

THE ONE SHOE DIARIES™

A journey across America, one shoe at a time.

A Randall Louis Hamilton Photography Collection



Our residence on Pensacola Beach after Hurricane Ivan.



THE JOURNEY BEGINS

On September 16th of 2004, Sharon and I boarded up the house we were renting on Pensacola beach in preparation for Hurricane Ivan's arrival. The storm hit with a vengeance as we hunkered down 10 miles inland at a small house in Pace, Florida. Ivan lashed at us for over 8 hours with winds gusting to over 120 mph. The small house lost almost all of its shingles and water leaked in causing the ceiling to fall in on us, but the house made it through. Our place on the beach was not so lucky. A storm surge of over 14 feet submerged Pensacola Beach and washed much of its residents belongings into the sea.

We were lucky as we got most of our valuable items out before it hit and only lost furniture, appliances and sporting gear, essentially just "stuff".

Pensacola Beach was isolated due to the Bob Sikes bridge suffering severe damage. It was two weeks before residents were allowed out to survey their damage. The streets were covered by sand so deep the only way residents could access their properties was to walk from the main beach parking lot. Which meant some had to walk as many as three miles in blistering heat. The sand was so deep in some places that only the roofs of homes were visible. It was a walk we will never forget. The Red Cross was patrolling on ATVs with water and MREs to help everyone keep going in the harsh conditions. I remember sitting outside our destroyed residence on rusted and mud covered beach chairs eating MREs thinking, "Now what?"

The walk back was even worse. I constructed a makeshift cart out of a tow dolly and a wagon to carry my TV and anything else that was salvageable. It was two miles of total surrealism. I felt as if I were in a march of zombies in limbo. All of us wondering where to go next when we did get back to the parking lot. Still vivid in my mind are the looks of loss and confusion hanging on their faces. Sharon and I just knew we had to get out of Pensacola for a bit, and away from the chaos and destruction.



Beautiful Sunset on the Gulf of Mexico

Malden Ave.

Pensacola Beach, Florida

N 30.338620 • W -87.101069

October 8, 2006

After spending a few days in Tampa with my friend Jason, Sharon and I got a wild idea. An idea to buy a motor home and just cruise around for a while until we found somewhere we wanted to settle down.

That is where our story really began. When one door closes another one opens. We began writing down our adventures and thought about creating a book, but we wanted to do something different. But what? Then it sort of just came to us. We started noticing numerous lost and/or abandoned solo shoes littering the highways. We thought about how each one represents a life, a story all its own. It would be these shoes that would provide the different and intriguing element that would be the basis of our travel book. The first shoe we came across after deciding to catalog them was a lone flip flop, ironically where the journey first began, on Pensacola Beach.

This flip flop, **Shoe #1**, was found while walking the "Puggles" down the still sandy roads of Pensacola Beach around two years after Hurricane Ivan hit. I did not have my camera with me at the time, so I had to run back to the shoe after the walk hoping it would still be there, and it was. I have now come to find out, lost shoes seem to stay lost for a long time. Sometimes after photographing a shoe I may

drive by it several times afterwards, looking to see where it moves to. Some do not move at all. Some travel several hundred feet. And a few do eventually disappear.

I encourage others to see the locations of our photographed shoes on the One Shoe Diaries™ online interactive map. They may still be lying out there as we never move them. It just seems sacreligious to disturb them where they rest.



The "Puggles" Jack -n- Inger

SHOE #1



I-10 Eastbound
Cantonment, Florida
N 30.503726 • W -87.259245
October 12, 2006

While visiting Pensacola we often stay at the Styx River RV Resort in Alabama. It is a little far from Pensacola but we love it because of the great access to the crystal clear Styx River lined with soft white sand bars. The "Puggles" love to run and swim for hours there and the fishing is not bad either. One evening as we were on our way to have dinner at Randy Bonner's house, a hopefully soon-to-be well-known country music artist, we were running late as usual. We had trouble getting Jack to go "potty" before we left :) So when we saw the boot, *Shoe #2*, for the first time on the highway we did not have time to stop and I had to pray it would still be there as it looked like a great shoe to photograph. I was really starting to feel the shoe obsession and was dying to get another photo for the One Shoe Diaries collection.

As luck would have it, the boot was still there the next time we drove down I-10 eastbound outside Pensacola and I was able to get the shot. That was the first time I laid down on a highway with traffic streaming by to take a photo. It was a little nerve-racking, but more so for Sharon I think. After this photo we set ground rules for when and where we stop to take photos. It was complete with a broken shoe string and a truck that happened to be coming around the curve at just the right moment. It has turned out to be one of my favorite images.

During the Country for a Cause event starring Randy Bonner we got the honor of hearing Henry Botts recite his heart tugging poem The Death of Country, Henry Botts was the youngest person to ever play at the Grand Ol Opry and was introduced by Roy Acuff after hiding his true age. I will always remember his signature tip of the hat when the audience stood and applauded, he truly is an icon of an era gone by.



SHOE #2



Highway 285
Niceville, Florida
N 30.534763 • W -87.457923
October 28, 2006



Discovered near Eglin Air Force base in Niceville Florida on Highway 285, shoe #6 is, and probably will always be, one of the most unique and interesting shoes I will come across. One cannot help but wonder about the story behind the duct tape.

I have a good friend who shared a memory with me that was evoked after seeing this shoe on the website. It was of his first 10K race. Where, in addition to wearing a hangover from the night before, he also wore his favorite pair of worn leather Converse that required one shoe to be reinforced with duct tape to go the distance. He loved those shoes and soon duct tape became the only thing holding them together before their eventual demise.



Dolphins playing in the gulf of Mexico,
Photo taken while we were on a boat
off of nearby Destin, Florida Beaches

It has been great to have friends take interest in my project. In fact, I cannot take credit for spotting this wonderful thought-provoking shoe. My friend Wayne, husband of Alice, had seen it on his way to school for weeks. When he heard I was photographing one shoes he insisted that I HAD to go photograph the shoe. This marked the first time I got outside involvement in my project. Wayne now notices one shoes lying around quite a bit now, and finds himself looking for them. He caught the "One Shoe Fever" :) Thanks Wayne.



SHOE #6



Highway 41
 Port Charlotte, Florida
 N 29.953322 • W -82.063613
 January 3, 2007

↖ Sunset at the Port
 Charlotte Beach Park

Doing good deeds to give back to society at a grass roots level is part of what we want to be able to do with the One Shoe Diaries. We want to share what we are doing in order to educate others as to the small ways in which they can also positively effect the lives of others. But talking about these "deeds" walks a fine line between educating and seemingly boasting. In telling you the story behind *Shoe #22*, I will attempt to walk that line.

At the highway 41 bridge, on the Port Charlotte side, there are a number of homeless/transients either living or just passing time under the bridge. Being in South Florida they are accustomed to warm weather. So when the weather was to turn below freezing Sharon and her sister became worried for those sleeping down there. They gathered up some sweaters, jackets and warm blankets they no longer needed and Sharon and I went down there that evening and distributed them. We handed our bundle to a few guys who in turn promised to pass on what they were not going to use to others. It was a selfish thing in a way, because it made us feel good to help someone else out, but is that a bad thing?

This photo was taken a few days later when I went down to the 41 bridge near where we gave the clothes out to take a photo of the gorgeous sunset on display that evening. When I climbed down the rocks to get the perfect angle on the sunset, I saw a sandal washed up on shore and proceeded to get this photo. It has become a favorite with my viewers for its beauty. But what the viewers cannot see is the ugly side of this photo. Just a feet away from this shoe there was a group of people so down on their luck that they were sleeping on the cold ground.

A black leather sandal with a strap and buckle is lying on a sandy beach. In the background, the sun is setting over the ocean, creating a warm, golden glow. A small, white, torn-edge tag with the text "SHOE #22" in red is attached to a piece of green grass in the foreground. The sandal is positioned in the lower center of the frame, and the grass is on the right side. The overall scene is serene and evocative of a beach at dusk.

SHOE #22

*Our friends at the
Hounds on Henry
dog park in Punta Gorda.*



Hounds on Henry Dog Park

Punta Gorda, Florida

N 29.924886 • W -87.058097

January 11, 2007

For the last few years we have been spending our winters in Charlotte County, Florida and have come to feel right at home there. One place we visit almost every day while visiting is the Hounds on Henry Dog Park in Punta Gorda in order to wear our hounds out and let them socialize with other dogs. Jack and Jinjer have been visiting dog parks since they were puppies. Which is what gave us half of the title for our travel website DogParksandBrewPubs. We have hit dozens of dog parks around the U.S. but Hounds on Henry (H/O/H) is our home park.

We and the Puggles have made many friends at H/O/H. We have noticed that dog parks have their own cliques. People tend to go at the same time every day, so everyone gets to know one another. Bella, Alexi, Ginger, Barney, Stella, Rocky, CiCi, Nugget, Addy, Tiwineddy and others were "regulars". With a pure bred beagle, Fredo, being the Puggles best bud. He was pure energy. He loved nothing better than to be chased by Jack. He would taunt Jack by picking up a ball and running from him. They would run and run until Jack got close and growled. Fredo would then drop the ball and run the other way. The most humorous moment came when Fredo snuck up on an older lady as she bent down to pick up her dog and stole her straw hat right from her head and took off running with Jack in hot pursuit. Jack caught him, ripped the hat from his mouth and proceeded to rip the flower off and tear it up. The lady was a good sport, she just laughed and laughed.

*H/O/H was surrounded by a tall black chain link fence. One day upon entering the park we noticed someone had apparently hung one sandal up on the fence, now known as **Shoe #26**. We thought it was fitting we found a solo shoe at Hounds on Henry since we spent so much time there and made so many friends and memories there. We always look forward to getting back to our home dog park.*

A close-up photograph of a black shoe sole, likely a sneaker, with a white label attached to it. The label has the text "SHOE #26" in red. The sole is black and has a textured, possibly rubber, surface. The label is white with a torn edge and is attached to the sole with a piece of clear tape. The background is a bright, cloudy sky.

SHOE #26



Live • Love • Laugh • Play

I-10 Westbound
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.503962 • W -87.224530
February 8, 2007

The Pensacola Bay Area Advertising Federation was holding its annual ADDYs award banquet and I was the creative director on several entries that idgroup submitted that year. So Sharon and I drove up from South Florida to attend. Idgroup did win a few silver awards but felt snubbed when our DestinFirst campaign did not get awarded. Everyone on the idgroup team left feeling a little dejected. Upon checking email that night I noticed that Angela, one of the idgroup team members, had gotten home that night and felt compelled to write and share her thoughts on how much she loved spending time with us all and what a great team we have. It was one of the most heartfelt and inspiring letters I have ever received. Angela has become someone over the years that Sharon and I both admire and feel so lucky to have as a friend.

Immediately following Hurricane Ivan Sharon and I were, for a lack of a better term, homeless. Angela and her husband Shawn found out and volunteered use of their house to us for a few weeks while they stayed in Maine with family. I do not think we would have gotten our lives together had they not done that for us. They gave us a place from which we could begin piecing together our plans of getting a motorhome and hitting the road. I remember pulling up in their driveway with the "CruiseMaster" and loading it with all of our belongings, gearing up for the adventures that lie ahead. We were at one of those life-changing moments that everyone writes about. It was both scary and exciting.

About a year later we got an email from her husband Shawn explaining that Angela had to undergo emergency brain surgery. She had been experiencing dizziness one night and had what could only be described as a stroke. She had slurred speech, disorientation and faintness. Our hearts dropped, we felt sadness and a bit of anger. Angela and Shawn were such good people and parents of two great young boys, Payton and Lincoln. How could something so tragic, happen to such good people? How could Karma not take care of them? We got good news the next day that she pulled through and was in good spirits. However she would still have a tough road to get completely well again.

This Sponge Bob Square Pants flip flop, **Shoe #31**, is the happiest-looking shoe I have photographed to date and reminds me of Angela and her wonderful spirit in various ways. First, it was spotted on the entrance ramp to I-10 by Angela's neighborhood. Two, we had just gotten that wonderful email from Angela the night before I found this shoe. Finally, its big grinning face forces me to recall the wooden sign Angela and Shawn had hanging in their house as their motto...Live, Love, Laugh, Play.



SHOE #31

Shady Lane

Charlotte Harbor, Florida

N 26.959308 • W -82.061199

February 19, 2007

I had been looking so hard to find a solo woman's high heel out there on the road. It is like spotting a rare bird for bird watchers. So I was so excited when I came across **shoe #38**. It was located on a street behind Sharon's sister Rachie's house. This is an area that was hit very hard by the eye of Hurricane Charley and many of the homes almost 3 years later are just now being rebuilt.

After Hurricane Charley hit Charlotte County, Sharon and I drove down there the day after to bring ice, water and food to Rachel and Donny and to help them however they needed. There was no electricity or water. We spent the night there without air conditioning and it was so hot, no breeze at all! We tried to sleep but all we did was sweat. It was not fun. We did not stay the next night as we were using up precious resources. Our thoughts were with everyone down there for a speedy recovery. I remember on the drive home thinking "I hope to God nothing like this ever hits Pensacola.

As fate would have it. Only three weeks later Hurricane Ivan ripped through Pensacola and surrounding areas with a fury. It was a life-changing event for Sharon and I, plus many others. It forever altered our outlook on life. Stuff became unimportant and family and friends took on a new importance to us.



*Hanging with friends at the Pelican Post bar in
Rachie and Donny's place in Port Charlotte, Florida*



SHOE #38



Highway 98

Gulf Breeze, Florida

N 26.959308 • W -82.061199

March 16, 2007

To launch our journey out of Florida to head west, we held our inaugural exhibition of the One Shoe Diaries. The exhibition benefited the charity Shoes That Fit and was sponsored by idgroup. I have been part of the idgroup team for almost a decade. I feel blessed to have such a great group of people to work with. We are an eclectic team, with diverse talents and backgrounds but mesh perfectly together.

The day of the exhibition was crazy. Sharon and I were running frantic around town trying to get everything together for the night. While driving around, solo shoes were popping up everywhere it seemed. I only had time to photograph *shoe #48*. Being a kid's shoe it fit well with the theme of the night of trying to raise money to help Shoes That Fit provide new shoes to school children. It was found on a highway I previously traveled everyday when I lived in Gulf Breeze for a couple years. I also spent many mornings at the Waffle House seen in the distance. It always evokes emotion in me to see a place that was so familiar at one time, but now is a faded memory that feels like a whole other life.

The night was a great success on many levels, but most of all it was great time spent with great friends. Special Thanks goes to my mentor and great friend, Mona Amodeo, for a making the great evening possible!

*The idgroup team at the
Pensacola Cultural Center
One Shoe Diaries Exhibition*



GALLERY NIGHT SPRING FLING

Check out more than 30 galleries, jewelry stores and other businesses in downtown Pensacola as they open their doors to the public for art and other entertainment. You can see Randy Hamilton's "One Shoe Diaries," which is the first ever public viewing of the collection at the Pensacola Cultural Center. Or check out the evolution of women's work in Pensacola history at the Pensacola Historical Museum. Also, there are four artists you can meet Elaine Savage, Eve Wilson, Julia Johnson and Betty Jackson and view their exhibit, "Art from the Heart," at the Quayside Gallery. Plus, much, much more. 5-9 p.m. Friday, March 16 Downtown Pensacola

Free

434-5371

*Article clipped from
IN Pensacola Newspapers*



SHOE #48



Veterans Blvd.
Metairie, Louisiana
N 30.001621
W -90.134912
April 3, 2006

Sharon and I had been to New Orleans numerous times in the past but had not been back to the Big Easy since Hurricane Katrina. We had felt like we had experienced enough hurricane devastation to last a lifetime. But since we were passing by New Orleans we thought it would be nice to visit again as the region needs tourism. We were surprised to find how much remained the same. The French Quarter and the Garden District looked largely unscarred. It was the outlying areas that were still in ruins. We drove through Metairie and saw numerous damaged homes. The Ninth Ward area was in shambles. It was overwhelming to us the feeling of loss that was present there, we did not linger long as we felt like we were intruding on people's personal tragedies.

Driving through Metairie we came across *shoe #56*. Lying in the middle of the road next to one of the many surgical masks that residents used during the aftermath to avoid breathing any dangerous environmental health hazards. A sobering reminder of the tough times that were just a short time ago. Hopefully a disaster like this will not be repeated.

While in the New Orleans area we stay in Abita Springs, home of the Abita Brewery. The town is a great southern small town. Close to New Orleans but world's away. If ever in Abita be sure to visit the Abita Brewpub for a TurboDog beer, Rausch's Market for lunch and the Abita Cafe for breakfast with biscuits the size of your head!



SHOE #56



Interstate 35 South

Austin, Texas

N 30.262215

W -97.736190

April 18, 2006



As we began to go along on our first journey out west we imagined the perfect shoe to find in each state. A flip-flop in Florida, a stiletto in Vegas, a moccasin in New Mexico, and a cowboy boot in Texas. So as we entered into Texas we thought there was less than a slim chance to find a cowboy boot because cowboys would never leave their boots on the road. Their boots are sacred to them we thought.

While driving back to McKinney Falls State Park after a great dinner we spotted *shoe #67*. It was an ornate brown cowboy boot in the middle of Friday evening traffic on I-35. I was unable to stop right away due to congestion so we got off at the next exit to circle back. But if you have ever been in Austin you would know that is easier said than done. It was getting dark quick so we needed to hurry. After two loops trying to get to just the right exit ramp we finally got back to the boot. We pulled off unto a berm. I grabbed my camera and ran back to the boot.

The boot happened to be right at the split of an exit ramp and the interstate, a more precarious spot it could not be. As I snapped the shutter, cars whizzed by me on both sides. I managed to snap two images before running back to the Jeep hoping I got the image I wanted. When I opened the door Sharon looked green, she said she was so nervous watching the cars go speeding within feet of me she felt she was going to throw up. We agreed that was the most dangerous situation I had exposed myself to so far and from now on with situations like that I would stand at a safe distance and use my zoom lens. The photo I got that evening of the cowboy boot has become one of our favorite photos. Austin also became one of our favorite places!





SHOE #67



Balmerhea State Park
Balmerhea, Texas
N 30.262215
W -97.736190
April 18, 2006



*Jack seeking shelter from the
 heat in the Fort Davis Mountains.*

Leaving San Antonio we started getting our first taste of the desert. The vegetation got browner and shorter as we drove west on I-10. So when we pulled into Balmerhea State Park we were surprised to see so much greenery. Even driving down the road to the park, there were fields rich with green crops. Once we explored the park we found out why.

There is a large natural spring that gushes clear fresh water at almost 300 million gallons per hour that irrigates the surrounding farms through a series of ditches. The spring has been walled in to create a large natural spring pool, complete with ladders and diving boards. The water is a beautiful turquoise and ranges in depth from 3' to over 25'. The natural rocky bottom remains in most sections along with a thriving fish population.

We decided the next day to go out hiking in the Fort Davis mountains for a bit with the Puggles. It was pretty hot and they were ready to get out of the heat after a few miles and so were we. The spring pool sounded really good at that point so we made a beeline back to Balmerhea State Park.

The waters of the spring run around 73°-75° year round, a little chilly for us but it was going to feel good after the desert hike so we took the plunge. We are so glad we did. A woman on the side of the pool lent us her mask and snorkel so we could get the full experience. It was amazing under the super clear water. Large catfish were lazily cruising the bottom and small fish were roaming in large schools. There were large boulders with algae on them, it reminded me of snorkeling the reefs of Hawaii only we were in the middle of West Texas!

We were only in town for a bit but there was not much to see anyway. If ever in Balmerhea you must eat at the Bear's Cave, "The Cutest Restaurant in Balmerhea"

A white sneaker with a velcro strap is resting on a wooden bench. The bench is made of dark brown wooden planks. In the background, there is a wooden railing and a clear blue sky with some greenery. A small, torn piece of paper with the text "SHOE #74" is floating in the air above the shoe.

SHOE #74

Taste of India

VIN
OWN

PH 5
FX 5
1001
LAS

Highway 70, White Sands, New Mexico

N 32.782267 • W -106.165311

April 28, 2007

One of the best days of our journey was spent exploring the Las Cruces area and met some of the most interesting people as well.

Starting out we drove over the Organ Mountains out towards the White Sands National Monument and but would have to hit it on the way back because we were seriously running low on gas. After fueling in Alamogordo it was on to Cloudcroft. Cloudcroft was a beautiful rustic mountain town set up in the Sacramento Mountains at 9,000'. The cool mountain air and wooded forests were a great respite from the harsh desert conditions.

On the drive back to White Sands National Monument we came across **Shoe #75**. It was in a good spot where I could position myself to get a photo with the white dunes visible in the background. Another "trophy" for my collection :)

We let the dogs run free in the dunes and they seemed to be running and looking for something. It took us a bit to figure it out but then it hit us. Water. They were searching for the Gulf of Mexico. The sand there looked exactly like the white sand dunes of the Florida Panhandle beaches where the Gulf of Mexico is not far behind. The puzzled look on their faces made us laugh, they were so confused!

After getting back to Las Cruces we briefly stopped at the coach to feed the dogs and immediately headed out for a Thai restaurant the park manager recommended. Upon getting to the restaurant we felt it was a little pricey for Thai food and opted for the Indian restaurant next door. The food there was excellent and we made friends with the owner and manager. In fact they ask a for a friendly favor. When they learned we were heading for Arizona the next day they asked for us to purchase some food coloring only available there and ship it back to them. They promised to reimburse us for it and we trusted them. In exchange for doing this errand they did not charge us for our dinner. After the dinner we were ready for a brew so it was off to a brewpub.

The High Desert Brewing Company was a small old house, in a local neighborhood, that had been converted into a brewpub. Surprisingly they had a large home-brewed selection. We met two gentlemen at the bar and had a great time sharing travel stories with them. The big guy told us a story of how he lost a shoe in Jerusalem some years ago while at the wailing wall. He took his shoes off to pay homage. and upon returning back to his shoes, he was greeted with just a solo shoe.:)





SHOE #75

Interstate 10 Westbound, Texas Canyon, Arizona

N 32.782267 • W -106.165311

April 29, 2007

As we drove out from Las Cruces New Mexico toward Arizona we visited the St. Clair Vineyard to taste New Mexico wines. It was the beginning of a long wine trail for us :) Down the highway we discovered the ghost town of Steins and had to stop as it was right off the highway. At the gift shop I bought a nice chunk of pyrite, a.k.a. fool's gold.

As we drove closer to Arizona the upcoming show in Scottsdale was weighing on my mind. I was beginning to get worried I might not find a great shoe to showcase, or maybe no shoe at all. But just after crossing into Arizona my fears were set free, as I had just spotted a great stiletto boot discarded in the red rock filled Texas Canyon. After I stopped the CruiseMaster, I jumped out and ran the quarter mile back to the boot to take the photo. But as I got ready to shoot, I was greeted with no power. The battery was dead :(Luckily I have a backup camera. It is old and does not take great photos, but this collection is not about the technical quality, but rather the subject so I was trying to be okay with it. I got some alright shots, but not the showcase quality I was hoping for as the lighting was not ideal.

I went back to the motorhome to resume our trek down the road. All the while the fact that I did not get the shot I wanted started to really eat at me. So I talked Sharon into stopping for the night in Benson, Arizona so I could charge my battery and go back to get the photo with my good camera. When I got back to the boot the sun was beginning to set and the light was perfect. It illuminated the mountain in the background beautifully. I was so happy to get this once in a lifetime shot, and have a showcase photo for the Scottsdale exhibition. I even noticed another shoe sitting on the rocks behind me. A bonus shoe!



SHOE #79



East University Dr., Tempe, Arizona

N 33.422089 • W -111.896040

May 1, 2007

The exhibition in Scottsdale was a success. We did not get much traffic coming by but the people that did stop by were great. We met, Dilia Wood and Amy Marvin of the Inspirador Art Gallery and were invited to exhibit there sometime in the coming fall. We finished packing up and were heading to, you guessed it, a local brewpub when we came across this grungy tennis shoe, *shoe #84*.

The Carefree Manor RV Park in Apache Junction is where we resided during our stay in the Phoenix area. Located near the superstition mountains it was a perfect place to explore both urban attractions and the natural beauty of the desert.

One evening we set out to eat at a local tourist attraction named Tortilla Flat. The drive was spectacular, something out of an old west movie. Steep rugged mountains and gorges filled with saguaro cacti. We saw two coyotes and other wildlife. The sun was just starting to set as we twisted and turned down the road towards our destination. And as I always do, I let the gas get pretty low but figured we would get gas at Tortilla Flat. When we came around a turn we saw Canyon Lake for the first time, it was breath-taking. Unlike any scene I have ever come across. A large clear lake set in the middle of huge red rock cliffs and mountains. The light illuminated it just enough to give it a mystical appearance.

We were now getting hungry, this short drive had turned into an hour long now and Tortilla Flat was just around the corner, but to our dismay, it was closed :(This was not good. Sharon asked if we had enough gas to get back. Since there was nothing I could do anyway. I answered with a confident, "sure, no problem, it is not even on the needle yet." I was worried, how was I going to get help out here if we run out of gas?

The fact that around any curve the Jeep might stall out made the drive back very stressful, but I could not show it. The curves and hills seemed to go on forever. It was pitch black now. I remember thinking how I had no flashlight with me and we had no cell phone service. Not good!

After what seemed like hours we emerged out of the desert wilderness with an end in sight. We were also greeted by one of the most beautiful moonrises I have ever witnessed. The moon was a huge ball of orange, silhouetting the saguaros and mountain ridges. But being so low on gas I dared not to stop and take a photo, it will just have to be a scene that is burned forever in our memories.





SHOE #84





1 Journey
9 States
268 Days
5784 Miles
153 Shoes
23 Dog Parks
14 Brewpubs





Abandoned Road, Palm Desert, California
N 33.765891 • W -116.314687
May 11, 2007

Continuing our desert trek, we descended down I-10 into California's Coachella Valley, home of Palm Springs, Indian Wells, Indio, Palm Desert, and other communities. We noticed right away it was a very nice well-landscaped area much like Phoenix, only greener. To my dismay we did pass up three shoes on the steep downhill into the valley, although it was no place to stop a 36 foot motorhome without using the runaway truck ramp. I hoped I did not miss the opportunity to get a shoe in the Palm Springs area.

Well as luck would have it I did get another opportunity for a shoe a couple days later while walking the dogs down an abandoned desert road next to our RV resort. I did not have my camera with me but would return later that day for the shot. After going back out there and getting the shot, I decided to walk down the road further because I had a feeling there may be another shoe to photograph out there. And that feeling proved to be correct. I found shoe #93 and then #94 then #95. As I kept walking they just kept popping up I found #96, #97, #98, #99, #100, #101, and finally shoe #102. I photographed a dozen shoes that evening! And came across only one matching pair in all of those (which I did not photograph :) This was the most prolific day of solo shoe photos to date.

The valley was very hot during the heat of the day so we were unable to do much outdoors. However during our stay we did have great Thai food, found an impressive ale house, and visited several nice dog parks. Maybe we will have to return in winter when it is cooler and explore Joshua Tree National Park. It looked awesome from the brochures.

To Bob in Palm Springs,
KISS MY SHOE!



SHOES #92-103



Highway 5, San Felipe, Mexico
N 31.030042 • W -114.857433
May 18, 2007



Sharon wanted to connect with her friend Liza, in San Diego whom she had not seen in some time. But come to find out her friend, Liza, was not going to be in San Diego at the time we were going to be there. She was going on her annual camping trip with friends on a beach near San Felipe in the Baja of Mexico. Liza asked if we would be interested to join them. Sharon had never been to Mexico before and I was excited for the opportunity for the One Shoe Diaries to go international so we jumped at the chance.

We met up with the group at Calexico, CA and all crossed the border into Mexicali to caravan for the 3 hour ride south to San Felipe. I was going crazy wanting to stop to get shoe photos. We passed up several but we did not want to lose the group. Especially in Mexico. Just inside the town of San Felipe I spotted shoe #106 on the side of the road. We were scheduled to have lunch in town before heading out to the campground. I knew I had to talk Sharon into venturing out to get the shot while everyone was waiting on their food. It proved to be an even better photo than I thought it would be.

That night at the campground it was pure chaos. What was to be a quiet camping trip on the beach turned out to be trying to sleep in the middle of a generator-powered mexican wedding fiesta. Complete with karaoke singing until 4:00 in the morning! I am not sure what was worse, listening to a mexican rendition of "Born to be Wild" or the loud revving of the dune buggy that stormed passed the tent every few minutes. "We are in Hell" I told Sharon. It was all so absurd we busted out laughing.

The next morning we were awakened by a military helicopter buzzing just a few feet above us. Wow, a night to remember for sure. The rest of the trip got progressively better. The beach was beautiful, we cooked great food and got a good night sleep thanks to some ear plugs given to us from a fellow camper, Dana.



Bit stop for a cerveza :)



SHOE #107



Clear Water Dr.

Oak Glen, California

N 34.048033 • W -116.946153

May 23, 2007

After spending weeks in the desert we were ready for some green landscape. We found a small RV park in the town of Oak Glen nestled in a valley at 5000' surrounded by the beautiful San Bernardino Mountains. Oak Glen is famous for its apple orchards. We either ate or sampled apple pie, apple crisp, apple syrup, apple salsa, apple butter, apple cider, apple wine, apple bread, apple soda, apple jelly, apple turnover, apple donuts, apple sauce, apple strudel, apple cake, apple muffin, apple dumpling, apple juice, caramel apples...

After indulging ourselves we searched out a place to hike into the wilderness with the Puggles to burn off all the calories we took in. The forest service headquarters in Oak Glen seemed to be a good place to inquire where we might be able to go hiking. We did not get the answer we were looking for since the office was closed. I assume we were meant to go there because next to the parking lot was a lone sandal, shoe #112. We did eventually discover some great trails to hike at the Wildlands Conservancy at Los Rios Ranchos. Complete with sequoias, streams, wetlands, mountains and more. It was exactly what we were looking for. We are so thankful for organizations like the Wildlands Conservancy that help set aside wildlands for future generations to enjoy them just as nature intended.



*Between every two trees is
a door to a new way of life.
- John Muir*



SHOE #112



Desert Dirt Road • San Timoteo Canyon
N 33.972818 • W -117.108327
May 31, 2007

Just under an hour away from Oak Glen, CA was our next destination, the Fisherman's Retreat RV Resort outside of Redlands, CA. This resort was kind of out in the sticks. However this did give me an abundant amount of desert dirt roads to explore on my mountain bike. I made a point to try and climb a different hill every time I went out riding. Out there it was just me and the hawks with a wide open view of the San Timoteo Canyon.

On one particular ride I came across a whole pile of discarded shoes. By far the largest stash I have ever come across. There were several pairs, but there were also 6 shoes, *shoes #116 to 121*, in the pile that did not have mates. I thought it would create a fun challenge for viewers to find which ones they were. Can you find the 6 solo shoes in this mess of footwear?



View from the coach of a train speeding by the lake.



SHOES #116-121

Shoes That Fit is a national
non-profit organization that
provides new shoes and/or
clothes to children in need so
that they can attend school in
comfort and with dignity. To
learn more visit ShoesThatFit.org.



Wickes Furniture parking lot
West Covina, California
N 34.069438 • W -117.924775
June 2, 2007

Claremont, California is the national headquarters for the Shoes That Fit charity organization. We had just done a benefit exhibition in Claremont the night before and were on our way to L.A. when..BOOM!! It scared the bejesus out of us but it was a familiar sound. We knew right a rear tire blew out. Fortunately we were near an exit and just off that exit we were able to park in an out-of-business Wickes Furniture store parking lot. Unfortunately we had used our spare earlier in the journey, so we had to get a new tire.

We worked as a team and quickly had the tire off and into the Jeep. A big RV tire is not the type of tire most stores carry. The last time we had to buy a tire on the road it cost us almost \$400 in Auburn, Alabama. Well the good news was that there was a tire store just down the road that had our tire for only \$149. But the bad news was that it closed in a half hour so I hoped I would not get lost. Luckily I found it with no problem and a new tire was put on the rim and headed back to the coach. When I pulled back into the Wickes parking lot I actually ran over **shoe #125** before noticing it.

After we got the tire replaced I went over to get a photo of the crushed heel. I was able to get in just the right spot so I could get the CruiseMaster and the Jeep in the background. All in all this could have been a disaster, but turned out to be just a small obstacle to overcome.

SHOE #125



Dockweiler State Beach RV Park
Playa Del Ray, California
N 33.925638 • W -118.433604
June 3, 2007

Once we saw the Pacific Ocean we felt like our journey hit a major milestone. We made it from one coast to the other. The state park we were camping at was directly on the beach which was great, but "June Gloom" was in full swing. If you have never visited the California coastline in June, "June Gloom" is a local term for a weather condition where fog develops and does not burn off until late in the day. Which, while we were there it never burned off at all. Being from Florida we are accustomed to June on the coast to be sunny and sweltering hot so when the temps only hit around 65° we were freezing :)

*We really felt like we accomplished our Journey Across America one shoe at a time, when we discovered a lone flip flop perched up on a sand dune begging to be photographed. **Shoe #127** The picture encompassed almost everything about our stay at Dockweiler Beach. It contained a road biker, the volleyball courts, the water company steam stacks, the beach and the "June Gloom" fog.*

One evening we decided we would sit on the beach. Bundled up in our blanket from San Felipe, sharing our bottle of Merlot from New Mexico, we got to see a partial sunset over the pacific through a break in the gloom. While taking in the sunset a strange sound got Sharon's attention. It was a seal barking. He had washed himself up on shore to rest for a bit. Then as quick as he appeared, he was gone back into the surf. In florida we see dolphins, turtles and many birds, but never a seal. Those are something we only see in zoos. It was really something special for us to see one in the wild like that.



SHOE #26





Photo by Sean P. Costello

Mulholland Drive • Hollywood Hills, California

N 34.118038 • W -118.343356

June 4, 2007

Living on the road has its drawbacks. One of which is that you are away from friends and family for long periods of time. It had been around two months since we had seen anyone we knew. So we were excited to see one of my best friends, Sean, while we were in the L.A. area. He has been living in Venice for almost ten years now working in the photography industry. During which he learned the area quite well. I had a vision to find a shoe somewhere on the sunset strip or Hollywood Blvd so he volunteered to be a tour guide and drive us around to see what we could discover.

*We drove all over the place sightseeing. He showed us so many famous places. He got us up close to the Hollywood sign, and took us for Thai food on the strip. The day was already one to remember. After lunch he wanted to take us up in the hills to the Hollywood Bowl overlook on Mulholland Drive to get some photos. On the winding ascent up to the overlook we drove by **Shoe #128** Sean pulled off the road for me so I could run back and get the shot. It was tricky because it was right at the edge of a cliff with the road just inches from me with cars operated by cell phone wielding drivers flying up the winding road. But this was a must get shot, I just prayed I would live to see it :) It all worked out as I came away with another "trophy" shoe.*

Time was starting to run out because we had to get back to the CruiseMaster to let the Puggles out to potty. We took a side trip to Rodeo Drive and it proved to be quite interesting. There were several Paris Hilton clones strolling up and down the street. This was at the time when Paris was serving her time in jail and someone in Century City actually had a large "Pray for Paris" sign up on their front lawn.

The following night we attended a small dinner party hosted by Sean's sister, Kelly. Kelly and I's friendship goes way back as well. We grilled fish and drank wine on her rooftop veranda overlooking Santa Monica. It was a great finish to our stay in L.A.

Thanks Sean, Gina, Kelly and Alex for a stellar visit!

SHOE #128



Paradise Rd. • Santa Ynez Valley, CA
N 34.533591 • W -119.857359
June 7, 2007



*The beautiful coastline of nearby
Santa Barbara coastline.*

Highway 101 north to Santa Barbara was a nice scenic drive and we got our first glance at the rocky central California coast. We drove through Santa Barbara up over the San Marcos Pass on hwy 154. The view was stunning, but the uphill grind was not fun for the CruiseMaster but it made it like the little engine that could. Once at the peak we started our downhill descent into the Santa Ynez Valley to our destination of Thousand Trails Rancho Oso on Paradise Rd. It was at the intersection of highway 154 and Paradise Rd. that *Shoe #128* was sitting all alone.

The days we spent at Rancho Oso were fun and relaxing. There were many trails to hike with the dogs. The highlight of the stay was the 3 mile horseback ride up into the mountains surrounding the ranch.

The ride started out calm with a nice flat trail and an easy stream crossing. It then started to climb a bit. Before we knew it, we were going up steep switchbacks on the edge of a cliff. While looking down all I could hope for is that my horse Duke, knew what he was doing. Apparently Sharon's horse, Ghost, seemed to have eaten something that did not agree with him

because he broke wind every time he had to strain to climb up, and we climbed a lot. As we crested at the top of the mountain ridge we could see the valley and the ranch off in the distance below. After a steep descent down we were back at the ranch quickly. Sharon and the guide started to trot but Sharon's horse got spooked and started to buck wildly attempting to throw her off. But she had a death grip on the saddle and held on like a pro rodeo cowboy! Ghost settled down and she just rode him slowly back to the stable. The ride was incredible! Unlike any other and so much better than we expected.



Rancho Oso far below

SHOE #131



The 101 Northbound
Tres Pines, California
N 36.765943 • W -121.300044
June 10, 2007



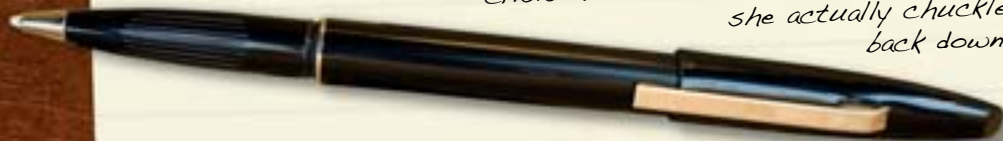
Before travelling out to California we always thought of wine country as just being a small area outside of San Francisco. Come to find out, almost all of California is wine country!

Our first vineyard experience in California was in the Santa Ynez Valley. From there we travelled to the Cienega Valley outside of Hollister. There was a wine trail just a mile from where we camped for a bit at the San Benito Thousand Trails. Excellent! This "trail" consisted of several wineries on the same stretch of road so that we could easily jump from one to another. We had five to visit on our list, but managed to only hit two. The second of which, Pietra Santa came to be our favorite in all of wine country. On our way to Pietra Santa a solo shoe popped up for a photo opportunity, *Shoe #134*.

The Pietra Santa tasting room is located in the middle of the vineyard. Built in the old spanish mission style it really set a tone of an old european winery, complete with stone balconies overlooking the vineyard. It was a perfect setting. The host for our tasting was extremely nice, we chatted and tasted wine for over two hours. There was also a party of women touring the winery that day, emphasis on party :) They had obviously been enjoying themselves, and once they left we once again had the room to ourselves. Along with wine we sampled cheeses, spreads and dark chocolate raspberry truffles. After a while we lost track of which wine was which. We left with an once in a lifetime experience.

Another experience we will always remember happened further north in wine country in the Russian River region in Sonoma County. Again we intended on hitting five or six vineyards but only managed to hit a couple. DeLoach being the most notable for their incredible Pinot Noirs. The infamous part of the journey was me running out of gas on the 101 heading home. I say me, because Sharon asked me earlier if we had enough gas, and of course I said yes because I was in a hurry to get to the vineyards. Anyway I got out immediately when the Jeep sputtered to a halt and began running to the closest exit to avoid the wrath I surely deserved from Sharon. As I was exiting the highway a young man stopped and gave me a lift to a gas station. I went in to purchase a gas can but they were \$20.00. So instead I purchased a large gatorade, drank it down and filled it up with gas. I ran back to the Jeep and within seconds had poured the gas in it and were heading to fill up. Crisis averted. All in all it took under 20 minutes. Sharon admitted

she actually chuckled a bit watching me running back down the highway with a gatorade bottle full of gasoline.



SHOE #134



Forge in the Forest Restaurant • Carmel-by-the-Sea
N 36.963421 • W -121.965250
June 15, 2007

For as long as I can remember I have always dreamed of visiting Big Sur. Just the mention of its name conjured up larger than life images of big pacific waves pounding a steep rocky coastline. So I was like a little kid headed for a carnival when we left the RV park in Morgan Hill for a day trip to the coast.

Our day started with a stop in Monterrey. It was too early for lunch at Cannery Row and we opted not to pay the \$9 to tour the 17 mile Drive so our stay in Monterrey was short, we were off to Carmel-by-the-Sea.

Carmel greeted us with chilly & foggy weather. And being Floridians at heart, we were cold! I ran to buy us jackets before venturing out on the streets of Carmel. It was time for lunch and Carmel is legendary in its dog-friendly attitude so we figured we would take the dogs with us. We found the Forge in the Forest Restaurant where they even had a pet section set aside. It was in this section that they were using four solo shoes as planters, **shoes #138-141**. We figured these shoes were perfect representations of the artistic, and natural feel of Carmel. We ate quickly as the Pacific Coast Highway was calling our names.

When we first hit the highway it was still foggy, but it cleared up as we drove south, eventually giving way to blue skies. Mother nature was on our side. The rugged shore lived up to all the hype I created in my mind. I wanted to stop around every curve to take a photo, it was truly breath-taking. We planned on doing a big hike, but time was running short so we took a great short hike down a cliff to a beach all to ourselves. The dogs ran up and down the beach just soaking up the freedom. Once everyone was pretty worn out we hiked back up to the Jeep.

Earlier we passed by the Rocky Point restaurant and it looked to be a perfect place to stop on the way back. If you are ever driving highway 1 to Big Sur, this restaurant is a must stop and you have to try the calamari appetizer. There we sat. Watching the sun set, drinking California wine, eating calamari and overlooking quite possibly the most amazing landscape I have ever seen. It was one of those perfect moments where time seems to stand still. It was truly a diamond day.

View from the patio at the Rocky Point restaurant on Highway 1 outside Carmel





SHOES #138-141

**Market Street by the Ferry Plaza
San Francisco, California**

N 37.794434 • W -122.395003 • June 17, 2007

San Francisco has always been a top destination that Sharon and I wanted to explore someday. That day had come. We boarded the Larkspur ferry to take us downtown. As we passed Alcatraz with the Golden Gate Bridge looming in the distance, we were almost bursting with excitement to start exploring. We disembarked at the Embarcadero to a perfect day in San Fran, 75° and sunny. With hindsight being 20/20, this is where I should have put a ferry schedule in my pocket.

We hopped on one of the city's restored streetcars for a ride to Fisherman's Wharf. We hit a seafood restaurant for a bowl of crab chowder and a pale ale. Next we chose to take a cable car to China Town. We got to stand, hanging off the side while we cruised up the steep streets. We felt like we were on a hollywood movie set as we stepped off into the chaos of China Town in search of good dim sum.

I am sure the \$5.99 all you can eat places are just fine, but with Sharon being a vegetarian we had to be careful what those dumplings contained. The place we settled on was perfect, and the experience was great. While sightseeing in China Town we came across a little fortune cookie factory and picked up a bag full. We needed to catch the ferry home so we grabbed a ride on the electric bus system back to the Embarcadero.

Having a little time to kill, or so we thought, we got off the bus a few blocks early, perhaps we would see a shoe lying around...Jackpot! There it was, **Shoe #144**. It took a bit of time to get all the exposure correct but I finally got what I wanted. Time to go. We walked to the gate to board the ferry home, except there was one problem. There was no ferry waiting. It had just left! Nothing like literally missing the boat. Apparently I had looked at the schedule wrong earlier! We were in a slight panic, there was no ferry again until 3 hours later.

Luckily an attendant helped us fix the situation by refunding our ticket and pointing us to the bus terminal to catch the Larkspur bus which was due to depart in around 10 minutes.

It was five blocks away so we bid our thanks and rushed off. We did not see our bus at the terminal, we thought for sure we missed it too. Then we spotted it across the street and broke into full sprints and made it just in time. This was our fifth different mode of public transportation that day. It made its way through the heart of the city, over the Golden Gate bridge and we got off at the bus stop right in front of our RV park. Right on.



You can't have everything.
where would you put it all?



SHOE #144



Highway 59 • Lake Havasu City, California
N 34.501542° • W -114.3496702°
June 27, 2007



The time had come to start heading back east. We planned on taking a slow route through Vegas, Utah and Sedona, but Mother Nature's heat was going to be too much for us. It was time to get away from the desert heat. Plus, I had a photo job to tackle back in Pensacola if we could get back in 12 days.

Manteca, California: Manteca was to be just a night stopover, but having to replace parts on our brakes forced us to stay for a couple of days longer. Time was ticking we had only 8 days to get back now.

Needles, California: We stopped for the night in a truck stop just east of Needles off Route 66. I wanted to drive Route 66 a bit to see if we could find a shoe on this historical route. Instead I left MY shoes outside the coach at the truck stop. And that portion of Route 66 was so rough it almost reduced the cruisemaster to just pile of fiberglass and bolts so we only drove for a few miles :-(

Lake Havasu, Arizona: The heat was so intense, even a dip in the clear waters of the lake did not cool us off. The dogs were not even able to walk outside without scorching their paws. Had we ended up on the surface of Mars?!? Trying to stay cool in the coach proved to be near impossible, so we decided to go for a cold beer at a brewpub. It was even hot in there. One patron remarked it was still 115° outside and it was around 7:00 p.m. On the way back we saw shoe #148, and it was so hot I almost did not bother to go photograph it. The heat coming off of the ground was like standing on top of a grill. We did not even last the night in Havasu, as soon as we got back to the coach we headed out so we could drive through the night to stay cool.

The huge state of Texas: We spent 6 days crossing Texas! We spent nights in El Paso, Belmerhea, Junction, Columbus and Beaumont. This was at the time when Texas was experiencing massive flooding almost statewide, our hearts go out to the families who suffered terrible losses.

Pensacola, Florida: Amazingly we rolled into Pensacola with a day to spare. It felt so weird to be back in Florida, almost like the trip out west may have just been a dream. We were sad our journey was over, but as it always is with us, when one journey ends, another begins... stay tuned :)



SHOE #148





POB

10.7



Over the course of our journey we saw many sights and met a lot of great people. We would like to thank all of our friends and family that helped make this book a reality. Also thanks goes out to everyone along the road that helped us keep going.

To purchase a copy of this book or to see the entire collection of shoes, visit OneShoeDiaries.com also check out our travel blog to see what new journey we are currently on.



Here are a couple of photos some friends sent me
Sean P. Costello (above)
Denis Latendre (below)



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My wife Sharon and I, along with our two dogs, set out on a journey across America in our motorhome. This book is a compilation of the stories and photos surrounding our trek. Starting out in South Florida and ending in Northern California. We met many great people and visited numerous interesting places. We hope you enjoy looking at the world through our eyes.

— Randall Louis Hamilton

