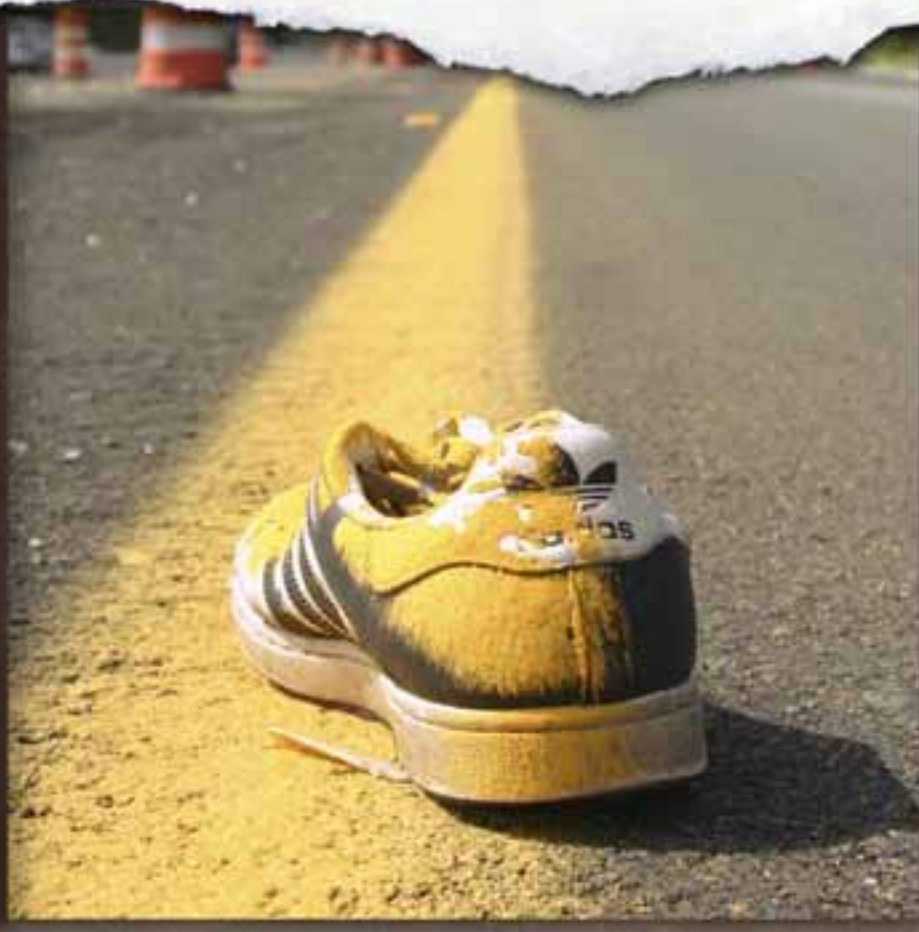


THE ONE SHOE DIARIES™

Volume 2: Friends, Family and Lost Soles

A Randall Louis Hamilton Photography Collection



A NEW JOURNEY BEGINS

Well a lot has happened since the publishing of the first volume of the One Shoe Diaries. We have been highlighted by newspapers, magazines and TV shows. All culminating to being featured on the CNN News show, "News to Me". They aired a great segment telling the story behind the One Shoe Diaries Project. We have posted the video on our website, OneShoeDiaries.com, if interested in viewing it. We also continued our adventures in the CruiseMaster by circling around the East Coast. We explored from Florida to Ohio to Maryland and back, all the while discovering more lost shoes, or what I now call, lost soles.

This volume will focus a little less on the travel aspect, and more on the stories that I want to tell about the people in our lives that mean the most to us, our friends and families. The stories that I will be sharing are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the vast amounts that reside in my head. Just ask me to tell one whenever you see me and I will be happy to oblige. Whether it might be the Skippy stories or the infamous "grab-the-rope" story. I promise they will make you smile. They may even help you remember some of the adventures that you have lived, and want to share back. I am always eager to exchange great stories over a beer or two.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported us in this endeavor. It has been really fun to get all of the emails and messages about other's lost sole experiences. Some of which have been sad, others humorous, but most of all they have enriched and reshaped our view of this world. Keep em' coming. Log on to OneShoeDiaries.com and share with us your photos and stories.



I-110 Northbound
Pensacola Florida
N 30.349257 • W -87.216094
July 12, 2007

*It was quite a grueling trip driving back to Pensacola from Northern California. We made the trip while enduring searing heat, massive flooding and mechanical problems, all while on a deadline. Along the way I even managed to get a few photos of lost soles. We spent a short time in Pensacola before we were back on the road headed north. But in the time we were in Pensacola I photographed almost a dozen shoes sitting lonely on the side of the roads. And just when I thought I had seen it all when it came to lost soles. I came across **Shoe #158** and was blown away!*

As usual, when I first saw the shoe I was unable to stop due to time constraints and had to pass it up. It started to rain shortly after and I just prayed none of the paint on it washed off. Upon approaching it the next day, I saw it had not. Everything about it could not have been more perfect!

I did break a rule this time. I just had to pick up the shoe and see what the line below it looked like. I wanted to see the paint shadow it left behind. It made a perfect outline of the shoe in the yellow line! I wish I had gotten a photo of that line now looking back.

I was so excited to get home to share the photo with Sharon. She loved it. So have other viewers. Many tell me it is their favorite image from the entire collection. They can hardly believe it was not staged. This was the shoe that got me re-inspired. I had just discovered the perfect lost sole photo. This photo encompasses everything that defines what the One Shoe Diaries is about, story telling. The story of a lost sole does not end when it gets lost, sometimes it just begins. I could not help but wonder, would I ever find something as unique as the scene of Shoe #158? It is that wonder that still drives me to look for shoes everywhere I go. It is the age-old lure of hunting for lost treasure that is so addictive.





SHOE #158

Near Avenida 23 Beach Access
Pensacola Beach, Florida
N 30.338969 • W -87.097474
July 15, 2007

While living on the road we had people asking us where we call home. That was a hard question. Do I say Cincinnati? Should Sharon say Baltimore? Or do we say Pensacola since that is where we lived most recently? The bigger question was where is it that we want to call home someday? But when we look at it, that answer is pretty clear. Pensacola. It is where we always come back to, it is where we have the most roots and friends. It is a place we just feel we belong. The main reason for that is our friends. Most of which we met while playing volleyball in Pensacola.

Hank, Donnie, Tami, Catfish, Charlie, Mocha, Jamie, Pat, Bosso, Holtsman, Adam, Lewis, Sam, Gretska, Lab, Roger, and Dave, are some of our friends from the beach. Many of us have been playing for a long time together, some a LOT longer than others :) We all take our volleyball pretty seriously. So seriously that many of us have fought over things as miniscule as barely touching the net, blowing a line call, "chucking" a ball and other stupid little things. But we always make up because we are always friends off the court. We have all been through a lot in life and it is the volleyball court that we come to for refuge. We really have been blessed with another great group of true friends, and are so grateful.

I realized while writing this story that the shoes may be taking a back seat in this volume. Having said that, the tie in between **Shoe #159** and my friends from the beach is just the fact it was found down from where we play.

Dan "the Man" Seely 1976 - 2007

Danny was one of our volleyball friends that was always around. He had a zest for life. He lost a lot of games but never lost the passion for the game. He loved the camaraderie that came with it. He was well-known and well-liked in the Gulf Coast volleyball community. Danny passed away over Christmas Eve 2007 in his sleep. He will be dearly missed by all his friends and family. His ashes were spread over the courts on Pensacola Beach so Danny will forever be on the beach he loved, surrounded his friends.





SHOE #159

Interstate 10, Northbound
Birmingham, Alabama
N 32.745644 • W -86.822501
July 17, 2007

Fresh off a month layover in Pensacola, Florida we fired up the Cruisemaster and headed out on another journey to see friends and family living all around the Eastern United States. Our first stop was near Birmingham, AL.

Continuing on the tradition from the first volume, I once again ran the Jeep down to fumes while driving to explore an area winery. As it always does, wine won out over fuel. We chose to push the limits and head to the winery first.

*After tasting a few nice wines at the Vizinni Winery, we settled on a bottle of a very nice Viognier, (pronounced Von-yeah as we found out from a snooty host.) We began heading back, and were still a few miles from an exit when I saw **Shoe #160** pop up on my radar on the side of I-65. A dilemma. Do I stop and get the shot and risk running out of gas? Or do I go get gas and hope we come back that way again before leaving to move to a new area? I chose to stop. Because not only was there a lost sole to get a photograph of, but a gas can as well! My lucky day. So I proceeded to get the shot, then pick up the gas can and take it with us just in case I had to walk for gas once again.*

Fortunately this time we did not run out of gas. We were able to make it back to our campsite in Oak Mountain State Park. Crisis averted. . . this time.



Pulaski Highway
Lawrenceburg, Tennessee
N 33.460929 • W -86.251152
July 21, 2007

We only stayed a short time in Alabama, enough time to bike, eat, taste wine and find out that by law, there are no brewpubs. An RV park just off the Natchez Trace Parkway in Hohenwald Tennessee was our next destination.

Finding the tiny town of Hohenwald turned out to be quite a fiasco. One thing about driving a large RV and towing a vehicle is that you cannot just turn around and head in another direction very easily. We had to do just that, 3 times!! One time we tried to use a church parking lot but it was not big enough so I had to get out in the blazing southern summer heat and unhook the Jeep and tow dolly, turn the coach around and re-hook up everything and get going again. I was drenched in sweat and literally melting.

But in the midst of all of this I did stop to take a photo of *Shoe #161*. I could not help it. We were out in rural Tennessee, and here was a camouflaged "Croc". Kind of unusual to find people wearing Crocs out here. Even more unusual was to wear them while hunting. I assume it was for hunting. Because why else would you wear camo-colored footwear? But hey, maybe it was a fashion statement. Because what self-respecting hunter would be caught hunting in "Crocs"?

We did manage to find the RV Park and set up the coach. Then went off to explore the tiny town of Hohenwald, known for its junk stores. And who can pass up a good junk store? Everyone likes a bargain right? My found treasure that day was an old vintage Duaflex II camera. The type where you look down through the viewfinder located on the top of the camera to compose your shot. It was in perfect condition, complete with leather case. I thought taking some shots of the shoes on the highways using this authentic piece of Americana would be very fitting. But where do I get film?

After an interesting lunch at the Junkyard Café we went back to the coach for a bit, the dogs had been left alone too long. They were probably bored and that is never a good thing.



Interstate 71 Northbound
Loveland, Ohio
N 39.288731 • W -84.321688
August 3, 2007



Our second journey was now well under way and we made it to our first major destination. We were at my hometown of Cincinnati. Being born and raised there I felt as if it were a homecoming of sorts. After being away for so long and visited so many great cities I still feel Cincinnati can compete in all aspects when it comes to quality of life except weather, because we hate cold weather.

*The first night we were in town I got lucky and came across **Shoe #166**. The colors were U.C. Bearcat colors and figured my brother Doug, being an alumni of U.C., would appreciate it. Just after that we encountered a small crisis.*

While exiting off I-75 at Fields Ertel, the Jeep's right rear brake caliper seized up! Sometimes if not for bad luck I would have no luck at all! Thank heavens my "bff" Trish lived nearby and gave us a ride back to our coach, which was set up at Thousand Trails Campground in Wilmington.

The next morning my mother, bless her heart, drove an hour to get me and take me back to the Jeep so I could fix it. It only took about 30 minutes to complete the repair so I had plenty of time to go to lunch with her at Skyline Chili.

Just recently my mom had sold the house in which I spent my entire childhood living in. We decided to go by and see what the new owners had done with the place. It was a very emotional moment to drive down my old street with my mom in the car. I loved growing up there. I had an incredible childhood full of great adventures with enough stories to retell for a lifetime. We drove by places that were sacred to myself and my friends, Jason and Skippy. The "Clay Mine", "Fossil Land" and "Old Shady Tree" are just memories now as they have been cleared for new housing developments. I held back the emotions. A lump grew in my throat as we got closer to 824 Marbea Drive, Loveland, Ohio. The house looked largely unchanged. It felt so weird to drive by and not pull into the driveway! It was someone else's home now. I wondered if they could they feel all the life that happened in that house? Would anyone ever cherish it the way we did and still do?

I believe true wealth in life is having great life experiences with the people that matter most in your life. Therefore, I feel I am one of the wealthiest people in this world. Many of the friendships I still have today were forged while living in Loveland, Ohio.

SHOE #166



Interstate 71: Kings Mills Entrance Ramp

Kings Mills, Ohio

N 39.358174 • W -84.261296

August 10, 2007

The "Gang". I cannot possibly mention friends I have made throughout my life without mentioning the Gang. How do I tell a story that happened over the course of many years and many adventures fit into the space of a few paragraphs? This will not do it justice, someday I hope to create a full novel that will, but here it goes anyway.



Taken by Trish at Skippy's wedding, 1994

On one side of town I started hanging out with a couple of kids named Jason and Jim a.k.a. Skippy. The three of us were inseparable. We played army in the woods, were on little league baseball teams together, we played dungeons and dragons, all the stuff young boys did back then before video games and cable TV. We became best friends.

On another side of Cincinnati, another group of young boys were doing basically the same things, although they met later in life, around 12-14 years old at the time. The group consisted of Sean, Mark, Gary, and Marvin a.k.a. Scooter. They too became best friends.

It was sometime our freshman year at Moeller High School when Jason met Mark through his cross-country running team and introduced him to me. It wasn't long before the two groups of boys, us and them, met and everyone became best friends almost instantly.

Over the years more guys came into the group, Wayne, Scott, Jeff, Mike, Chris, Brian, Ryan, Kevin, and the lone girl Trish. We hung out all the time. We traveled in a large pack, or as people began to call us, the Gang. We liked the name, not because we were gangsters in any way, it just sounded right. Being young teenagers we came up with a symbol, a "G" with a circle. We vowed that all the members would get a tattoo of it on their ankles before the first member was married. There are still a few that need to get one, me not being one of them. And they know who they are.

*Now what does all of this have to do with **Shoe #167**? In the background of the shoe photo you can see a water park. It was at that water park, The Beach, that the Gang hung out at while we were out of school for the summers. Most of us even worked there at some point. So we spent more time there, than not there. Even on days off we went there to hang out and play volleyball. It was simple and easy times, ones that are forever woven into who I am today.*

It is so amazing to me how shoes seem to materialize at just the right time in just the right places. I could not believe it when I found this shoe, and where it was located. I am not much for the supernatural or a higher power that involves himself with our individual lives but it just seems someone is placing shoes for me in all the right places.

SHOE #167



Highway 4
Hopkinsville, Ohio
N 39.358174 • W -84.261296
August 14, 2007

It is not a trip somewhere without visiting a winery and/or a brewpub. Another great friend of mine from High School Randy a.k.a. Big Randy, and his wife Jenn, invited us to a dinner at The Valley Vineyards near his house. We also got Trish to join us.

*On the way to meet them I saw a shoe of course, **Shoe #168**, just waiting to be discovered. It was very close to Big Randy's house so I was able to park there and walk to where it rested. I decided to try out the vintage camera I bought. I was unable to find film for it but learned a technique online where I could shoot through the viewfinder with my digital camera. It gives the same image as if you developed it with film from the camera itself! The color came out a little too intense so I simulated film grain and desaturated the color on the computer to finish off the imitation.*

After the shot we all headed to the vineyard for dinner. The way the vineyard conducted dinner was that you choose your steak, chicken or fish and they provide large grills for you. So you literally cooked it yourself. They provided all the fixings and the side items, and of course wine. It was a great time spent with close friends.



Route 42 N.
Sharonville, Ohio
N 39.282465 • W -84.316303
August 18, 2007

During our stay in Cincinnati we had the opportunity to do an exhibition at the frame shop where I worked at years ago. While there I became good friends with my co-worker Dave. Dave now owns the frame shop and has renamed it to Depot Square Frame and Art.

In 1990 I moved to the Big Island of Hawaii to work as a bartender at the Hilton Waikaloa for Mark who had taken a job there as the assistant beverage manager there. I talked Dave was attending culinary school at the time and I thought it would be a great opportunity for him to do an internship with the hotel. He took the opportunity and we lived out there for almost a year.

Dave now has a wife, Beth, and 2 sons. We love hanging out with them. We decided that it would be a perfect time to exhibit the project at the frame shop. I had many friends and family show up that night. I extended it into the next day for those that could not get there the night before. One of the people that showed up the second day was my Uncle Junior.

Uncle Junior is my mom's older brother. I had not seen him in many years. It was great to see him and my cousin Terry who came with him. He shared with me a great story about the first day my grandfather arrived in America straight off a boat from Germany. I will try and retell the story the best I can...

It was sometime around 1912 and my grandfather Harold Geezner and his two brothers just arrived. Being in a foreign country and not speaking the language, what else is there to do than find a German pub and get drunk? Many beers later a fight ensued. The details concerning the subject of the fight are unclear but it is thought a woman was involved somehow. Well there they were. So mad at one other that one brother announced, 'I hate you both so much, I no longer want to be your brother, I am spelling my last name with an I (Geisner) and going on my own!' The second brother (my grandfather) exclaimed, 'I too do not want you as brothers. I am spelling my last name with an S (Geesner) instead of a Z! The 3rd brother was so furious that he did not even want to be in the same country as them and sailed back to Germany for good. Still to this day if you look in the Cincinnati phone book, you will see 2 different 'Geezner' families.

*It was immediately after talking to my uncle that I headed back to the motorhome and found **Shoe #173** in the middle of the road just a block from the frame shop.*



Ohioypyle State Park
Pennsylvania
N 39.871370 • W -79.491581
August 22, 2007

After 2 weeks in Ohio we started heading east to Maryland, but had a few stops to make along the way. The first stop was in Pennsylvania. What an excruciating day we had getting there! My computer screwed up when I was on a very tight deadline. We changed a tire in pouring rain. Got the RV stuck turning around. Got semi-lost. Set up in pitch dark. Got very muddy, etc, etc!

The following day went much better. We packed up the puggles and headed out to Ohioypyle State Park near Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water home. We planned on eating lunch at Falling Water and checking it all out, but it was going to cost us \$32 for admission for both of us just to get in. So we said..NAY NAY (that was for you Alice :) I always wanted to see that place, but for that price I'll settle for pictures.

Ohioypyle State Park was just a few miles down the road but on the way we stopped for at a little pizza joint off the beaten path in Mill Run. We had delicious, huge strombolis. The woman working at the restaurant (I am embarrassed to refer to her as "woman" as I should have gotten her name as we chatted quite a bit while waiting for the strombolis to cook) she gave us a sample of their famous fried dough while we waited. If you ever happen to stop at the Pizza Barn Family Restaurant you got to try it. It is addictive. Kinda like cinnamon sticks from Dominos but better. Just look for the signs pointing you down a small road to get there.



We got into Ohioypyle S.P. and were surprised to see all of the activity there. The Youghiogheny River was roaring from all the rains they had been getting. It was amazing watching all that water crashing over rocks and forming huge foaming rapids and raging waterfalls. We decided on a hike to see one of the bigger falls in the park and hiked out to Cumcumber Falls. The trail meandered through dense green foliage. It was beautiful. The dogs had so much fun tromping through the thick, muddy trails.

After hiking we walked over to the Ohioypyle House Bar for a brew. With 72 different beers to choose from, I was like a kid in a candy store. I settled on Troeg Nut Brown Ale brewed in nearby Harrisburg, PA. It capped off a great day out in nature.

Amazingly enough, just as we exited the bar, there was **Shoe #174** perched perfectly on a large rock. I promise you, there was no staging. It was just there, seemingly waiting for me to find it.



SHOE #177

Lisburn Rd.
Lower Allen, Pennsylvania
N 40.173350 • W -76.920634
August 24, 2007

The previous year we had passed through Harrisburg, PA and stayed in Hershey. Sharon's long-time friend Monica lives in that area with her family, Husband Ray and kids Megan, Nathan and Emily. We got to visit with them one evening that trip. They became fascinated with our project and caught "Lost Shoe Fever." The kids really wanted to find a shoe for me to photograph near their home. So on this trip we wanted to stop and stay for a bit longer this time, hoping to find a lost sole.

*We parked the motorhome in a nearby Church parking lot and stayed at their house. They too have a Puggle, Gideon. So ours had someone new to play with. We found a dog park nearby and since Gideon had never been to a dog park before it seemed a great opportunity to let our Puggles show him the ropes being dog park veterans. On the way there we spotted **Shoe #177** about a half mile from the entrance to the park.*

It was pretty cool to be able to actually find a shoe with them and include it in this book. They took such good care of us and we had a great time with them, especially watching Miss Teen USA fumble and stutter her way through her on-stage interview. Unbelievable! Too hilarious to describe. Something we had to have watched to believe, over and over again. Oh the miracle of DVR :)



Scott's Cove Marina
Chance, Maryland
N 38.169158
W -75.947065
August 27, 2007

We arrived at our next destination, Deal Island, MD. Located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It is the home of Sharon's parents. The small island has a population of around 500 and has an interesting maritime history, complete with pirates.

Every year since we have been together we have gone up there to the island to see her family in late August. It is a great time, picking fresh blue crab on the screened-in porch while her pops sings and plays the guitar for us. I just love it there. The outside world seems to disappear.

The trip culminates with the Annual Labor Day Skipjack Race and Festival where we set up a booth and sell photos of the mighty skipjack boats that I have taken over the years. Another long standing tradition that takes place around the community over the weekend is that many of the residents set up yard sales. People from miles around come to rummage for treasures. I love the yard sales.

During the current road trip I had gotten on a vintage camera kick and wanted to go look for cameras at the yard sales but could not because I had to man my booth. I told a couple who stopped by my booth about my dilemma. Apparently they decided to go out and scour the garage sales and buy all the old cameras they could. They brought them to me at the end of the day as a surprise. I wanted to pay them but they would not take money. I finally got them to take a framed photo as a thank you gesture. I was very touched by the generosity and the thoughtfulness of people who barely knew me.

*I got a chance to use one of those cameras in the same way I used my other vintage camera and took this shot of **Shoe #178** with a skipjack in the background undergoing restoration.*

Captain Art Daniels and the "City of Crisfield"

Embedded in the history of skipjack captains is the legendary Capt. Art Daniels. He has won many races and his most recent win I that witnessed he was at the age of 86, on his ever aging, still in working-service, "City of Crisfield" skipjack. There have been fully restored skipjacks that have come down from Baltimore with uniformed crews that have lost valiantly to Capt. Art's sailing experience and knowledge of the waters around Deal Island. We have had the pleasure of sailing with him on the City of Crisfield. On board was just Sharon, Rachie, Michael, Aimee, Pops and the wind. It was an incredible experience.



A photograph of a boatyard. In the background, a white sailboat is on a slipway. In the foreground, a black clog shoe lies on the ground next to a green hose. A white label with red text is in the bottom left corner.

SHOE #178

Near the O.C. Beach Pier
Ocean City, Maryland
N 38.140734 • W -75.946025
August 27, 2007

Shoe #179 was found while wondering around Ocean City Maryland waiting in anticipation as Sharon and Rachie were about to meet a half-sister they had never met, or really was sure even existed. It all came about through the miracle of the Internet.

One day a few months before the meeting, Sharon began searching through MySpace for her siblings that her biological father had with another wife. When Sharon was just 4 years old her father left them. He made a few futile attempts to see her and Rachie but eventually completely lost touch. He went on to remarry and start a new family. He and his new wife had two daughters and a son. Sharon knew their names and always thought about meeting them someday. So one day she decided she would check out MySpace to see if she could locate one of them. After just a short search she found a young girl matching the name she believed was the youngest daughter, Elise. After reading her profile a bit Sharon was overcome with emotion, she just started to cry. She read about a young girl in Virginia who had a blind father that meant the world to her. The emotion welled up not only because of finding her sister she never knew, but found out her dad had passed away several years earlier. No one ever let her know. She never had a chance to say goodbye.

After Sharon calmed down she composed an email to break the ice. It was a very tough situation as these two sisters had totally different memories of a man they shared as a father. A few phone calls were exchanged between all the siblings. From the conversations the opportunity arose to meet up with Elise in Ocean City, MD.

Rachie and Sharon prepared themselves and headed out to meet their sister for the first time ever. It was a pretty surreal meeting. No one knew quite how to react or feel, the emotions were confusing for all of them. Eventually they started talking and telling life stories in a nutshell to each other. It turned out to be a really great day for them, they had another little sister, complete with a nephew Jake they never knew they had.

The other two siblings were not as open to these new relationships and never really embraced it. There have been a few phone calls, even heated ones as they both had varying opinions of their father. Sharon and Rachie knew a man that abandoned them early in their life for another woman and just faded out of their lives forever. Breaking their hearts and leaving them angry and confused. The other siblings remember a kind and loving father, someone they refer to as a great man. It was hard for them to fathom him as a person who abandoned a family and left them to struggle with no support from him.

But as for Elise, the youngest, Sharon and Rachie have kept up the relationship. They now have another younger sister. They got a dream come true. Something they always wanted to have happen. This really did show the power of the Internet. It was great to see Sharon get closure on something in her life that always haunted her.

A black flip-flop is lying on a sandy beach. In the background, a wooden pier extends into the ocean. A small, torn piece of white paper with red text is placed on the sand in the foreground.

SHOE #179

Custom House Rd., Deal Island, MD
N 38.169158 • W -75.947065
August 31, 2007

On Deal Island, just at the end of Sharon's parent's driveway I came across *Shoe #182* rotting in an old deteriorating structure which I surmise was a house at one point that was across the road from a parcel of land that her parents sold off earlier that year.

The land now belongs to Mr. Steve. He built a house on it with his own two hands. Not much of a unusual thing except for the fact he was 77 years old when he built it! He barely looked 50. After speaking with him for a bit we learned of a very interesting story surrounding his life. He is the current owner of Historic Holland Island.

There has been an emmy-award-winning documentary produced about him and the plight of Holland Island. We have boated around the island in the past and always wondered the story was behind that lonely dilapidated house. Now we know.

The Disappearing Island

Holland Island is a small island in the Chesapeake Bay that was once a thriving community of more than 350 residents. But after economic hardship and mother nature taking away pieces of the island, it became deserted. It is barely a speck of land anymore with just one lone house still standing. Steve L. White, the latest owner of the island has formed the Holland Island Preservation Foundation to help shore it up so it does not erode to nothing like so many other islands in the Chesapeake Bay.



SHOE #182



Belt's Wharf at Fell's Point
Baltimore, Maryland
N 39.279639 • W -76.589859
September 9, 2007



SHOE #186

**EAT BERTHA'S
MUSSELS**

Shoe #186 was found floating in the Baltimore Harbor adjacent to the building which was used in the filming of the Television Series "Homicide: Life on the Streets." I just hope there was not a leg attached to it. It was the first lost sole I had found actually floating in water.

Sharon and I decided to take a day to stroll around Fell's Point in Baltimore with Glenda, Aimee and Nanny. The day was great. The sun was out and people were bustling everywhere. I just loved the historic feel that Fell's Point holds. You can imagine what it must have been like two centuries ago with the large sailing ships coming in to harbor to unload goods traded from the other side of the world.

We ate some Bertha's Mussels and drank their signature beer, Oliver's Darkness, a really great black ale. Also the Gelato around Fell's Point is great, just steer clear of the spicy chocolate, not a good combo. It was so nice to spend quality time with family.

That night we met up with Sharon's best friend growing up, Vicky, and her husband Scott for dinner at DuClaw. It was a brewpub of course, but the beers were average, nothing I personally cared for. However, the crab pretzels were the BOMB! But it was the company that mattered, and it was nice to catch up with friends.

Highway 64
Ashboro, North Carolina
N 35.717303
W -79.911582
September 16, 2007

SHOE #187

Mark, one of the "Gang" members, lives just outside Raleigh N.C. and was on our route so we dropped in on him for a bit. Mark has been with his wife Dana since 1991 so I have known her for a long time. A few years back they adopted a beautiful little girl from a Chinese orphanage. Her name is Madeline, or Maddie for short. She is one of the most adorable and smartest children I have ever met. She really endeared herself to me.

At one point during our stay, Jack was perched on my lap and Maddie came up and asked "will he bite if I pet his head?" "Nope" I replied. "Will he bite me if I touch his nose?" I answered, "No, Jack never bites." "Will he bite if I touch his teeth," she asked again. At this point Jack just kept looking at her, like she was silly. He let her pull his ears, his lips, touch his tongue and more. We played this game for almost a half hour. Jack was such a trooper. After a while he began to fall asleep. He let her do anything she wanted, which was no surprise to me. But to her it was amazing that he was not biting. Because their dog would either have snapped at her, or ran away by now, but Jack just stayed there soaking up the attention. It was one of the cutest interactions I have ever seen.

Later that day Mark, Sharon and I went out for a little bit of adult fun. We visited the Carolina Brewing Company for a tour which Mark claimed usually has only around 6 people there and free beer for an hour afterwards. A dream come true. But after arriving late we did not get to grab a beer to drink during the tour. Which to our dismay was attended by 50 people or so that day!! AARGGGHH!! The tour lasted what seemed an eternity as we watched everyone else enjoy cold beer while listening to the spiel. Not to mention it was 100° in there!! Then, to try and be sly, we stayed at the back when everyone moved to see the packaging explanation so as to get out and be first in line to get a beer after the tour. FOILED AGAIN! The beer was actually to be poured at the packaging area so we were now last in line. After what seemed as another eternity we finally got a well-deserved free beer. Mark observed that the temperature lowered several degrees just after that first delicious drink. This time we did something right. As we drank that first beer we got in line right when we finished that one we were ready to get another.

I know I get off track sometimes because the story behind the discovery of some shoes is not as interesting as the stories during the trip in which I found the shoe. So if I do not describe how I found the shoe that is associated with the story, it is because the discovery was uneventful. Shoe #187 happened to be found on the way back to the coach after leaving Mark's house, nothing exciting.



Ashley River Rd.

Charleston, South Carolina

N 32.877916 • W -80.098474

September 28, 2007

Charleston S.C. was the next stop. We visited Kevin, my longtime volleyball partner and fellow "Gang" member. Kevin has been the source of many of my stories. I really razz him hard, but he takes it all in stride. He is the star of my infamous "grab-the-rope" story, which is much better told in person.

With Charleston being so steeped in history, we wanted to take a historic tour. We settled on doing the "R" rated tour of the seedier side of Charleston's past. This included learning about murders, drugs, prostitution and their darkest crime, slavery. The tour proved interesting but left us wanting to see more. So after the tour we headed off on our own to explore.

Famous for its ghosts, we began searching out Charleston's most-notoriously haunted locations in hopes of seeing something paranormal. One such location is the St. Phillips Church and Graveyard. We stayed for some time there and took numerous photos but got no evidence of spirits, so we moved on. Just down the street was the Dock Street Theatre, home to the most documented hauntings in Charleston.

I set my camera on a tripod and proceeded to snap some photos using my remote control. I took probably a dozen. Then we walked over to the old Slave Mart, where slaves were once bought and sold like livestock. Many lives were lost as they were kept in cramped and unsanitary cells. What more tragic of a place to find spirits still lingering about than there! I took some shots, again with the shutter open for a bit. It was getting late so we headed home. I was unable to sleep. I had to see if I captured a ghost in a photo.



I began sifting through several interesting looking photos, just nothing paranormal. But then there it was! A photo where the frame before showed normal lighting but this one had something eerie going on. It had been a clear night, there were barely any lights on at the theatre. So the streaking pink lights in the photo on the left cannot be explained. Nor can the foggy outline of what looks to be a figure's head and shoulders. It still makes my hair stand on end when I look at it!

SHOE #190





**Platte River Multi-Use Trail
Denver, Colorado
N 39.757160 • W -105.006731
Halloween, 2007**

After Charleston, lost soles became scarce for a while. I found one on the way back to Pensacola and a few in Pensacola, but none too exciting, until I took a trip to meet Kevin in Denver. His work had sent him out there to a conference and he wanted to stay after it was over for a few days to hike and camp in Rocky Mountain National Park. He persuaded me to come along by twisting my arm.

*Before heading to the mountains we had a day to explore downtown Denver. We hit a couple of brewpubs, had dinner then headed over to the REI Outdoor Store for any last minute supplies. As we walked there, we came across **shoe #198**. But I did not have my camera with me, and there was no time before it got dark to go get it. So I had to resort to using my camera phone. I was very excited to stumble upon such an unusual lost sole in Denver. I later even found inspiration in it to do a large oil painting of it after I got home.*

Early the next day we headed out to the Park. We intended on camping for the three nights we were in the park. But being from warm climates we forgot just how cold late November in Colorado can be. After the first night of freezing temps and little sleep, along with a nasty cold we decided to stay at a lodge. We no longer have the fortitude to winter camp like when we were in our 20's, which is yet another source of a good Kevin story to be told another time :)

Our hikes consisted of long day hikes up into the mountains. We explored frozen glacier lakes and huge glaciated valleys. The pinnacle of the hikes was getting to Andrew's Glacier. It was a long trip just to get to the base of the skree field. The climb from there was straight up over boulders, it was off-trail and in deep snow. It was awesome, but it really tested my will and stamina since I had been battling the flu the entire trip. Once at the top, we felt as if we were on top of the world. It was like a small Everest to us. The wind was howling and snow was flying in a straight line. It was surreal and amazing. The jagged dark peaks covered with pure white snow glistening from the bright mid-day sun all set against the clearest and bluest skies I have ever seen.

It was spectacular up there but I was getting cold. We rushed off the mountain in a quarter of the time it took to get up there. Still riding the high of reaching our goal, we showered and headed out to the local brewpub for a cold beer and warm chili. That made a fantastic ending to a fantastic day.





SHOE #198



My painting of shoe #198

Our drive back from Rocky Mountain National Park took us on highway which follows along the Big Thompson River. We were in awe by the river's beauty and strength that day as it seemed to be raging. After a few miles down the road we noticed a lot of cars parked on the side of the river, and dotted with emergency vehicles as well. People were lining the riverbanks and appeared to be searching for something, we figured it was for a body. Our fears were realized when we saw a lone yellow kayak still wrapped and around a large boulder. The string of rescuers went for several miles down the river. I assume they did not find the kayaker alive. I looked in the papers the next day and searched online to no avail. I saw nothing and was unable to get a name, hence I have to dedicate Shoe #198 to the Unknown Kayaker who lost his life on November 3rd to mother nature's Big Thompson river.



Norwood Lateral East (I-471)
Norwood Ohio
N 30.469517 • W -86.562769
December 22, 2007



SHOE #207

Unfortunately lost soles have still not been showing up as much as usual. We almost went an entire trip up to Cincinnati without a shoe sighting. But it was the Christmas Season and all was merry.

Shoe #207 popped up on the way to Trish's house. It was her birthday so everyone that was in town got together to go celebrate. We got to hang out with Sean, Kelly, Jason, Gary, Big Randy, and Skippy. Whenever we can get part of the Gang back together is a good time. We had some drinks and told stories from the "old days."

The following day Sharon and I were scheduled to head out to Maryland. But before we left I had planned to meet up with Chad, an old from grade school. He is married and has a sweet little daughter. We were surprised to find out that he and his wife were into organic foods, green lifestyles and holistic medicine like we are. At that time his wife was pregnant with their second child and planned to give birth naturally with the aid of a mid-wife. Just like we would do if Sharon ever accidentally got pregnant. We are not really looking to have a child, we have our furry kids and are happy with life as it is. But if it happened we always said we would embrace it with all our heart. We would just settle down, get a house and join back with normal society leaving the RV lifestyle behind. An RV would be no place to raise a child.

We enjoyed spending time with them doing a little shopping and visiting the annual Christmas model train display at the CG&E building in downtown Cincinnati. Somehow it always seemed larger when I was a kid. I must admit that while I watched the fathers show their sons the trains and live vicariously through them. I fantasized a little about what it would be like to have a son of my own and watch the wonder in his eyes as he experienced the trains for the first time.

Sad to say, the settling down part has finally come. Living in the RV full-time has proven to be too much on us, mentally, physically and financially. We found a great little restored cottage in the North Hill Historical District of Pensacola. We decided to rent, just in case we get the fever to pick up and hit the road again.

Being near downtown I am within biking distance to everything I need. While biking to a meeting with a client I spotted **Shoe #213**. I had been worried that living in one place would no longer allow the discovery of new shoes. But this was one of many I had been locating around close proximity to our house. Amazing how often people lose a shoe.

An odd thing had been occurring around Pensacola, and I really started to get suspicious. I realize that this is quite narcissistic but I began to believe that someone in Pensacola was picking up all of the lost soles around here.

There had been numerous instances where I have passed by a lost sole and not gotten the photo for whatever reason, running late, bad spot to stop and so forth, with the intention to come back to it later take a photo. Normally when a shoe is lost it stays lost for some time so there is never a worry that it will not be still there in a day or so. That had not been the case lately in Pensacola. Those shoes I had been passing up were disappearing!!!! I would say almost 8 -10 shoes at that point. So what I had to do, is either make myself stop and get the shot, or come back asap! I think I had gotten a step ahead as I had been getting the shoe photos, then finding those shoes gone in a day or so.

I do recall a teenager telling me at one of my exhibitions here in town that he loved my project and had somewhat "borrowed" my idea. Which is not a problem, as long as he stopped taking my lost soles off the damn road!!!!

North Davis Highway
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.420418
W -87.210509
January 8, 2008



East Wright Street
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.418246 • W -87.207823
January 28, 2008

One day while checking my email I noticed one from a producer of a Television News show on CNN Headline News. He wanted to know if I would be up for being featured on it. This seemed too good to be true. My big break I thought. I would have a national audience. Then I thought, I will have a national audience and I got terrified.

*They wanted me to set up a camera in the motorhome and answer a list of questions about the One Shoe Diaries. I tried and tried to do it, but I was so nervous. I looked so uptight on camera just sitting there talking to it. So I grabbed the video camera and mounted it on the inside of the Jeep and started driving around town looking for a lost sole while answering the questions in a much more relaxed nature. Can you believe it? I found **Shoe #217** in the process! Perfect.*

The show aired a few weeks later and I watched it in shock. They did not just use some of my footage but they really ran with it! I could only laugh as I watched myself on TV speaking as one after another of my photos were displayed. It was incredible. I could not have been happier with it. I never imagined they would do such a great job. It was almost a 4 minute clip. I have it uploaded on my One Shoe Diaries website if anyone would like to see it.

The response was overwhelming after it aired. The emails and the comments were from so many people that shared my same vision. I did get a couple of negative thoughts, but most were positive. A few blew me away.

Lost Sole Identified...

While watching our CNN show a man recognized one of my lost soles, Shoe #132 and emailed me to tell its story. Several years ago while on Vacation in London he had a pair of shoes handmade for his daughter. They became treasured items instantly. One day while cleaning they noticed one was missing. They took the one remaining shoe and placed it on a shelf like a treasured memento. Never knowing where the other ended up until that morning when my show aired. He went on our website to see where it was located. He had driven down the highway where it sat many times since it was lost and never noticed it on the side of the road waiting to be found. If anyone ever goes by it, I would love to know if it is still out there.



SHOE #216



Old K-Mart, Highway 98, Gulf Breeze, Florida
N 30.385944, W -87.083180 • January 29, 2008

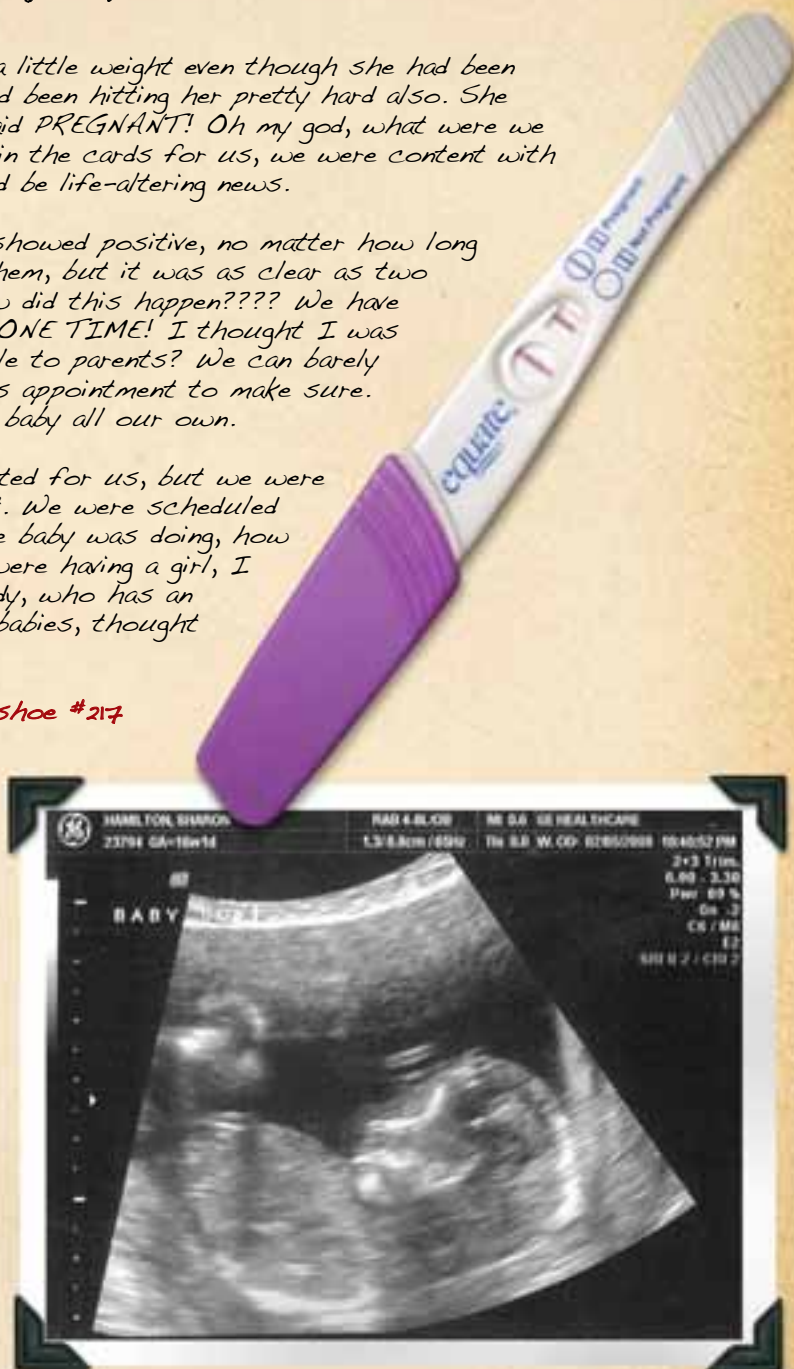
Sharon had not been feeling well and also gaining a little weight even though she had been eating really healthy. Moodiness and depression had been hitting her pretty hard also. She thought she may be pregnant, yes that what I said PREGNANT! Oh my god, what were we going to do. We never really thought a child was in the cards for us, we were content with it being just her and I with the dogs. This would be life-altering news.

We bought a few pregnancy tests, and they all showed positive, no matter how long I stared at them. I debated with Sharon over them, but it was as clear as two lines right there on the stick. Holy ****! How did this happen???? We have always been careful, except for one time. Just ONE TIME! I thought I was going to throw up. How were we going to be able to parents? We can barely take care of ourselves. We scheduled a doctor's appointment to make sure. And sure it was, we were having a baby. A little baby all our own.

It was funny how everyone around us was excited for us, but we were shocked and scared. We just were not there yet. We were scheduled for an ultrasound in which to find out how the baby was doing, how far along and hopefully what sex. She felt we were having a girl, I just knew we were having a boy. Our friend Randy, who has an excellent track record of predicting the sex of babies, thought it was a boy also.

On the day of the ultrasound we came across *Shoe #217* sitting in a parking lot of a long closed K-Mart store. Seems it never fails that whenever there is something important happening a lone shoe seems to pop up. I took the photo and it was a good distraction from the stressful appointment we were about to have.

It was when we saw our baby on the ultrasound screen that it all became real. Sharon and I were to have a baby, a baby boy. Yes we were to have a baby BOY!! I cried when we got out to the car. I was hooked. I was going to be a father and for the first time in my life I really wanted to be one. We settled on Noah Charles Hamilton as his name that day. Because Sharon already had Nora chosen if it was a girl and Noah was close to Nora, and Charles is a family name on her side. I could barely grasp what was going on. I felt so many emotions. Ones I had never experienced before. We were now where everyone else was, excited!



SHOE #217



SHOE #220

Fairfield Dr.
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.451320
W -87.222340
January 31, 2008



Lost shoes have been my thing for several years and I thought I had stuck to it now pretty well. But I may have met my match in Pensacola. Linda Bills Shirley, aka "The Glove Lady," has been collecting lost solo gloves for over 20 years now. She has hundreds of them. She was exhibiting them in Pensacola when we started to hatch the idea of collaborating on a "Hand and Foot" exhibition together. It would be a perfect fit. Her walls of gloves flapping in the breeze combined with my photographs of lost soles.

*Not long after meeting her I came across **Shoe #220**, with a glove placed in close proximity. A very appropriate image for sure. I plan on making this image the cover image for our exhibition flyer.*

One evening during the Pensacola Gallery Night, I assembled my show in front of the museum she was exhibiting at in order to draw people in. I was pretty shocked to have so many people recognize me from the CNN interview. I felt like a minor celebrity for a night. I am not going to lie, it was pretty cool.



SHOE #226



North A Street
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.432049
W -87.224944
March 23, 2008

The neighborhood we live in is beautiful. It reminds me of the Garden District in New Orleans. Many of the homes are from around 1900 -1940 and some are huge (but not ours :). They have such incredible large oak trees with Spanish moss draped from the branches. Lawns are thick and green and the gardens and landscapes are full of blooming flowers. We just love to walk the dogs around the neighborhood and check out the houses.

While walking we met many wonderful people that live in some of those beautiful homes. They made us feel so at home. Many became interested in us and wanted to know when we were expecting and became involved in the pregnancy in some way. We were asked, "When is Noah going to come out so we can meet him?" One neighbor whom Sharon somewhat knew already created handmade letters for Noah's room with pairs of animals attached to them. It was such a nice gesture. But it would be the Guardian Angel coin with Noah's name on it that became the most special gift from her.

*One evening while taking our morning stroll through the neighborhood, **Shoe #226** appeared. I ran home and got my camera. I got the photo. Good thing because the next day it was gone.*

Bayou Blvd. Target parking lot
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.468596 • W -87.208472
April 17, 2008

One of the fun things I have found out about having a baby is registering for gifts. We registered at Target (we pronounce it TAR-SHEY:) We scanned so many items. During that experience we realized we knew very little about raising a child. We knew diapers and wipes, but what is a boppie and a onesie? Do babies really need shoes? So many fun

looking swings and such, but which one do we need? We started to get overwhelmed and scared. What the hell were we doing? We should have enlisted help.

*After going through that process and heading out of the store we almost stepped on **Shoe #231**. I was pretty taken back that it was a small infant's shoe, since we were there picking out infant things. Seems like someone, perhaps my poltergeist is placing them for me to find. Too bad I do not believe in things like that.*



SHOE #231



GAMEFLY
BOX 60018
INDUSTRY CA 91



Map Key

Red Pins = Vol. 1 Shoes
(#1 - #157)

Blue Pins = Vol. 2 Shoes
(#158 - #250)





Badog
The Original Knucklehead
R.I.P.



North Shore Dr.
Charlotte Harbor
N 26.960479
W -82.059922
May 17, 2008

It was time to take a little trip. We headed down south to Port Charlotte, FL to visit Rachie and Aimee because they were dying to see Sharon pregnant, and throw her a baby shower.



*It was nice timing because I was getting wanderlust and needed to travel somewhere. I wanted to find a lost sole somewhere else besides Pensacola again. The shoe I found, **Shoe #234**, was found near Rachie's house. Nothing special but I did like the colors in it.*

While we were in town Rachie's work was doing a fundraiser event for Renā, her co-worker, who was going through cancer treatment. I had donated a painting for the large benefit auction that was held during the event. But that paled in comparison to what my good friend Scooter, owner of Tribal Boatworks, had offered up. He hand-built a boat to be raffled off with proceeds to benefit Renā. He ended up raising \$7500 for her! I could not believe the way the community stepped up and helped out a fellow citizen.

One of the items being auctioned off was a handmade Noah's Ark quilt. We had decorated Noah's room with various Noah's Ark items we had been finding so we HAD to have this. I began the bidding at \$20. Someone outbid quickly to \$25. I went to \$30. He went to \$35. Dammit. That's all I had. But I still went \$40, thinking I could borrow the money from someone. He went \$45 quickly. Dammit, who was bidding? I looked around and saw Sharon motioning to stop bidding. I then noticed it was Donny, my brother-in-law who was out bidding me. He wanted to get it for us as a gift. I could not believe we were bidding against each other and did not know it! But hey it was for charity.

During the shower we also got numerous Noah's Ark items including a handmade sheet set and pillow. His room was really starting to come together. We could not wait to see him in it.



Renā and Rachie, the day of the auction

We regretfully announce that a few days after the first editions of this Volume were printed that Renā Dalva passed away the morning of Christmas Eve 2008. We dedicate shoe #271 to Renā, which was found that same morning in Princess Anne, Maryland on Deal Island Rd. Renā will be dearly missed by many friends and family, may god bless her wonderful soul :)





SHOE #234



SHOE #241

Southwest Corner of
Gregory and Palafox
Pensacola, Florida

N 30.414228

W -87.215618

June 12, 2008

Our next door neighbor Augusta, or Gussie as she likes to be called, is a wonderful and interesting person. She is a slightly older woman living with her bed-ridden mother and mentally challenged brother. She takes care of them with the help of home health care workers. She works on her landscaping so much it makes me feel guilty because I just do not have the time to keep ours looking as nice as hers. Sometimes she will be out there at 7:00 am in her housecoat pulling weeds, I even found her pulling ours one morning. Talk about a guilt trip.

Gussie was born and raised in Pensacola. She moved out to go to college at Ohio State to pursue her doctorate in Rhetoric. Not sure what that is, but it sounds like you do not want to get into an argument with Gussie. She then went on to teach at Cornell where she eventually retired and moved back into her grandmother's house in Pensacola where she currently resides.

It is nice to have a neighbor like her. Someone who will help look after things when we are away, someone who brings goodies by and someone just to chat with about the weather and life.

*After telling her our story and about the One Shoe Diaries she came over the next day. She had seen a shoe lying on the sidewalk in Downtown Pensacola. It was a "rather nice shoe" she told me, "I don't know how anyone could just lose one." I immediately got on my bike and rode to get the photo of **Shoe #241**. As you can see, it is a rather nice shoe. Thanks Gussie.*

SHOE #244

North Palafox Street
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.434406
W -87.220211
July 3, 2008



One week in March, Nanny, Sharon's Grandma, came to visit us. She flew down by herself from Baltimore. We were nervous for her because as my mom used to say, she is a worry wart. But she made her connection in Atlanta and arrived in great spirits. We love to see Nanny. She seemed to have made quite a few friends on the trip to help look after her, because people kept coming up to say bye to her. Everyone loves Nanny.

We had a great time with her while she visited. The highlight was when just her and I had a day out. We visited numerous thrift stores to shop for Noah. We found a couple of Noah's Ark items and some maternity clothes for Sharon. Nanny helped raise Sharon when she was little so they have a special bond. Nanny was so excited to soon meet her great-grandson Noah soon that she could hardly contain herself.

After shopping for a while we got hungry. I knew Nanny loved her barbeque so we stopped at a famous local BBQ stand, King's BBQ. We both got the large pulled pork sandwich loaded with King's famous sauce. It was divine. We both ate as much as we could and saved the rest for later.

The entire time we were shopping Nanny wanted to discover a lost sole for me so bad. She gets such a kick out of my shoe photos. We did see a couple of shoes and even got a few photos but I opted not to use them for this story.

*Instead I chose this one, **Shoe #246**, as the feature shoe for this story. I took the photo just a couple of weeks after Nanny went back to Baltimore. It was in the gutter just down from King's BBQ, which allowed me to get the sign in the background. I just felt this shoe was more appropriate. Hopefully Nanny will come back down again soon and we can get another BBQ sandwich together with Sharon and little Noah in tow.*

I-110 Northbound
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.438164, W -87.215813
July 10, 2008

When it came to the birth of Noah, Sharon and I wanted to do it naturally. I know what you are thinking, easy for me to say right? But it was really own decision and I supported her 100%. We found a mid-wife to do the home birth with us. Vicky had delivered hundreds of babies at home and we felt very confident with her knowledge and expertise. The doctor that backed her up in case something went wrong was Dr. Maher, a high-risk OB. We also had been seeing him for consultations and ultrasounds. We liked him a lot.

*Well it was time for little Noah to make his appearance but he was not ready yet. Sharon was 40 weeks and we were headed for the midwife's office for an appointment. Running a little late as usual we saw **Shoe #246** on the highway once again. This was probably the 5th or 6th time I had passed by it on the way to an appointment. I just never had time to stop.*

Everything checked out fine. When we got home I got on my bike and rode the couple of miles to get the photo of Shoe #246. I wanted to have it just in case Noah decided to come, that way I would have a shoe to coincide with his birth. More days passed and still no Noah, but he was doing great in there, no rush...yet.



SHOE #246



Peg Leg Pete's Restaurant
Pensacola Beach, Florida
N 30.328132 • W -87.164911
August 2, 2008

I want to warn you up front this is the hardest story I have ever told or ever want to tell in my life.

Noah finally started to come, Sharon's water broke late at night and we were preparing for contractions to start. But they didn't come. We called the midwife and she told us that sometimes it can take up to 24 hours after the water breaks for contractions to start so we went back to bed to get well needed rest for what was to come. Sharon woke up again, she felt something wrong, she was bleeding pretty heavily. We rushed to the midwife's office so she could check us out.

The next few minutes seemed like an eternity as Vicky searched for little Noah's heartbeat. She could not find it so we rushed to the hospital where Dr. Maher was waiting for us. We were in utter shock, so scared. They brought in the ultrasound to find his heart beat. It was so strong usually. I just knew something was wrong. We could see it on the screen, there was no more life in his little heart, it was just sitting there. We broke down. How could this happen!! He was so strong. Why us? Weren't we good people? I was so distraught. I never in my wildest dreams thought this could happen to us.

Just when I thought it could not get worse, I realized we still had to deliver him. How would Sharon ever have the strength to deliver our sweet baby knowing he was not alive? I was terrified by this thought. How would I be able to hold my dead son? How is Sharon going to survive this. I thought for sure she was going to die of a broken heart for sure. I know I thought mine was going to burst from the pain. My heart literally ached.

Throughout the next five hours Sharon labored just fine, she opted for the epidural. She was a little loopy from the anti-nausea drugs which was a blessing, it eased her torture. I made all the sad calls to friends and family telling them the awful news. I cried until I could almost not cry anymore. But I was not alone, there were people crying for little Noah all over the country that night.

The time finally came to push, but Sharon felt she could not do it. Our good friend Alice was with us for support and came to her side. Our midwife's assistant,

Marla, who had been with us from the beginning of this ordeal helped gather Sharon's strength. And then almost on cue, the mid-wife showed up, then her assistant Connie, and then our friend and also a doula, Elizabeth came to help get Sharon through it. The energy in the room changed so much, as if angels had arrived to help Sharon went on to find an inner strength, she was inspiring. I felt proud to have her as my soul-mate.

Noah came into this world quietly. There was no crying. Almost not a sound to be heard, except the muffled sobs of a mother who had lost her baby. I had to be strong. It was time for me to be a father. I got to cut the cord and they handed me my son, he was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. I took him to Sharon and placed him in her arms, we sobbed and mourned as a family. He was so sweet, such an angel. He was perfect and always will be.

We held him for a little while longer and I stayed by him while in lay motionless on the infant table, he looked as if he were just sleeping, I thought for sure he was going to open his eyes and take a breath. The reality sunk in, he was gone. Having never taken his first breath.

We did get pictures of him and us together by a professional photographer Angela. She belonged to the organization, Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, a volunteer group of photographers who visit hospitals to get photos for parents who lose their babies. Those photos are something we will always cherish.

The following day we had family and friends from all over come in. My longtime close friends, Gary, Kevin, Skippy, Trish and Jason came. Sharon's mom, sister Rachie, Aunt Glenda, her friend Joy and even Nanny came. It was so hard to see everyone's sadness. They all were so heart broken. Everyone loved Noah so much and could not wait to have him with us.

*That next day we all went out for lunch on the beach at Peg Leg Pete's where I told everyone the story about how Noah did not make it and what all had happened. I even told them about this book and how I was going to end it with the story of Noah, but I had no shoe to go along with it. It was just then I glanced around the restaurant. There it was. Perched up on a ledge right in front of me. A small boy's croc, **Shoe #248**. I could not believe it, I just stared and pointed. They all looked up in amazement. It was then that all the unexplained yet wonderful things started happening.*

SHOE #248



North DeVilliers St.
Pensacola, Florida
N 30.424382 • W -87.224712
August 4, 2008

While I was holding Noah in the delivery room, I could not help but notice his amazing scent. I breathed it in as deep as I could, trying to imprint it on my brain so I would never forget it. The aroma was so sweet, almost like blooming jasmine. I found myself stopping in my tracks a few times those first few days afterward, catching a whiff of what I swore was his scent. It enveloped and took me over. Time stopped and I felt at peace for a moment. Then as quick as it came, it was gone.

I remember one instance so vividly. It was during Noah's memorial service and I had run out to the van to get stuff to bring in. And there it was, that smell, so strong and real. When it left I reached in my pocket to touch Noah's Guardian angel coin. But it was not in my pocket. I panicked. I forgot it at home. I called Kevin to see if he would go get it for me. There was no way I wanted to be at his service without it. Kevin was waiting at my house for some unknown reason, so it was no problem. He grabbed it and brought it to me. It almost seemed like Noah reminded his dad that he forgot the coin. My forgetfulness is legendary.

I did find a shoe that day but I did not have time to get the image. I had been put in charge of the photo album and I was running late for my own son's funeral.

It was the day after the service when we felt like we needed a day at the beach to uplift our spirits. My friends had all gone home but all of Sharon's family was still around. We went for lunch at Flounder's and then went to watch the surfers at a point known to locals as "the Cross. We had a great time just relaxing.

On the way home I wanted to stop at Macquire's Irish Pub and Restaurant to act on a local tradition. People for years have been hanging dollar bills with their names on them up on the walls and ceilings, to the tune of over \$600,000 to date. I wanted to memorialize Noah by putting up a bill with his name on it. We all then did a toast in his honor.

About 30 minutes later Sharon noticed my phone's clock was stuck on 5:50, which was pretty odd because that was right around the time I put up Noah's dollar. I shrugged it off as coincidence, but little did I know what series of unexplained "coincidences" were still about to transpire over the next few days.

Upon exiting Macquire's we were greeted with something that blew us away. Playing on the outside speakers was the Unicorn Song, an old Irish tune about Noah's Ark. I could not believe my ears! Was Noah playing a trick on us from beyond, was he telling us everything is going to be okay?

It was by far the most unnerving and uplifting moment I have ever experienced.

"What was the deal behind 5:50 I asked myself? Did it mean something else? I believe I got my answer from a friend of mine, Priya, who has extensive beliefs about angels communicating from the other side. She informed me that angels often communicate using number sequences, and that 550 is an important sequence believed to mean...

Things may seemed to have gone wrong, but they are in perfect alignment with God's will and that everything is going according to his plan.

WOW! Was this possible? As I stated earlier, I am a skeptic with spiritual experiences. But how can I refute all of this? Something in me told me that this was genuine. There was a plan and I should take comfort and find hope in it.

The shoe I have associated with this story is **Shoe #249**. It was a shoe that was secretly placed by Sharon's sister Rachie by our house. It was intended to cheer me up, to give me something to occupy my mind for a bit. I usually do not take photos of staged shoes, but I made an exception on this one.



SHOE #249





Shereline Drive, Gulf Breeze, Florida
N 30.355944, W -87.168571 • Aug 8, 2008

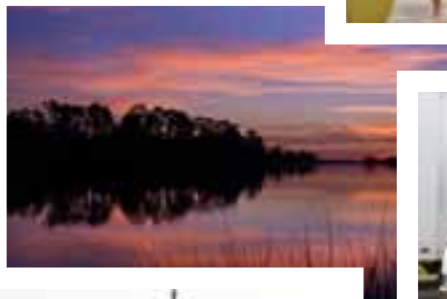
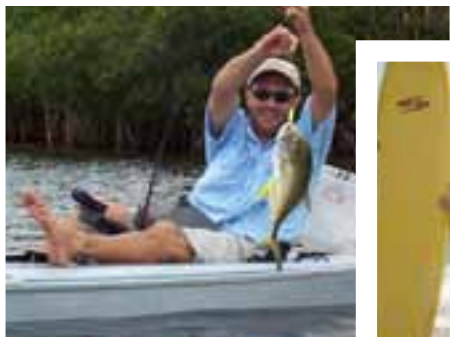
The next morning came the inevitable visit with the funeral director. He was a nice man, he was very sympathetic and made us feel at ease. While we were doing the arrangements it came to a point where he needed to know if we wanted a duplicate death certificate. We did, but it would cost \$8 cash, I started to search my pockets as I remembered Glenda had left some money in my backpack and told me to keep it. As I pulled out a few dollars, one in particular drew my attention, so much so I felt electricity run threw me as I read the word that was scrawled on it in bright blue. "Baby." It read "Baby!" Sharon saw it then and asked where I got it. I told her that I did not see any writing on it before. Where did Glenda get it? Did she know it had B-A-B-Y written on it? We were speechless as we stared at it.

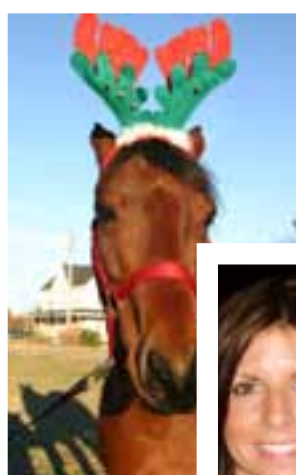
On the way home we called Glenda. She had no idea that she gave me a bill with writing on it, let alone the word "BABY" in big blue letters. Sharon then fell silent for a moment, and then told me. "The night before I prayed to Noah, God or anyone that could help. Please let us know if it would be alright to try someday to have another baby." She then paused. "Do you think we just got our answer?"

It was that moment where something shifted in our thinking. We began having true hope. Hope that we would get the chance to be the parents we know we can be. It is now a dream of ours to be parents, where before Noah we were so unsure and scared. I hope I ended this sad journey on a note of hope. Without hope, how can we ever go on.

SHOE #250

This photo relates back to the lost sole I found the day of Noah's service. When I returned the next day to take the photo, it was no longer there. However, I took this photo of where it had been instead. And metaphorically I feel it is a more powerful image than had the shoe still been there.





SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The photos displayed on these pages were submitted to us via email or through the One Shoe Diaries Website, we encourage anyone who sees a lost sole to photograph it, and post it on our website.

I just got back in Madrid a couple days ago from a little tour around Spain. I wanted to hold good on my word to find a shoe parted from it's owner here in Spain, and I did! This photo was taken in Madrid on a side street called Paseo del Marqués de Moristral near Puente de Segovia... Spain is not known for simple short street names :-) One thing I liked about this picture is that it turned out to have a legible piece of paper in the foreground with the words 'no contacto'. It's as though this piece of paper and shoe shared the same fate in common: having lost their owner. My friend that was with me thought it was a bit odd I stopped to take a picture of an abandoned shoe, so I explained to her your interesting journey :-)



"The Third World Shoe Tree"

My Daughter (Joni) and I went to Roatan, Honduras in 2002. She Started to notice all the lost flip flops on the beach, so she hung them on a tree by the ocean. Thinking someone would claim them. The island children thought it was so neat, they all began to add to the tree. And spent many hours contributing to it. It's a very poor country, so every once in awhile they would find two similar shoes that might would fit. Even if they didn't match. And would wear them home proudly. She keep this up for the entire time we were there. Thirty three days. After we returned home, my daughter was killed in a horrendous murder. Which to this day has remained unresolved. She was only forty two. I just wanted to thank you for helping a heart broken Mother remember happier times, by viewing your web site. Joni would have thought it was the neatest thing for someone to do..she too was a free spirit. And saw life as you see it through such artistic eyes! A mom, who's heart is touched by your insight. P.S, she is the one in the sunglasses

I live in El Paso, Texas and I was watching CNN when I saw the piece about the one shoe, so I went to the website. Sad to say I have never been to any of the places that were featured in the blog. I have always wanted to go to White Sands and explore. It made me realize after looking at your pictures that I need to take my kids and experience the sands. So with that said, we are loading up today and heading that way. Thanks for the beautiful pictures and inspiring to get off the couch and just GO!

P.S. You have to head to Lajitas, Texas to meet the mayor! It's a beer drinking goat.

When there is a great storm It may destroy and It sometimes kill but always, always reminds us of - I don't have the words, I can't put my finger on what it is I can only compare it to the shoe that at one time I loved and walked a short journey with and somehow I walked away from that shoe and the journey was over. But once I loved that shoe.



❀ Dedication ❀

This book is dedicated in loving memory
of our sweet little angel,

Noah Charles Hamilton

The greatest blessing of all, was having you.

We would like to give a special thanks to all of our wonderful friends and family for your support during the hardest experience of our lives. We will NEVER forget the love that poured out to us and Noah. We are amazed and humbled by how many lives Noah touched without ever having been born.

Randy and Sharon Hamilton.

God looked around his garden
and found an empty space
He then looked down upon the earth
and saw your little face
He put his arms around you
and lifted you to rest
God's garden must be beautiful
He only takes the best
It broke our hearts to lose you
but you did not go alone
for part of us went with you
the day God called you home.



Photo taken by NILMDTS (Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep) photographer Angela Etheridge Dowling

This book was not an easy thing to write. What started out as a way to celebrate the birth of our son, Noah Charles Hamilton, has now become a dedication to him. He will always be in our hearts. It has also served as a testament to how great the human spirit can be. We are so grateful for all the wonderful people in our lives that came to our side to help us through the worst time of our lives. We cannot thank our friends and family enough. We love you all!

— Sharon and Randy Hamilton

