

## THE KID

It was just past five o'clock on Friday as we stood in front of Reney's, the only general store in our town of Grantham, New Hampshire. We did the same thing every day after school, rush home, change clothes, and go down to Reney's. It was fun, the same old gang, Ken, Roger, Beth, and me. We all grew up together in Grantham, N.H. and were like best friends. Beth and I had started in First Grade at Grantham Elementary. We have been like sisters to this date. It seemed like only yesterday, and here we were now in our senior year at Mascoma High School.

We had our afternoon laughs and were walking home when we saw a guy on a bicycle coming up Route 10 from Newport. He wore the latest bicycle fashion wear, black spandex shorts, red spandex shirt, and a pointed red and yellow helmet. He was about a half mile away but coming fast, he rode like those guys racing in Europe. As he neared us he brought the bike to a smooth stop next to the bike rack, and gracefully jumped off. It was late September, the sun was setting and the temperature had begun to drop. A large sweat stain was evident on his shirt. He removed his helmet, I could see steam rising from his forehead. His red hair was kind of short and dripping sweat. As he put his bike in the rack just outside Reney's entrance Ken moved towards him.

“ That's my bike spot.”

The boy looked up at Ken, who was at least five inches taller and 50 pounds heavier, and nodded. He moved the bike into the next slot.

Ken laughed.

“ That's also my bike spot.”

The boy laughed, shook his head, then moved his bike around the building and leaned it against the sidewall. He confidently strode into Reney's as we walked up the road. Ken and his brother Roger were laughing and having a lot of fun but I didn't think it was so

funny, they seemed like bullies to me. I had a funny feeling that was not the last of the bike rider. As I neared my home I remembered where I first saw him. It was about two weeks ago, I was doing my work out for the high school long distance team. I was running my regular four to five mile program up at Eastman Lake when I heard.

“ You can run faster than that”. He ran past me with a big smile on his face and waved, within thirty seconds he was out of sight. I thought to myself.

“Wow can that guy run”.

The following Monday morning I waited with my friends for the school bus. Beth pulled me aside.

“ Mary, guess who I saw over the weekend? The kid on the bike. He was running up Route 10. Even though I was riding my bike I had a tough time passing him.”

“ You’re kidding. Did you see where he lives?”

Beth turned, to point up Route 10, and whispered, “shhh there he is.”

Walking towards us with books under his arm was our new “townie.” He was not far away when the school bus from Newport pulled up. I was the first to get on; I looked out the rear window and saw him trotting smoothly toward us. When he got on the bus and started to take a seat next to me , Roger couldn’t resist and said

“ That’s my seat.”

There was a roar of laughter; news spreads fast in a little town like Grantham. The kids from Newport didn’t know what was so funny, but laughed anyway. Our new kid in town shrugged and walked to the rear of the bus. I was a little disappointed, it was my chance to get to know him. He sat far from me. I turned and took a good look at him. He had a very short haircut and not an ounce of fat on him, his forearms seemed too big for the rest of his body and the veins on his arms were bulging out. He was nice looking, but his nose seemed a little flat. As I stared at him, he smiled and turned on a “Walk-Man” and started nodding his head to the music.

By the beginning of October the rumor mill had nailed everything down. Our new kid in

town was Tim Keogh, a transfer from Massachusetts, who loved music, and was definitely a loner. The local guys, especially Ken, gave him a hard time whenever the opportunity presented itself. They kidded him about not wanting to play football, and his joining the school band. Tim was not only a loner but was also very quiet. He ran, rode his bike, practiced the guitar, and listened to his Walk-man.

One day on the bus with the usual kidding going on Ken was really out of line. Tim lost his cool. It was the first time I saw him get angry. He got up from his seat in the rear and started up the aisle towards Ken who saw him coming and quickly stood up. Ken held his right arm down on his side and his fist was tightly closed.

“Come on Wimpy you can have the first swing.”

Tim stopped about three feet short of Ken and stared at him. Tim’s face was beet red. He said nothing, just turned around and walked back to his seat. The rest of the ride to Mascoma was very quiet. I felt sorry for him, he was just too small to get into a fight with Ken.

A few days later as Beth and I stood outside Reney’s, Tim ran by the store, and stopped to help Beth’s little sister who was struggling to jump rope. He knelt down next to her, and showed her how to hold the rope. Tim stood up and showed her how to jump rope. He started slowly and the sound of the rope hitting the ground had an easy tempo. Within thirty seconds the sound gradually increased until the rope made a whoosh sound like the blade of a helicopter. The speed of the jumps was unbelievable and then he started crossing hands and jumping as if he were running. This kid was beginning to amaze me. Beth was laughing and I applauded. He smiled again at me, as he took a deep bow.

“I’m Mary Pierce, where did you learn to jump rope like that?”

“I’m Tim Keogh, I grew up in Boston with five sisters. If you think that was good you should have seen them jump. They made me look sick.”

I thought to myself .

“He’s not bad looking.”

Tim continued on his run and waved goodbye. A minute later Ken showed up

“ What did Wimpy want?”

“Why don’t you let up on the bully program? It’s not very nice and kind of getting old.”

The weeks went by and it was close to the holidays. It was a quiet but cold Sunday morning in December and I was cross-country skiing at Eastman Lake when I saw Tim running down Snow Hill Road which had just been plowed. We were not far from one another and both stopped at the same time. There was a far away sound, like a whimper, or a crying child. Tim took a few strides, stopped again, turned his head toward the lake, and tried to hear the sound again, but all was quiet. It was only about eight in the morning and the Lake was very still. I looked around to see where the sound came from. The morning sky was dark gray and I could smell the odor of wood burning stoves, from across the lake. He started to jog again, when we both heard the sound again, this time louder. It sounded like an animal in trouble. This time he recognized the direction it was coming from and ran down the snow covered hill to the edge of the lake. While I was taking my ski’s off, I recognized the sound as a dog yelping. Tim slowly knelt down on the ice and started crawling forward. About fifty yards from shore I saw the head of the dog that was struggling, he was trying to get up out of the water and onto the ice. Tim got down on his stomach and was gradually sliding forward towards the dog. The dog’s cries got louder. The ice had a blue-gray appearance which means it still isn’t very solid. I could see small cracks and water near the shoreline. Suddenly the ice gave way and Tim was now swimming as fast as he could towards the dog. With Tim swimming forward the ice started to break up and the dog swam towards Tim. He grabbed the dog by the nape of the neck and swam back towards me.

“ Mary, can you help me?“

As they neared shore I knelt down.

Tim yelled through blue lips and a mouth full of water.

“Grab the dog.”

I pulled the dog out of his arms and onto land, we stumbled and slipped our way up the snowy hill to the road. Tim now took hold of the wet dog. I threw my ski jacket around Tim and the puppy. They were both shivering.

It was not long before a security patrol vehicle came upon us. We jumped into the rear of the Jeep and told the officer what had happened. He recognized the dog. It was a small, black and brown, Yorkshire Terrier.

“That’s Cinnamon, it belongs to Senator Putnam. He notified us the dog was missing.”

It was only a matter of minutes before we parked in front of Senator Putnam’s home.

Senator Robert Putnam, of New Hampshire had just moved into Eastman.

Before we could say anything Mrs. Cynthia Putnam opened the door and took the puppy in her arms. She was already crying.

“Oh, thank god, we were so worried about her. What happened, please come in.”

With that, Senator Putnam drove up and parked his car. He had been out searching for the puppy.

“Where did you find her? I’ve been searching for her for close to an hour.”

We started explaining everything when the Senator interrupted.

“Let’s talk this over later, you kids need to get warm, Cynthia get some warm blankets for them.”

Cynthia gently placed the dog down in front of the fireplace. After Tim and I were wrapped in warm blankets we sat next to the dog.

Senator Putnam thanked the security officer, turned to us and said.

“Come with me, my car is good and warm and you kids need to get home.”

As he drove from Eastman to Grantham, I told the Senator all the details of how Tim saved his dog.

A few days later our senior class at was invited to a political program at Dartmouth's Auditorium. The program moderator for the evening made the usual agenda comments and then proudly introduced Senator Robert Putnam.

“Good Evening ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to be with you this evening. Before I begin my regular presentation on the Social Reform Program for the State I must tell you a short story. Last Sunday morning there was a knock at my door. Upon answering the door my wife saw a security officer, a young lady, and a young man holding our dog “Cinnamon” in his arms. The young man and our dog were soaking wet and looked very cold. The security officer told me what happened. Our dog Cinnamon had apparently got out of the house when I went into town to get the newspaper. As he started across the frozen lake he must have hit a soft spot and fell into the icy water. The young man hearing the dog’s cries for help dove into the freezing water and saved Cinnamon. After doing some investigation into the young man whom saved our dog, I was not surprised by his courage. The young man is with us tonight. He is part of the Mascoma High School band, who will be playing for you later. His name is Tim Keogh, formerly of our neighboring state of Massachusetts. He is also last year’s NCAA lightweight boxing champion. He will try out for our country’s Olympic team this year. Tim, please stand up.”

Tim rose from his seat and the entire auditorium gave a round of applause. I looked down the aisle where Ken, and Roger were seated and noticed them slowly slink down in their seats so no one could see them.

Needless to say the following Monday as we boarded the bus for Mascoma High things were very quiet. I turned to look at Tim and noticed a very slight smile on his face. Tim took his regular seat at the rear of the bus, Ken got up from where he was sitting and sat next to him. They both started laughing and pushing one another. I figure from now on that things may change in the little town of Grantham N.H. NO MORE WIMPY!