the geyser and it was ready to blow.

It is far more impressive when you are close-up. Wow!! We made it!



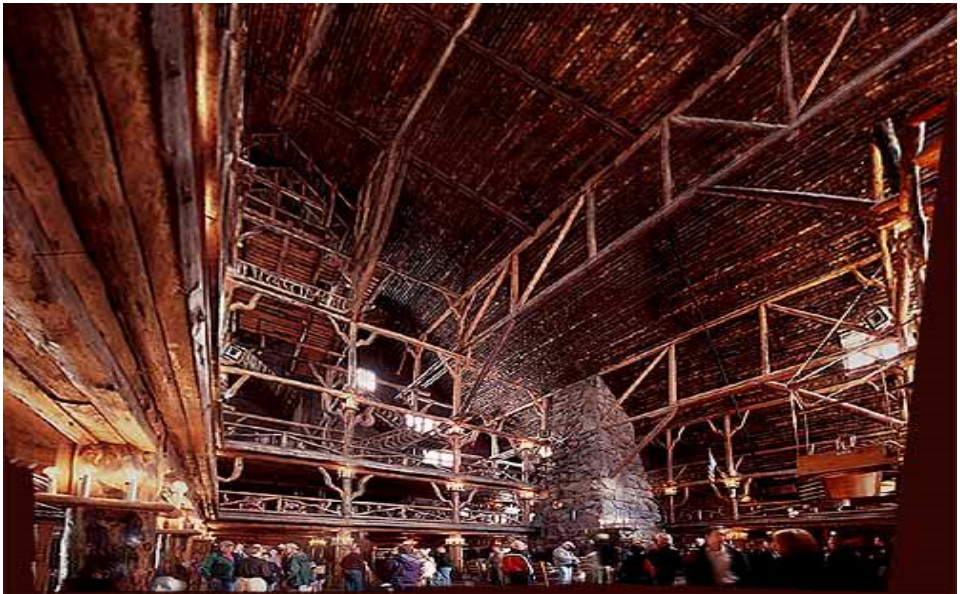
It took about five minutes to finally stop squirting.  
Now what?

Dad had heard the Old Faithful Inn would be a remarkable place to stay but without a reservation even though we waited for cancellations, we did not get in.

## Old Faithful Inn, Beautiful and A National Park Treasure



### Inside Old Faithful Inn Better than the Outside



## One more picture of the Old Faithful Lodge – Dining Room



Notice the exposed beams in this dining room / cocktail area. The whole place was like this. I love that look.

### **Off to West Yellowstone, Montana**

Dad asked at the Old Faithful Inn desk where we could find a place and they said that West Yellowstone Montana was not far away and they had hotels.

They said it was very close. We struggled through the park but we got there. It was dark but West Yellowstone was all lit up:





The next morning we were off again and we drove back into Yellowstone to see more of the hot springs, sulfur springs, etc.

We headed out of West Montana back into the West Entrance to Yellowstone National Park. The picture on the next page is one of the hot springs:



Isn't that amazing...even now that I see it in this small page size I ask: Did they bring the steam in from Mars?

## Yellowstone to Jackson Hole & Grand Tetons



Though we did not go to the Grand Teton National Park per se, we were close. This is what the Grand Tetons looked like from most of the spots in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Wow!



Jackson Hole as a town, looked to me like an old western spot that had been spiffed up for the times. It was clean and beautiful.





We left about 3:00 PM for Utah

## Jackson Hole Wyoming to Logan Utah

We got a good look at all the Potato Farms but Gibbs Farms impressed us all as we were heading by Grace, Idaho. We felt we had to get to Utah so we kept moving.

We luckily got a place to stay In Logan. but the Town was basically closed. When we got up, We were starved and could not wait for breakfast.

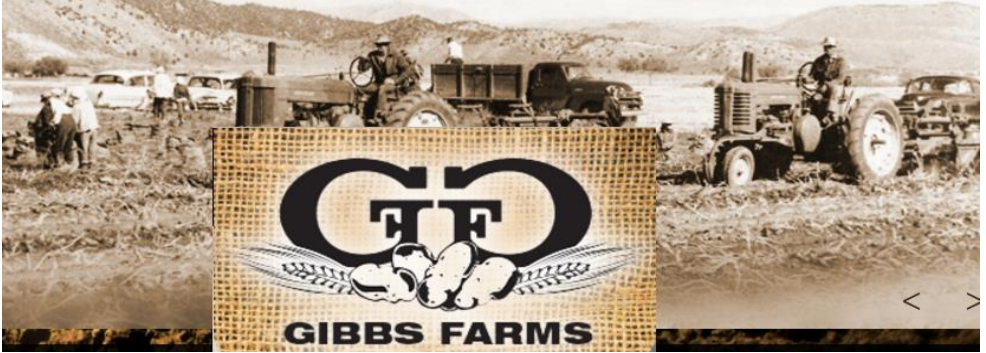




208-425-3699  
632 Highway 34, Grace, Idaho 83241

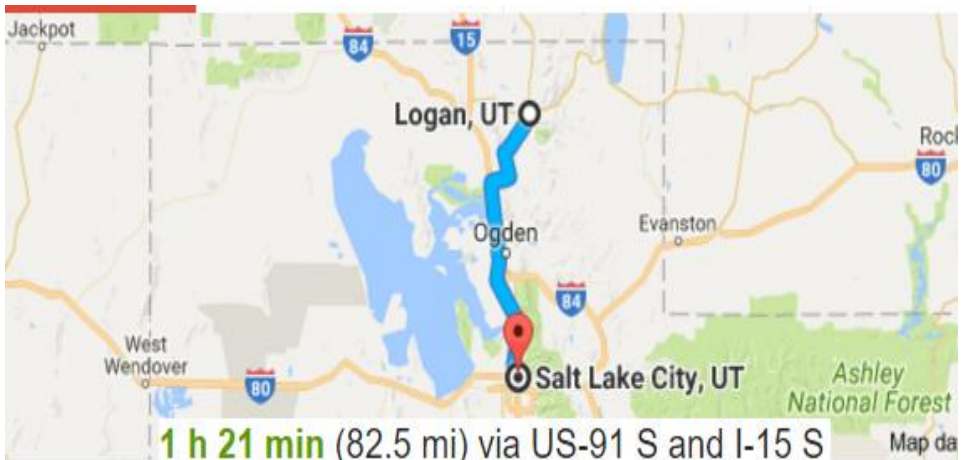
Continuing the Tradition...

Hard Work and Honesty always Produces  
the Highest Quality Results.



## Logan Utah to Salt Lake City Utah

It was about our sixth or seventh day or eighth or ninth. We were not counting at that point. We knew that we had to get back for Darragh's All-Star Game. We had a great breakfast and took off early for Salt Lake City.



Here is a panorama postcard of Salt Lake City. Beautiful! We stayed two days.



Here is a picture of the Great Salt Lake. We all wished it was nicer. Even the rocks were not attractive as the seagulls had had their way with them.



## The Impressive Mormon Temple



**Are we going back home?**

Then came the final moment of truth when we were in the van pulling out of Salt Lake City. We hit the juncture of I-80 which was very close by. Decision time!

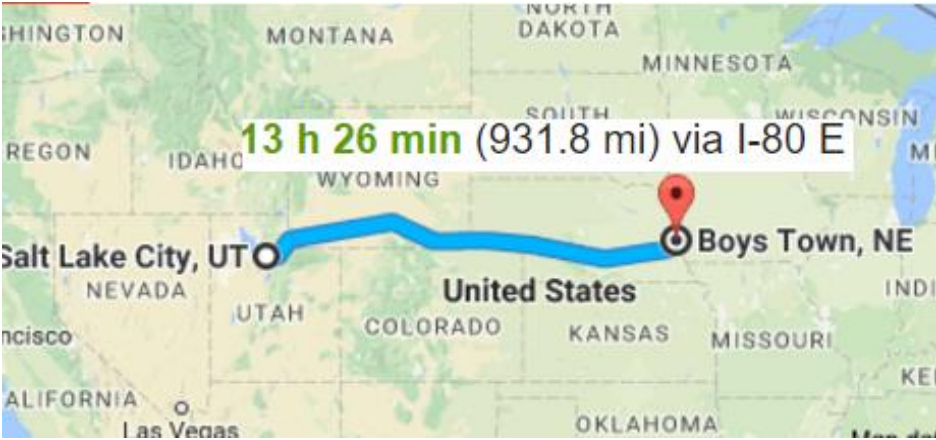


Darragh wanted to play all-star ball. We made a bargain. There would be no Las Vegas. We were off to

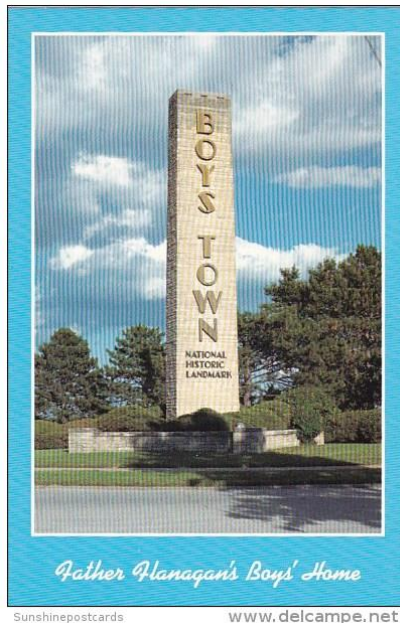


Boys Town Nebraska next. It took a long time to get there. We stayed overnight just outside of Boys Town.

## From Salt Lake City to Boys Town Nebraska



We looked out the van window and saw Boys Town.



As we were reflecting on Boys Town while back on Route 80, Dad told us he had bought some stuff for Sister Lucy, his buddy, and mom gave us each a small memento from our visit.

## From Boys Town to Notre Dame, Indiana



On our way home, we were passing South Bend, Indiana, but, not without stopping.

It was an uneventful straight shot to South Bend from Boys Town. We made it in less than eight hours. Late in the afternoon we found the Morris Asare Inn, where we stayed.

The Morris Asare Inn (Picture from about 1954 after construction)



We checked into the Inn and went to our room.

Here is the outside of the much nicer newly renovated Morris Asare Inn today. The campus gate is no longer there:



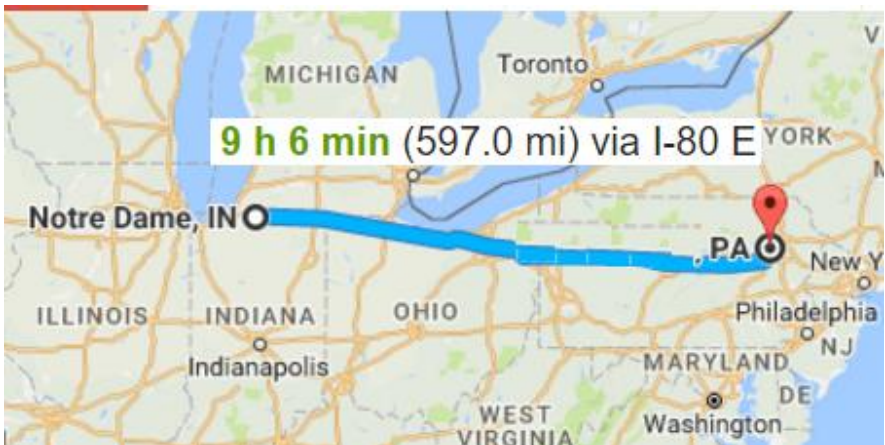
We walked to ND Stadium from our room. They were just about to renovate it and add 20,000 more seats. So it was basically abandoned when we got there.

We did not have a football but Darragh, Cornelius-C, Katie-K, and I ran like the devil in the stadium. I thought I saw dad run but he was running away from a bug about to bite him. We scored many TDs each.

We went to the ND Bookstore next. Dad bought us all ND T-shirts and some other ND memorabilia. He got himself an ND stein and mom got some ND jewelry. What a great place.

## From Notre Dame to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Dad said we might be able to get home in one day. We were all ready to give it a try.



We got up early and had breakfast at the Inn. Dad did all the work. He brought our luggage including K-Mart and bookstore purchases out the front door on a big cart.

Lou Holtz was at the gate coming out of the campus when Dad was going back to get the car. Wow! We had been observing Lou Holtz, the famous Notre Dame Coach being Lou Holtz, and we did not know it.

That was almost as great as scoring multiple touchdowns in Notre Dame Stadium.

Soon, we were off. The signs were good and dad got us quickly onto Route 80. But for a few biology breaks and fill-ups, we went right through without a hitch.

## **We Made It Home**

We were home before 6:00 PM, Wilkes-Barre time. What a great trip! Thanks mom and Dad. Sure, we'll go again.

Darragh immediately called his T-Ball All-Star coach and he learned that he had already missed the first game. The league had moved it up a week.

Darragh also learned there would be another game in two weeks. The St. Trez team lost by a ton of runs without Darragh. So now the team was going to play in the Losers' Bracket.

They still had a chance if they won every game.

Of course, even if we had known about the rescheduling, we could not get back. Thankfully, Mr. Bee did not call.

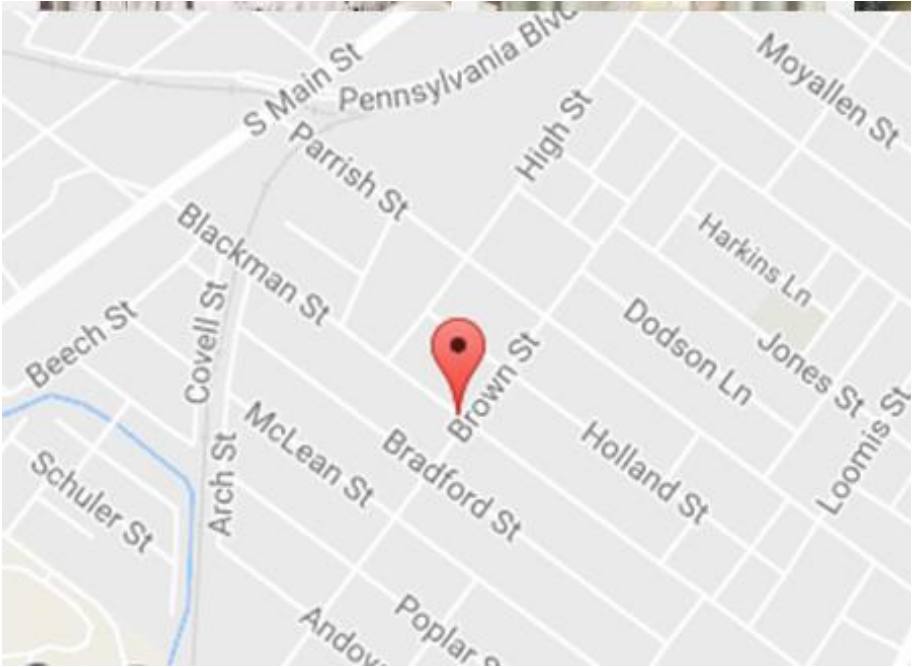


However, if we had known, and could not possibly get home. Mom might have gotten to see Las Vegas and we all might have been able to see the Golden Gate Bridge and eat shrimp and crab on Fisherman's Wharf in Dixie cups.

Nonetheless, we were all glad to be home after the almost nine-hour drive from Notre Dame. Now, almost to a person united in a yell, we wondered: "Where is that Dog and Cat?"



## Chapter 9 We're Finally Home!



Darragh was very disappointed that he had missed the game but he was glad the season was not over. When we parked, the boys immediately went over to Mr. Bee's to get Breezy and Tabby.

Mr. Bee gave Darragh some bad news and some good news. His T-Ball Team, Gerry's Pizza, had lost their last game last weekend by 5 runs. That's the bad news.

The good news was that they still won the league championship as the #1 team. The Nippers had lost their second game. Gerry's record was 9-1. Mr. Bee had the trophy for Darragh and he gave him his T-shirt.

Darragh loved both but I think he liked the T-shirt best. He wore it every day and when we went to church on Sunday's he had it under his dress shirt. We could all see the lettering beneath his outer shirt.

Finally, we all got to hug our dog and cat. We had not talked much about them but we sure did miss them. There was a friendly bark and a courteous meow before the hugs. Boy did we miss those little guys.

The Grand Moms and Grand Pops – Petru and Troski came by right away. They gave us all big hugs. Mom had souvenirs for everybody. They stayed for some nectar.

While Katie-K, Cornelius-C, and I were with the animals, enjoying them immensely in Mr. Bee's living room, Mrs. Barbie Bee joined us and gave us all a big hug. Then came David, Dinder, and Kimmy.

Wow, great hugs! Darragh and Mr. Bee had disappeared.

After about ten minutes of doggie slobber and the overriding smell of catnip, I had to go to the B-room the Bee house for a bio-break. I went upstairs and as I was about to go in, I heard Darragh and Mr. Bee talking.

Mr. Bee said he could not give Darragh back the Red Hat because everybody already knew how to swim. Mr. Bee told Darragh that the Red Hat was sad when everybody left.

He also said that he did not like living in the drawer for four years.

Mr. Bee figured the sparklies he saw were really the Red Hat's way of making light beams to notify Mr. Bee to come get him. Mr. Bee took Breezy and Tabby also.

The older the hat got the more it was comfortable with communicating. Mr. Bee was the Red Hat's favorite person but the mystical hat also loved Darragh, for sure.

Mr. Bee said he did not originally know that this phenomenal Hat was magical but he had his suspicions. He learned that the Hat was a force—a force for good!

Darragh had secretly been putting the Red Hat on and off a lot since Mom had put it in the drawer when Darragh learned how to swim.

Mr. Bee with the counsel of The Red Hat had deduced that a different family with smaller kids might be able to use the powers of the Hat to help all their kids become able to swim, and do good.

I heard Darragh crying like somebody had died. My big tough brother, my favorite brother (Don't tell Cornelius-C) was crying because he loved his Red Hat.

He was only seven but he seemed like a man to me. I hated to hear him so sad. I kept listening and did not have to go that bad.

Darragh said that he thought the rays from the hat over the years had helped him grow strong and become muscular and be able to do anything better than almost anybody else.

He knew the Red Hat had a heart even if it did not beat and it had magic too. Darragh told Mr. Bee that he often talked to the Red Hat about how life was going.

He told Mr. Bee that they had become *buddies*. Darragh said: “at least I felt that way!”

Mr. Bee knew a lot more than he was saying to Darragh. He was glad to have the Red Hat back in his house even though he was convinced it was a force for good and not evil.

He confessed that he should not have given up the hat but he loved the Petru family so much he wanted to help in the best way. The Red Hat apparently had other ideas.

Mr. Bee told Darragh life is not so simple. He said the Red Hat had told him that he loved all the Petrus but his mission in his life of being a magical Hat was to help children swim and to be good kids.

He did not like being in the third drawer and he confessed to Mr. Bee that sometimes his power via sparklies would leak into somebody who had no idea what was happening to them.

The Red Hat had convinced Mr. Bee to let him return to his prior role. He loved helping young children learn how to swim.

He also loved Darragh but he said he knew Darragh no longer needed him (The Red Hat) to be a great person in life.

Through Darragh's sobs, I heard him ask Mr. Bee for one more favor if the Red Hat would grant it. He asked to keep the Red Hat in our house for the next two weeks until his first All-Star game.

On second thought, Darragh asked if it were possible if he could have the Red Hat for possibly the rest of the T-Ball tournament. Mr. Bee was getting immediate mental signals from the Red Hat.

Mr. Bee had not said anything in a while Then he suddenly burst out: "YES, Darragh!" OK! Then I went into the B-room as I had to go real bad after the trip.

When I came out of the B-Room and went down stairs, Darragh was back snorkeling (that's our word for hugging) the dog and the cat.

Both of the animals looked a little bigger like they had been chubbing up on the Bee's good food. David told us that they were eating every two hours and the cat ate so much every day that he just fell asleep, woke up and ate more.

Kimmathee and Dinder nodded in agreement.

Mr. Bee had bought a few chocolate milks for us all. We were treated like returning veterans. Wow, we love chocolate milk.

Mr. Bee in front of us all, gave Breezy and Tabby the Cat a bowl each of some great home-made chouter as he called it. It smelled good enough for me to eat but the chocolate milk was just great enough!

We were at the Bee home for over an hour and had not even walked into our own house. Mom and dad were enjoying some nectar with Barbie Bee. Then, we heard dad say:

OK kids, let's see if we have a home left next door.

The Bees lived next door to us. We went right home. We all still had ND and the trip in our heads.

As we were on our front porch (eight steps high) I saw Darragh's bag that said K-Mart but I also saw the color red inside.

Mom had frozen some wimpies before we left, and the Bees had bought and brought us some fresh tomatoes and lettuce and bread. Boy, are they nice people! We were all starving. What a feast!

We ate and then with Breezy and Tabby frolicking around like usual in the house, it seemed like we were back home for good and all was well. Wow! Trips are great but coming home to love is great too!



I fell asleep on the couch right after we ate and did not wake up until the next morning. I had a bad dream about Boys' Town and then I had a dream about the spookiness about the Red Hat.

I finally woke up about 9:00 the next morning. I was the last one up. I literally smelled the coffee. Dad had another day off before he planned to see about maybe working again.

He had gone to the new Old River Bakery and rather than make eggs and bacon, he bought Dick's Special Crumb Cake, as well as a coconut stolen, and some cinnamon buns. Mmmmm!!!!

I got there just in time. They let me have half and half coffee. It was great with all the morning goodies.



## Chapter 10 My Red Hat Shows Its Magic



From the day we got home from the trip cross country, Darragh spent a lot more time in his room than normal. Sometimes in the morning before breakfast, I saw him open the third drawer and the sparklies did come out.

He would put his Red Hat on and he just looked bigger and stronger than ever. One day I asked him

about it while he was wearing his Red Hat. He let me see him like that.

He told me about his conversation with Mr. Bee and that he would have to give up his Red Hat so that Mr. Bee could help other young children to learn how to swim.

He told me that his Red Hat could talk but without being heard by the air. He said the words of the Red Hat went right into your mind.

He said that this Red Hat was very smart and had been around for many years before he was discovered by Mr. Bee, after he (the Red Hat) had thought it was his end.



He said that Mr. Bee had found the Red Hat in a pile of clean dirt outside Peters Economy Store on Brown Street.

It was when Butchie Peters was remodeling the store. Butchie, a good man, had no idea of the Red Hat.

Mr. Bee brought the Red Hat home. Mrs. Barbie Bee washed it up to make it presentable and Mr. Bee would put it on each weekend of every summer to keep the sun from his eyes when he was outside working.

Back then in their old house, the Bees had their own above ground pool. Sometimes Mr. Bee would be by their pool or swimming in their pool. The Red Hat never seemed to get old. Its threads still are like new.

Mr. Bee first learned the magic of the Red Hat when Davey was almost two years old. Mr. Bee often let the kids on his big chest whenever he did the backstroke or the back dead man's float.

He always had His Red Hat on. One day he put the hat on Davey and after a while, he took Davey in his arms and placed him in the water to see what he could do.

He then let go and Davey rose up a few inches in the water.

It was like magic and Davey never went under. They were in the pool for over an hour.

Before they came out Mr. Bee took hold of Davey with one arm and with the other arm, he took the hat and put it back on his own head. Mr. Bee was using the hat to protect his head from the sun.

Mr. Bee's plan was to walk Davey over to the ladder but Davey knew after an hour of Red Hat power, he could swim.

Davey broke away and swam like a champion to the ladder. Davey never needed the hat again.

When Dinder and Kimmy were old enough Mr. Bee did the same thing with them. Each stayed with the Red Hat for over an hour. That's why all the Bee's to this day are great swimmers.

Darragh said that for the years the Red Hat was in his drawer before I was born and while I was in the crib in the hall. He told me that he did not have permission to put on the hat.

But, nobody had really told him that he could not put it on. Mom always wanted the Red Hat in the drawer. Each time, he touched the Red Hat, Darragh said he felt better and stronger.

So, what about now? What about the All-Star Game? Darragh told me that Mr. Bee told him that he could wear the Red Hat.

Because he had to wear his Gerry's Pizza team hat on his head, Darragh figured he would put the Red Hat under the shirt of his T-Ball uniform.

All Stars when playing, were required to wear their team designation. So, Darragh knew he could wear a Gerry's Pizza hat during the game with the Red Hat under his top uniform.

He told me that he knew that he had just one game with the Red Hat. Mr. Bee had given him the orders that right after the first game he had to give his Red Hat back to Mr. Bee.

Mr. Bee had already picked out the family that would get the Red Hat on the day of the game. The Red Hat was thrilled about helping another person to learn how to swim.

I asked Darragh if there was any way for just one day that the hat could be mine. I told him I understood either way. Darragh had no idea that I already knew that he had major restrictions with the Red Hat.

## **Liam's Lament**

I am Liam, the runt of the family. I am the youngest. I have never worn the Red Hat--ever. I knew I could, but I chose not to violate anything that would make it tougher for my brother.

The family, Darragh especially had taught me how to swim the old-fashioned way. The Red Hat was always

kind to me but had never jumped in when I needed help learning to swim.

All the other six kids in our two families learned how to swim using the Red Hat. Darragh thought it over for a while and then told me “YES.”

He said that that three days before the game, the Red Hat was mine for the whole day from breakfast until breakfast the next day. I was thrilled.

Darragh said for that day, the hat would not be Mr. Bee’s, and it would not be his. He said just for that one day, the Red Hat would be My Red Hat.

He told me to be very careful and to treat the Hat well. I asked if I could wear it outside and he said sure... just be careful—and just for 24 hours.

## **My Red Hat Keeps Me On The Ground!**

I thought the day would never come but it did. Darragh and I went down for breakfast. We were hungry. Mom had made panapoona.

That was the Petru name for pancakes with Maple Syrup. Darragh and I loved panapoona. We ate and then went back upstairs.

Darragh immediately opened the third drawer and handed me the Red Hat. I said: “Thanks for letting me use your Red Hat today, Darragh.”



Darragh said not to call it his hat because it was mine—for the whole day—24 hours. I took the hat and rubbed it on my chest and around my arms and I smelled it and then finally I put it on my head.

I felt like a king.

I felt strong and better than ever. Darragh cautioned me to not be rubbing the hat as it was a very powerful hat.

Darragh said it would be unfair if he stayed with me during my Red Hat Day so he took off over to the Bee's house. Mr. Bee had him working on a special Bee project.

I normally jumped when I got three steps to the bottom going down our stairs. This time when I was eight steps to the bottom I felt like I could do it. I jumped and glided softly to the floor with no thud. Wow!

I opened the front door and ran and jumped down the eight steps to the sidewalk. Again, I landed softly.

When I landed, Mrs Nipstock from the other side of the house, who had seen me jump, thought I had fallen. She yelled over: "Are you OK, Liam?" I picked my head up and said: "Yes m'am. Thank you for asking."

I wanted to get the old football and the old bat and ball from the sports box so I had to go in again. Could I jump up the steps? Was it possible.

I had tried this often and never got past one step. I took a deep breath and jumped to get to the top. I came down on the fourth step up.

Wow, so there were some limits to the power of the Red Hat. I walked the other steps and went inside and got the sports stuff; came back out and jumped the steps again and then headed for the field.

I wondered: “How did I do what I just did?”

There was nobody in the well-groomed fenced Official St. Trez Little League Field that day so I walked right in. I was wearing my Red Hat. My grandmother would have said that I was really feeling my oats.



The Tee was in the dugout as if a team would be practicing soon but nobody was even close to the field. I ran around the bases in what seemed to be no-time.

No wonder Darragh wanted to wear the Red Hat for his All-Star game.

I couldn't help it. I took the hat and rubbed it again on my chest and arms. I smelled it again and it had a sweetness and kindness about it.

I felt like a superhero. I rubbed it a few more times before I started to play ball.

Before this day, I could just about reach the pitcher's mound with my throws from home plate and I never hit a ball into the outfield. Hey, I was a four-year-old.

I stood on home plate and I threw as far as I could towards center field. The ball went into the grass of the outfield. Wow! I took the hat off; tried it again; and the ball went just past the pitcher's mound.

It was a terrible throw—like a slow pop-up.

I then put the Tee in place and hit the ball from home plate and it bloomed over the mound. Then I put the hat on again and I whacked a liner to the outfield. What a difference! The hat was definitely magic.

I kept playing and enjoying my new temporary skills until I began to see some cars pull up to the field. The drivers looked like coaches. It was time to go.

I had not even told my mom where I was going. Four-year olds, even in our neighborhood, could not just take off like I had done. I hoped she would not see me on my return.

As I was packing up the bat and ball and glove, I noticed the football on the ground. I had everything in my netted sports bag and was getting ready to put the football in there too.

Heck, I could never even hold the football well and when I threw it, I could not even keep it in the air for half the distance from the plate to the mound.

Once I had everything packed, I noticed the gate had been closed. I don't know how the coaches did not see me. I was a little scared because I do not think I was supposed to be in the nicely made up field.

I had never climbed a big fence before. As I approached the fence, I felt words talking into my mind. I could not hear them but they were entering my mind as if I had heard them.

The words said "Liam, try the football." I figured I was imagining it. Then again: "Liam, Try the football." Then, a third time: Liam, you won't be disappointed; try the football. I knew it was "my" Red Hat talking to me.

I took my stuff down by home plate quickly to bring out the football. It was a regular sized college

football that was my dad's when he played. In the past it would fall off my hand when I tried to throw it.

I reached into the bag with one hand and I was able to grip the football. I took it out of the bag with one hand and put the fingers of my right hand on the laces.

I cocked my arm back and not only did it not fall out of my hand, my arm felt even stronger. I threw the ball. It sailed over the mound and almost hit second base.

I "heard" the "Red Hat" again telling me: "Liam, make it perfect." I knew then that My Red Hat wanted me to throw the football one more time.

This time, I threw from second base and I felt that I was supposed to hit the home plate with a perfect line drive pass. I cocked my arm again and let it fly. It went out like a bullet. No kidding! Wow!

It landed right square on home plate and then had enough force to bounce up and hit the backstop. The full image of the football appeared like a drawing on the home plate.

I wished I had a camera or a cell phone like Katie-K and Cornelius-C. The Red Hat spoke again. He said "you did it Liam; now it is OK to go home."

I put the football in the bag. As I was almost over the fence, I heard somebody yell, Hey Kid! I kept going and then ran home.

Darragh was coming out of Mr. Bee's house when I got home. I was tired and unusually hungry. I told Darragh what had happened.

He was thrilled for me. He was hoping things went well for him in his All-Star Game.

There was some time before we ate supper so Mr. Bee said we should all take a swim. We did for a few hours. We were all late for supper when we finished our swim time.

I wore the Red Hat all the while I was in the pool. I knew that I could not show off but deep down I knew that I could do everything better when I was wearing my Red Hat.

After supper, I was wearing my Red Hat and every now and then I rubbed it against my chest and breathed a whiff of that sweet smell. We watched some TV and then I went up to bed.

Darragh stayed downstairs talking to mom and dad about the game he had coming up in three days.

I slept with my Red Hat on. I had some wonderful dreams. Darragh let me sleep in the top bunk. I woke up the next morning and as promised, even before I got out of bed, I kept my word.

I gave my Red Hat to Darragh. He took it and opened his dresser drawer but before he put it in,

something happened and he put it on top of a trophy on the dresser.

Just then, Darragh looked up at me and he was in shock. He said, "Liam, are you OK?" I said, "Yes, Why? I felt like I was still in bed. I had my light covers on. I looked down from the bunk bed and saw Darragh.

There was something wrong with my eyes as Darragh seemed farther away than the floor. I took the covers off and there was no mattress underneath me but it felt like there was.

When I turned and looked up, I saw the ceiling right next to my nose. I was not in the bed, I was several feet above the bed and now my nose was bumping gently into the ceiling.

I was floating in the air. I did not have my Red Hat on so I could not figure out what gave me the power to do that. It had to be inside of me. Now what?

It had been a hot night so the window by the bed was open. Darragh was in front of the window. He looked out and he yelled down to Mr. Bee to quickly come to our room.

Just then a wind came and I felt myself floating out of the window. I saw Mr. Bee going to the front of the house and I called to him. He was not panicking.

He yelled to Darragh to get Con's cell phone and call him (Mr. Bee) from it. Darragh and I did not have phones.

I felt myself drifting to the Bee house. I was about fifteen feet off the ground--second story window height.

I had gone about three or four feet after getting out the window, then I would come down a few feet.

But, I never went any higher. Whatever it was that was doing, this did not take me any higher

Mr. Bee got to the closest upstairs window in his house. I was between the houses at the same level. He told me not to make any quick motions.

He put a running fan out his window and I heard him tell Darragh to get our fan and turn it to pull air inside. What a neat plan.

Mr. Bee's fan was blowing me towards my window and Darragh's fan was pulling me back into the room. In just a few minutes, I was close enough for Darragh to reach me.

He pulled me in and closed the window quickly and he then closed the door. I saw the Red Hat on top of the trophy on the dresser.

I reached down and with my fingertips, I could reach my Red Hat. Not knowing what would happen, I put it on and I immediately soft landed erectly on the bedroom floor.



I felt safe with the hat on. I felt normal, I remembered the song I had in my dream all that night. It was weird that this would happen right after that dream:

My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Cause my Red Hat keeps me on the ground.

Now I got the message.

Darragh closed the blinds and the shades so that I did not break the window and get out again. It got a little darker in the room and in the darker room, he could see a lot of sparklies on my chest and all over me.

The sparklies had to have come from my Red Hat. They had given me the power to fly. Even though I was flying it was like I was floating. I had no idea how to steer myself once I was up in the air.

Just to see if my Red hat was really keeping me on the ground, I had to test it. I gave the hat to Darragh who was then standing on a chair by the bunk beds just in case things did not go well.

As soon as I let go of the hat, just like a helium balloon that gets released, I went right up and my whole body was lightly pressing against the ceiling. My nose again was just about touching the ceiling.

Darragh was wondering if we should call mom and dad to help when Mr. Bee came in the room. He too saw the sparklies on me. Mr. Bee suggested not worrying mom and dad now but we should tell them later.

When Mr. Bee saw the sparklies, he knew immediately what to do.

He asked Darragh to hand me the hat. When I put it on, I immediately came back to the floor in my room, which according to the song I was humming, was the ground.

My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
But my Red Hat keeps me on the ground.

Mr. Bee started laughing and he asked Darragh how long I had the Red Hat. Darragh told him: "All day yesterday."

Mr. Bee said:

"And I bet he was rubbing it and smelling it and enjoying that Red Hat."

I confessed that I was.

Mr. Bee said: No harm done!!

Darragh said well, what do we do now ? Mr. Bee said “

“Take him down the hall and have him take a shower with his Red Hat on his head. Take a fresh set of clothes for him. Have him shampoo his hair twice. Use lots of soap and rinse very well. Then do it all again.

“Have him dry off twice with two different towels and pass out the towels and dirty clothes to me.”

Darragh helped me get all cleaned up. “Heck, I was never that clean.”

Darragh took the towels and all the clothes and handed them to Mr. Bee. The sparklies were still working but Mr. Bee was heavier than me.

He felt so light. Even he almost floated down the steps to the washer. He put the load in with a lot of detergent.

Mr. Bee ran the washer for about three hours. Then he put all the stuff in the drier. Then he put everything on his clothes line for a few days to air out even more.

Even after all that bathing, on my way to the room to put on my sneaks, I felt a little light of foot. Mr. Bee was back by then. I carried my Red Hat back to the room wet.

While I was putting on my shoes I mentally heard my Red Hat say: “I’m sorry.” Wow, what an exciting experience.

And mom and dad never even knew this happened. I had the same tune running through my head:

My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
But my Red Hat keeps me on the ground.

Then it stopped.

I knew I was OK.

Mr. Bee and Darragh knew I was OK.

Con ran into the room and described a weird tune he was hearing that had awakened him. I said “What tune was it Corny? Cornelius-C said:

My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
But my Red Hat keeps me on the ground.

We all looked at each other and smiled. Con found his cell phone next to the wet Red Hat and he wondered why the Red Hat was wet.

We told him not to worry. Cornelius-C then got his twin Katie-K and mom called us all down for breakfast.

What a day, and it was still breakfast time.



# Chapter 11 Darragh's T-Ball All Star Game



I knew that something was different with me but nobody else did. I did not have to use as much energy to do things that I had done a few days before I wore the Red Hat.

Darragh went up after breakfast and his Red Hat was dry—like it had never been wet.

The days passed and finally it was Darragh's game day. I saw Darragh on the morning of his big T-Ball All-Star Game putting on his uniform. He had to be there two hours ahead of time.

After he was completely dressed and had his Gerry's Pizza hat on, I saw him open his third dresser drawer and he took out his Red Hat.

He tucked it inside his baseball uniform shirt, rebuttoned the shirt and took off for breakfast. He said: "See ya over the park Liam." I said "you bet Darragh. Good Luck!"

I was back on the bottom bunk now so I slid over, got out of bed, put my pajamas in my dresser, got fresh clothes and got dressed.

Right after I got my sneakers on, I went downstairs for a bite of breakfast. I was no longer light on my feet going down the steps. The residual effects of the sparklies had dissipated.

Darragh and dad, Katie-K and Cornelius-C, had already gone to the game. It was a big deal. Mom made me some cinnamon toast quickly.

I had some half coffee, half milk and a glass of milk, and some orange juice with the toast. Then, mom and I left the house for the game.

There were not many seats in the bleachers but Mom and I could squeeze in right next to the rest of the family and the Bees.

The sun was behind a big tree so we were not exposed and we were not sweating like at some games.



It was about 75 degrees out so we figured that the players should have a pleasant game.

Darragh's team had shirts that said St. Trez Little League and everybody wore their team hats. They all had on a pair of jeans with low-cut white sneakers. That's how Darragh was dressed.

When the cars with the Nanticoke Northstar League arrived, I noticed their uniforms were almost the same except for their team names on their hats and the league name on the shirt.

They had a few big kids on the team. One was a real tall girl.

My dad's high school friend Paul Grimes was in the broadcast booth behind home plate and he was going to announce the game.

They split the field down the middle and both teams got in their pre-game warmups and practice. About fifteen minutes before the game, each team got five minutes of full infield practice.

Then Mr. Grimes announced that the game was about to begin. He asked us to stand while he played The National Anthem over the Loudspeaker. It was very nice.

Since we were the home team, the Northstar All-Stars batted first. The ten-run rule was in effect and teams were not permitted to bat around in one inning. Darragh was playing at the mound position.

With T-Ball, of course there would be no pitcher. The first batter cracked a hard liner just over the mound.

Darragh jumped up higher than he probably was supposed to be able to jump and he snagged the ball for out #1. Wow, it was a hot shot.

The next batter hit a hard grounder up the middle which Darragh snagged and threw to first in time.

The third batter hit a slow dribbler to first base but he could not run fast so Tony Weiss tagged him out. St. Trez then came in to bat.

After the inning warmups, “Darragh Petru” was announced by Mr. Grimes. Darragh took a few swings outside the box and then came to the plate. He whacked a hard line-drive just over the pitcher position’s head.

It was so hard the player could not get his glove up in time. It sailed over his head and the center fielder’s head. The fielder was playing near the back of the infield. Darragh ran like he had jet engines attached.

The ball reached the fence on the ground. Before they had the ball back to the infield. Darragh crossed the plate. It was a home run. The rest of the guys also got some good hits.

Ten players played on each team. The ninth batter for St. Trez hit a blooper to the pitcher and St. Trez

stranded three on base in this the first inning. Ron Liddon, the right fielder did not bat in this inning. St. Trez was winning 0 to 3 after 1 inning.

The Northstar's big guys were up in the second inning and they plowed the ball. They got three home runs and then some other great hits. Their last batter (#10) popped up to end the inning with one man on base.

They had three outs plus it was their tenth batter. The score was now 6 to 3 and the St Trez team was up to bat in the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Ron Liddon got a triple and Darragh whacked one in the same spot in center field and ran around for another homer. At the end of the inning the score was tied 6 to 6.

Each time Darragh batted he hit it to the same exact spot. I hope I am keeping everything written down right. At the end of the fourth inning the score was 12 to 12.

Darragh did not bat in the fourth inning. The Northstar scored six runs in the fifth inning. Darragh was up first in the bottom of the inning. The score was 18-12.

He cracked the ball to the same place again but the coach for Nanticoke had moved his best player to the spot where Darragh had been hitting the ball for home runs.

The ball left Darragh's bat like a cannon. Without moving an inch, the center fielder put his hand in the air and caught the ball in the middle of the glove. He held on but the ball had stung his hand through the glove.

They had to ice his hand down to help ease the pain. Darragh was out and now it did not look good for the team.

With one out, somehow, St. Trez scored six runs but they were not easy runs. They were mostly little dinker hits that were errors by the Northstar. The coach was happy they got six runs and tied the game.

Darragh had a little talk with his Red Hat in between innings. The good hitters on the Nanticoke Northstar were walloping the ball and it was like the ball had eyes and avoided being caught.

This inning was supposed to be the last inning—the top of the sixth. Nanticoke had their best sluggers coming up. Nobody knew if St. Trez could withstand the pounding from these very good Nanticoke ball players.

Batter one whacked a fly ball over the shortstop's head. It was low but it looked like it was going to go out of the park when suddenly a big wind came up.

This wind was like a blast from a hurricane. It blew the ball all the way back from left field past first base and back to the catcher's area.

It kept moving but slower. It headed for the mound and popped into Darragh's glove.

You're o-u-t said Mr. Grimes. Then he apologized to everybody because he was just the announcer, not the umpire.

With one out in the top of the sixth and the score tied 18-18, batter two ripped a ball that was heading over the head of the first baseman.

With no logical explanation, the ball suddenly turned left and found itself in the glove of Darragh Petru, who was playing at the Pitcher Mound position.

It was now two-down. One more out before the St. Trez guys got to bat again. The third batter of the inning, a big, strong, and tall girl who had hit a home run every time she was up came to bat.

Her coach raised the Tee a few inches for her. She had a determined look on her face. She raised her left foot and took a hard swing. She missed the ball completely. She did not even hit the Tee.

She then ripped what would surely have been a home run to left field. It was way over the fence. As it got close to the fence, it began to curved left of the flag pole and was several feet foul.

Mr. Grimes called strike two repeating the umpire's call..

She swung so hard the third time that she spun around and fell down. The ball was a shot and it hit the right field fence in fair territory. Nobody was close to the ball and she was about to get another home run.

When she got up, she was discombobulated and disoriented from the spin. She took off running a mile a minute but one thing was wrong.

She was running down the third baseline. She touched third base instead of first base.

The umpire, Mr. Steve Bollinger from the Phillies Phinest Team, and Mr. Grimes at the same exact time screamed: "You're out." She would have surely scored but all bases must be touched in the correct order.

Here is the baseball rule for that: "**7.02** In advancing, a runner shall touch first, second, third and home base in order."

With the score tied 18-18, and a lot of tension in the air, everybody knew that Darragh, who was having a great game, was the fourth batter coming up so somebody had to get on for him to be able to bat.

The first two St. Trez batters hit little dinkers to the pitcher and were thrown out to first base. One more out and the game would be in extra innings. Ron Liddon was up next.

Ron was not a bad hitter but there was a lot of pressure on everybody as the game was on the line. Kids

sometimes have a problem hitting a ball even on a Tee when a game is close.

If Ron did not get on base, Darragh would not bat and as noted, the game would go into a seventh inning (extra innings.) It was so hard to keep these great ballplayers from Nanticoke without any runs.

Ron Liddon went for the fences and missed. He then missed again. With two strikes, he then whacked one over the shortstop's head and it was caught on the ground by the left fielder.

Ron made it to second base. Now Darragh was up.

Darragh had three home runs and had a fly-out right where his other home runs had landed. Again. The opposing coach lined up his players to be able to catch Darragh's whack if he hit one like that again.

Everyone expected Darragh to hit another cannon ball in the same spot and thus fly out. In this game, all his hits went to the exact same place on the field.

Darragh had a little talk to his Red Hat but nobody saw it like me. He had gotten some advice. Instead of hitting the ball straight-on; instead Darragh started his swing a little lower.

He had never swung at the Tee like that. He swung very hard but his bat went over the top of the Tee without knocking the ball off the Tee.

Technically it was a strike. Darragh stepped back to figure out why that had happened.

He knew he had to lower his whole swing just a little but keep the angle he had used for the first swing. His hands started to sweat and he asked for time out and he got some dust and rubbed his hands in it.

Then he got back into the batter's box. He pulled the bat back as always but just a little lower and he hit the ball hard. It quickly went over the pitcher's mound.

The second baseman was playing right on second base. The ball flew way over the second baseman's head.

The ball was now heading for the best player on the Nanticoke team who was playing right where he had caught Darragh's last fly ball.

This time, the ball sailed way over his head and kept going until it was about twenty feet outside the park.

For the first time ever in the state of Pennsylvania in a T-Ball game played in a regulation Little League Field, a player off the TEE had hit the ball out of the park. It was an automatic home run over the fence.

Ron Liddon made sure he touched all the bases and Darragh Petru, my older brother, my buddy, my favorite of them all, made sure he touched every base on the way to home.



St. Trez won the game 18 to 20. Darragh was exhilarated. He felt he had left his team down when we went on the West Coast Trip for two weeks and he missed the winners' bracket game.

He had made that up today for sure.

In the post-game pep-talk, his Coach said that if the team won one more game in the losers' bracket they would make the final bracket. Darragh knew that Mr. Bee would have his Red Hat but he still felt good.

There would be three games played if St. Trez won out.

After the game Dad invited the Bees over the house for some nectar and an awful lot of pizza. Mr. Bee made his prized fondue and we were all the happiest people there ever were in Pennsylvania.

At the field, when nobody was looking, I saw Darragh give Mr. Bee back his Red Hat.

Mr. Bee showed up a little late for the post-game festivities but not too late for us all to enjoy the fondue and the pizza that afternoon.

He had dropped off his Red Hat to a nice family who had recently given birth to unexpected triplets. The triplets were just less than a year old.

He gave the dad and mom the full story and he "talked" it over with his Red Hat, and everything was OK.

He gave specific instructions, even the song. Another family and then another and then another would all eventually learn how to swim the safe way because of Mr. Bee and his Red Hat.

Bravo to the Red Hat. Bravo to Mr. Bee. Bravo to my dad who bought the pizza, and the nectar and the soda. Bravo to Wiley Ky Eyely, my cousin from Harrisburg who came to the game.

Bravo also to cousins Brian, Margaret and Lynney, Geoffrey, Myranda Roo, America, Maccadacca, Marty Sr., Erin, and a whole crew of other cousins and well-wishers for Darragh.

They all came to see Darragh him play.

Barbie, Mr. Bee, Dinder, Kimmy, and Davey Boyle were thrilled at the results. Great game! They were all there.

We had a fine celebration that day for sure. There were no lamentations. Darragh had said good-by to his Red Hat and he was OK with it. That's that!

## **What Happened in Darragh's All-Star Tournament**

I forget what the brackets looked like but Darragh's Tee Ball Team all seemed to breathe in some of the sparklies in the dugout that game.

The Red Hat had magical powers for sure. The Red Hat could actually reach out and help anybody for any

reason. Who knows how or why all these good things happened to Darragh, and Mr. Bee?

I am so glad I was there to see it all.

Everybody on Darragh's T-Ball All-Star Team were better ball players from that day on. They could hit better; they could catch better; and they could all run better.

They started to pound the ball in all the games played from that day on.

More importantly they were like vacuum cleaners in the field. When a ball was hit and it was anywhere close to them, it would soon be in their gloves. After the first game, they possibly had three games left.

They played perfect baseball.

They won each game and that meant that they had won the Big Valley T-Ball Tournament. They all got trophies and bright Red Hats that Said All-Star Champs 2030.

What a great life!

Wouldn't it be nice if we all had magical friends?

We still sing this song at home sometimes. One day we'll tell mom and dad why!

My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
My Red Hat keeps me on the ground.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Without my Red Hat I would Fly.  
Cause my Red Hat keeps me on the ground

Thank you for reading this book about the great and magical Red Hat, a friend of many families forever.

Tell your friends about how one day a kind and magical Red Hat may appear to keep them safe on the ground.

God bless us everyone!.



## Other books by Brian Kelly: ([amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), and Kindle)

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