This is a story I heard a number of years ago on the radio. A writer, Paul Auster, was overseeing a contest for National Public Radio called “The National Story Project,” in which listeners could send in stories and hear a few of them read on the air. This one was sent in by an elderly woman whose name I am unfortunately unable to recall or locate. I will try to be as faithful to the original as I can be, although, since I am reproducing it from memory, it will not be word-for-word.

Retold by: David Frankel

This is the story of something that happened one Christmas day during my childhood.

My family was living down south. It was during the Great Depression, and times were hard, for us and for most people. On that particular Christmas morning, my sister and I opened our presents at home, and then the family piled into the car to go to my grandmother’s house for the Christmas meal. It was raining, and hardly anybody was out on the roads.

As we drove, we saw some people standing at a bus stop. It looked like a family – a man, a woman, and two little girls. It looked like our family, the one in the car, except these people were more poorly dressed and were out in the weather. They had some luggage with them and looked as if they’d been on the road a long time. We knew the buses didn’t run much on Christmas.

We drove past them, but then the car got slower and slower, until finally my father stopped it. “I can’t,” he said to my mother. “I can’t just leave them out there in the rain. Not on Christmas.” So we turned around and went back.

The man at the bus stop said they were trying to get to Birmingham, where he thought his brother might be able to get him a job. They looked as if they’d been traveling for quite a while, and as if they hadn’t had a whole lot to eat while they’d been doing so. My father told them to get in the car. He said his mother always made too much food for Christmas anyway. So we all squeezed in.

We ate a big meal at my grandmother’s, and we helped the family dry out their clothes. I think maybe my grandmother slipped them some clothes they hadn’t come in with, but she did it quiet. Then, when the eating was done, my father asked those two little girls, “Has Santa found you to give you your presents?” The two girls shook their heads, and I can still see how their faces looked – the look of children who know that no matter how sad they get, it’s important that they not complain. “Well,” my father said, “I’ll get you each a ten-dollar bill, which was quite a bit of money back then. The man didn’t want to take it, but my father made him. “Go ahead,” he said. “I know what it’s like to be broke and not be able to feed your family.” When we drove away, I kept looking out through the back window at the two girls. One was wearing the new sweater, and the other was holding the new doll. We waved at each other until I couldn’t see them anymore.

That was how my father taught me the meaning of Christmas.
I had me at ‘hello.’” Kali had me at ‘Papa.’ Just like that was Papa, and I’m still Papa. It’s strange how life twists and turns. I would never have predicted I would feel this way. They have their charms. It’s kind of sad — when my sons were born, I was in Gallup, and I was working all the time, and I couldn’t see them except for every other weekend when I got some time off. I see more of these granddaughters than I did of my own sons. Maybe it’s my way of getting back that time I didn’t have then.

How does teaching compare to medicine? They’re both arts. They say the practice of medicine is an art, and that’s absolutely true. There’s a lot of wisdom and experience, and it’s not a cookbook like everyone wants it to be — you don’t just plug in symptoms and come out with “best practices.” Teaching is the same way figuring out how to transmit information also turns out to be an art form. And I’ve been getting better at it. Boy, I sure appreciate teachers.

There’s a lot of teaching in being a physician: you have to teach your staff what you want them to do, and there’s a lot of back and forth. But classroom teaching is very different, and I was not at all prepared for that, so I’ve kind of had to learn as I go along.

What made you come to LCC? I retired four years ago, but I needed something to do. I had to get my brain working again, so I wandered over here and talked to the dean, and he said, “Yeah, I can give you something to do,” and I became an adjunct. Then, after a full semester and a summer semester, I was hired full-time.

I have taught Anatomy and Physiology II, and one of Microbiology. And then Biology 116, which is a fun class. It’s diseases for regular people, for non-science majors.

Do you mention Ebola? Oh, yeah, I already have. When you teach a course on diseases, and there’s a disease going around, you have to mention it. I also teach diseases in Bio 216, Pathophysiology, which is 116 on steroids, as like to put it. I teach 216 in the spring, and it’s for nursing majors, so it has a lot more detail.

What have you found most rewarding about teaching? It’s a challenge, and you have to stay challenged. My brain was starting to shrink, so I had to juice it up again. Even when I stop being a full-timer, I’ll still want to adjunct. That way I can teach for a semester and then take a semester off and travel. When it’s cold, go where it’s warm — that sort of thing.

Is traveling one of your hobbies? You know, I don’t really have hobbies. I had a hobby, I skied, and then I had to stop skiing because I went into residency and I had no time. I didn’t read a book for five years, I didn’t watch TV, I didn’t even know who was running for president. You’re really way out of life in that situation. When I had a little more time, I started to go back to things, and I found out I was too old. I taught my sons how to ski, and by the time they were twelve and fourteen years old, I had blown a rotator cuff, snapped a tendon in my thumb, and cracked a knee cap. So I thought, they’re on their own now. I really don’t have much time for hobbies. I never have.

You’re busy working. Yeah, and even now, teaching is time-consuming. I don’t do yard work like I should, as my wife will tell you. I think it’s important to keep engaged, keep your brain stimulated, but I do look forward to being less active.

Sounds like your hobby now is, “I want to play with the grandkids.” Yeah. I want to teach them to ski, I think I can do that, although we’ll see. I used to climb mountains — my sons and I used to climb Long’s Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park. It’s a great climb, and it gets you on top of Colorado and gives you a view you’ll never get otherwise. Those were my hobbies back when I had time.

One year, the pope was in Colorado for World Youth Day. This was quite a while ago, in the ’80s. There were youth visiting from all over the world, and they all happened to pick the same day to go up Long’s Peak. Very seldom do you see many people walking up and back, but on that day there was a single-file line from top to bottom, with people speaking thirty different languages. You could hear French, Italian, German — all these healthy people going up the same mountain you were. That was one of my favorite days.
LCC’s Runnin’ Lopes Women’s Basketball

Early Season Update

By: Tom Sutherland, Head Coach

Two weeks into the 2014-15 season, and the women’s basketball team sits at 3-4, having played only one home game so far. Began the season up in Casper, and have also played in Garden City and Colby. Putting the miles on the van!

While the team struggled to score up in Casper, it has scored points in bounces the last five games, averaging 100+ points/game. The girls are playing very fast, very hard, and with a stronger sense of purpose as it relates to our style of play.

In our only home game to date, 11/4 against Dodge City, the team overcame a 17-point halftime deficit to pull out a very nice win, final score 103-96. While very disappointed at half-time, the team played the second half with great resolve and determination, and simply refused to lose their home opener. Khadijah Vigil came back from an in-game knee injury to score 32 points, and Gabriela Jimenez had 20 points, to help lead the way. Ariel Rosa was ALL over the floor the entire game, and had 8 steals. The entire team was very appreciative of the home crowd and their support.

Overall, the team remains a work in progress, as it is very early in the season. While the team has struggled to rebound the ball, and has fouled at an alarming rate, the girls are working hard to improve the level of play. The sophomores are playing with a sense of urgency, as they realize this will be their final season of competition at LCC. The freshmen are trying to find their way in a unique style of play, and will become more comfortable with the system with continued game experience.

For those unaware of how we play the game, or our style of play, we play at an extreme pace/tempo, with the goal of wearing down the opponent in the second half. Our style demands that our girls play with supreme effort and conditioning, as we press the entire game. With that scheme in mind, the players play all-out for roughly 45 seconds, then the next 5 player unit/shift comes into the game. We play every girl in every game, so we do get full participation, which is rather unusual at the college level. As a result, we believe we play a very exciting brand of basketball, and highly entertaining. Community support last season was excellent, and we hope for that support this season, as well.

Every season for every sport is a journey into the unknown. While that involves apprehension, it also creates a strong sense of excitement. With that in mind, the women’s basketball program is looking forward to the journey ahead, and are proud to represent LCC.

LCC’s Runnin’ Lopes Women’s Basketball 2014-2015 Roster

Bree Torres
Miroslava Rangel
Ariel Rosa
Taryn Frazier
Kelley Grinvalds
Vanessa Mestas
Gabriela Jimenez
Fatou Keita
Colina Quayle
Kim Roth
Seidman Rushlow
Devyn Lapp
Kristina Robertson
Khadijah Vigil

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
— Nelson Mandela