



Straight Talk

by Muriel Sluyter

Of Flat Tires & Super Young People

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Greetings, Gentle Reader,

The character that takes command in moments of crucial choices has already been determined by a thousand other choices made earlier in seemingly unimportant moments ... by all those times when the voice of conscience was at war with the voice of temptation ... the decisions that, piece by piece, bit by bit, developed habits of discipline or of laziness; habits of self-sacrifice or self-indulgence; habits of duty and honor and integrity — or dishonor and shame." (Ronald Reagan)

A couple weeks ago, I was on my way to an appointment and to take perishables from our place to a friend, when a huge nail flattened my rear tire. I stopped; a young man, Walt, stopped behind me and asked if he could help, confessing that he had never changed a tire.

My husband had changed the only flat we had experienced in my car, and I didn't know how to get at the equipment. We looked at each other and grinned, knowing this was going to be a learning experience.

He had found the jack and the "doughnut," when I mentioned I had a physical therapy appointment and was almost late. He immediately offered to take me into town and come back to change the tire. He said he would come get me in an hour. I was embarrassed, but gratefully accepted his offer.

He had a college friend who would put my perishables into her refrigerator and let us pick them up after my appointment. Accordingly, he dropped me off and left.

An hour later, he and his friend gave me the bad news that the wheel wouldn't come off. She had changed tires and had tried to help, but without success. It was time to call my husband.

Walt hung up the phone and said, "He told me to kick it really hard. He even told me how to kick it. ('Don't kick it with your toe. Turn around and kick it with your heel.')" We laughed as we envisioned applying this high-tech advice.

Arriving at the scene, he walked over, turned backward and gave the tire a tremendous kick with his heel. It immediately fell off. When we stopped laughing, he and his

young friend set about finishing the job. She really had done it before, and her experience came in handy.

Putting the doughnut on my car, Walt instructed me to drive slowly; he would stay behind me with his hazard lights on. They waited outside my friends' house while I completed my errand, then continued to follow me. As I pulled into the driveway of the tire shop, I honked and waved at them; they waved back and went on their way.

This young man and woman were top of the line. They don't get any better. They drove all over town, willingly running me here and there, though I was a complete stranger. They changed my tire, then stayed behind me to insure that I would reach the shop in safety. If they had been my own grandkids, they couldn't have been more thoughtful and kind, yet great fun (their good humor neither flagged nor failed).

By now they are in Fort Collins for practice, he for football and she for volleyball. I hope they have fun while they learn.

To the two sets of parents of these young people: You can be proud of them. America is safe in their hands. They have made those little choices that have led, bit by bit, to habits of discipline, self-sacrifice, duty and honor. Congratulations. You have done well.