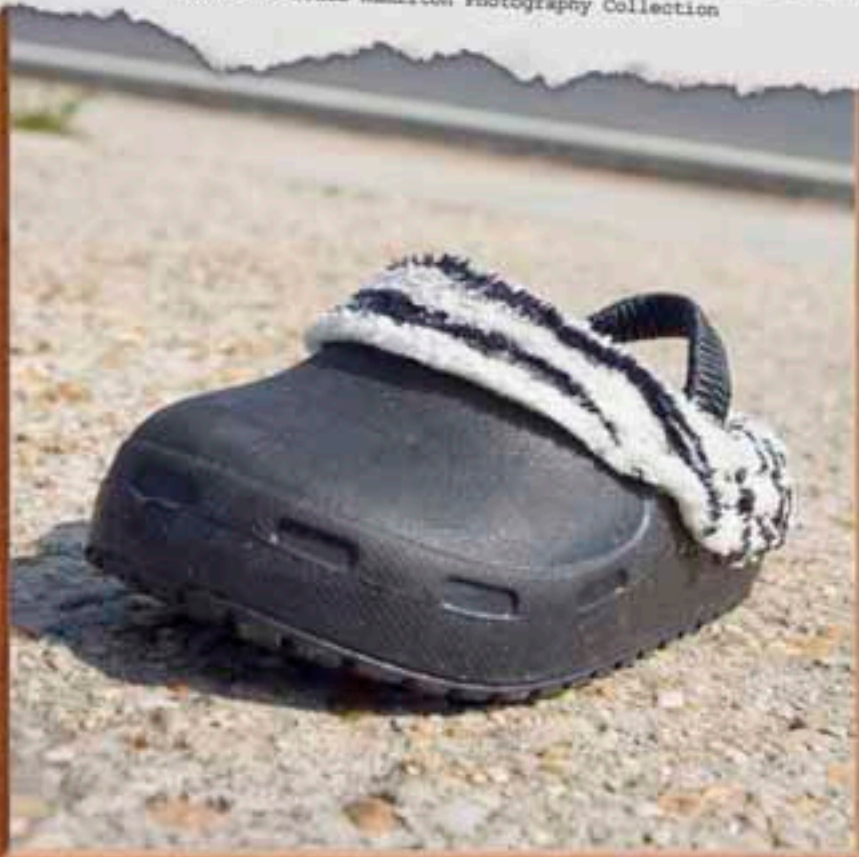


THE ONE SHOE DIARIES™

Volume 3: Lost Soles lead to Hope Found

A Randall Louis Hamilton Photography Collection






FAITH AND HOPE

In Volume 2 Sharon and I found faith. Not so much in a religious aspect, but rather in a way that was ever present. We had to have faith everything would work out, faith that Noah was alright and in a good place, and faith that we would get through as a couple. Faith became a source of strength to help us get through our personal tragedy.

Volume 2 was a rough book to write, let alone experience. Sharon and I were forever changed through those events. We learned a lot about each other and human existence, both good and bad. Most of all, by realizing through faith that everything happens for a reason, true hope was born. It is in that spirit of hope that I embark on writing this volume. I cannot say all the stories in this volume are bright and cheery, life never is. However I do hope that others will be changed a little through reading this volume and that it may help people appreciate the power of hope and why it is so important to never lose faith.



Roosevelt Blvd.
Smather's Beach
Key West, Florida
August 9, 2009
N24.551240 · W-81.773136

Sharon was not on maternity leave per say, but during Noahs pregnancy she had been working at a rehab center operated by The Sacred Heart Health System and planned to return after Noah gotten to be around six months old. She had worked there for almost five years so she had made many friends. When they found out what happened with Noah they started a fund-raiser so that the two of us could take a short getaway to find peace from the stress of everyday life for a moment.

We were humbled by the outpouring of generosity. Many did not even know Sharon but felt compelled to help. The donations enabled us to take a trip to visit her sister Rachie in South Florida and venture to Key West for a night.

The plan was to take the high-speed express catamaran from Fort Myers to Key West early one morning and stay the night, leaving the next evening. It went all according to plan except for the extremely rough ride thanks to Tropical Storm Fay which had just recently blown through. The boat became affectionately referred to by us as the B arf Barge, luckily we had Dramamine to save us.

Once off the boat we set out on foot to the Alligator and the Mermaid B&B. It was AFRICA HOT that day! Looking back, we should have splurged for a cab. Upon arriving at the B&B we were greeted with a beautiful house and lush gardens, it was a true paradise. The room could not have been more relaxing. There was no TV, just large windows and a CD player.

That night we went out to explore. We ate a great dinner and had a few drinks before walking back to the B&B, which along the way a time-share salesman tried to make a pitch to us. At first we just politely declined, then he offered \$100 in food and shopping vouchers to go to the presentation. That stopped us, and being semi-professional timeshare participants, we took the offer.

A shuttle picked us up the next morning and drove us across the island to the resort. It was a typical timeshare resort right down to the salesperson and their sales spiel. We made up something about needing dog-friendly resorts, which they had none so away we went back to the B&B with \$100 in vouchers to spend.

On the ride back we discovered shoe #252. A little boys Croc! I say that in amazement because of the symbolism of the boys Croc from Volume 2. Noah seems to like Crocs. I asked the driver if he would turn around and go back so I could get the shot. A nything for Art he replied.

This trip refreshed our souls. We learned how to enjoy life again without feeling guilty and we reconnected as a couple. Thanks to the employees of Sacred Heart for this opportunity to gain the perspective and energy to get back to living our lives.

Red Rover Died With His Spurs On

by Katha Sheehan,
Key West The Newspaper.



Red Rover died this week, in all his glory, with his spurs on, defending his henhouse and his wife Belle against the assault of a pack of wild dogs, in an avocado grove in Homestead, Florida.





SHOE #251



North A Street
Pensacola, Florida
N30.355944 • W-87.168571
August 23, 2009

One of the uplifting effects that came from Noahs passing was our renewed appreciation for how the human spirit can reach out to others in times of need. It showed us that we are not alone in this world. In Volume 2 I made reference to our neighborhood in which we lived and how we loved it there but never went much into detail why.

When we had Noahs memorial service at our friend Belindas house, our neighbors pitched in and created a whole spread of food to set up before we even arrived. They also brought flowers and made everything look great. Upon entering the house we were so taken back by the gesture we were both speechless with tears in our eyes. In addition they chipped in to buy Sharon an engraved Tiffany bracelet.

It was right then that they forever endeared themselves to us for making such a beautiful gesture that we will never forget. That is a major reason we never want to leave our neighborhood of North Hill.

Shoe #251 was found just 2 blocks from our house on DeVilliers, basically at the pinnacle of the North Hill. There was nothing special about the circumstances behind finding it. I merely drove by it one day and parked, then walked to photograph it. It was gone the next day. I find it funny how the Lost Soles come and go. How did it get there? And how did it leave there? All within view of my house but I never saw a thing.

Bayfront Parkway
Pensacola, Florida
N30.551240 • W-87.773136
September 9, 2008

Shortly after getting back from our trip to Key West the hurricane season became active again, first with Hurricane Gustav, then with Hurricane Ike that devastated the area of Galveston. When Ike was steaming towards the coast we went out to Pensacola Beach to see the giant waves coming ashore.

On the way out there we came across Shoe #253, yet another little boy's Croc. The coincidences were piling up, this was the third out of five lost soles after Noah's passing that were little boy's Crocs! We will now always think of Noah whenever we see a Croc. I believe that was his goal.



SHOE #253

Highway 13 North
Salisbury, Maryland
N38.397008 • W-75.569386
September 23, 2008

The inevitable time had come to travel to Maryland to put little Noah's ashes to rest on Sharon's parents' farm on Deal Island. We found a spot in their small garden to bury them. We did not have a marker yet so my mom wanted to send us my grandmother's cross for us to use. It was Friday evening at that point and it had to get to Maryland before we left Tuesday morning so we could place it. She was unable to ship it until Saturday so it seemed there was no chance to have it delivered by Monday. However, on that Monday, it showed up in the mail! Someone made it happen.

It was really sad for us to lay him to rest, but we knew in our hearts he would always be by our side, and maybe, just maybe, return to us. Many believe the spirits of unborn children return to their parents in another child, and like we always do, we hoped it was true.

Driving up to Baltimore the next day was somber. We had to have faith Noah would stay with us and not tied to his earthly remains. Not long after the drive started we passed by Shoe #258. I was amazed to see it had a big N on it. We realized it was a New Balance shoe, but in our hearts we believed the N was a sign from Noah to let us know he remained with us. It was something that gave me such solace. My spirit was uplifted in an instant. I remember taking the photo with tears in my eyes.



SHOE #258

1
2



The Club Parking Lot
Gulf Breeze, Florida
N30.382413 • W-87.103177
October 10, 2008

Before we began our trek in the motorhome I was an avid tennis player. But being on the road made it hard for me to have a steady partner to play against. So when we settled back down I was eager to take back up tennis. I found a great opponent in my friend Eric. He is a big server, with solid ground strokes. We are pretty evenly matched to my dismay.

One day we headed out to play and noticed that some flowers were on the posts of the net closest to the parking lot along with a group of guys walking off the court. Eric noticed what he called gravel all over the court. What's all over the court? we asked the guys. They told us it was their friend Larry's ashes. Apparently he was a big tennis player, literally. So they thought it would be fitting to spread his ashes over his favorite court. That's a lot of ashes, remarked Eric. Larry was a big man one of them replied.

So as not to desecrate Larry's ashes we moved down a few courts. Unfortunately there were still some ashes that had spread all the way across the complex so we had no choice and figured Larry would understand. Several times the ball took a weird bounce. We attributed that to Larry and thanked him out loud. I am sure he got a kick out of having an impact on a tennis match after his death. I bet he was smiling somewhere.

Even though shoe # 259 was found near a different tennis complex in Pensacola a few months before his death, it made me think of Larry. So I dedicated this Lost Sole to him. Also noting the fact that it was another small boys Croc! I can't help but think of the 70s era song, Sign, sign, everywhere a sign

could," said Don, who learned of his brother's death when he was to drive him to the heart doctor for a checkup. He went onto his walker with one hand and his racquet with the other.

Even those who didn't know him as a tennis person were quick to become fast friends with Larry, who welcomed any challenger and freely offered advice. "People around town hold him in extremely high regard," Don said. "He was so friendly; everybody loved him, and he loved everybody. I'd take him to lunch, and even with the people who sell newspapers on the street, he'd stop and wave at them and say, 'Hello.' He just loved everybody. He'd had his ups and downs since the stroke. Unfortunately, his number just came up, but fortunately, in a peaceful way."

Former longtime University of West Florida tennis coach Ralph "Skipper" Carson knew Larry as one who wouldn't back down from an on-court battle. "When PJC had a very good tennis team from the late 70s to 1980 when

despite his great success, Larry found time to hit with anyone with a racquet, something that was appreciated by his students and peers. Family was also a huge part of his life, just as was the love for the great outdoors.

"He or to say for eight has a different the wood that for or pitch an offer Bayview.

"The l Caton i ute by j took a groun go out would fit out there and would fit out there and

John Hunt, longtime friend of Larry Caton, picks out the wooden racquet among the memorial on Bayview's court



Bruce, Don and Larry

Not long after dedicating Shoe #259 to Larry Caton I came across this article in our local tennis magazine, First Serve. He sounded like an interesting man, I wish I had crossed paths with him before he passed instead of after. Perhaps it was fate that day that led me to the courts at just that moment so I could carry on his story through my book.

Last month, along with Don and Bruce, Larry was finally inducted into the Pensacola Sports Association Hall of Fame. Recently, the Larry Caton Memorial Tournament benefitting Tennis-4-Everyone, Inc. was played in honor of the man who loved improving tennis games, especially for children.

Take this to heart; if you're ever at Bayview's hard courts on a sunny weekend morning and you need that extra push to win a point, just know "The Iceman" is right there beside you, encouraging you each step of the way.



Larry "the Iceman" Catton
1942 - 2009

SHOE #259



I-59 North
Sulphur Springs, Alabama
N34.696474
W-85.568976
December 16, 2008

The road finally came calling again. Unfortunately we would not be in the Cruisemaster. We had just recently said goodbye to it forever, which was not easy for me as I am a very sentimental person. We had a lot of good memories with that motorhome. We now travel in a Town and Country minivan but hitting the road still felt great. I got excited when I saw this boot, Shoe #266 under an overpass. It was in a perfect location, out of harms way and sitting at an interesting angle.

Prior to this trip, Sharon and I had been actively trying to conceive another child. We are pretty eager as we are not getting any younger. We actually thought we did conceive this past week, but Mother Nature did not bless us. It is so hard. We cannot help at times to feel like we should be parents and deserve a child to love. We sometimes feel like we were cheated. Those are the demons that come with losing a child though.

However, those demons must be fought so as not to become bitter and depressed. I believe we win most of those battles but we are only human and sometimes the negative thoughts do creep in. Thankfully we have each other to lift ourselves out of the darkness. We miss our Noah so much, and now with the holidays it is that much more intense.

There are no physical obstacles for us in order to get pregnant again. We have great hope it will happen. We just have to keep our chins up. We have decided to forgo the trying and just let it happen at its own pace. Maybe we still need some time to heal.



SHOE #266

Madison Avenue
Oakley, Ohio
N39.156228 • W-84.425007
December 20, 2008

While in Cincinnati we got to see snow for the first time in a few years. I had been wanting to photograph a lost sole with snow on it to add to the collection for some time. So we made an effort to really be on the look out. To my disappointment, the snow came and went without getting the ideal snow shoe photo.

While we stayed with our friend Trish, her church was doing a Christmas show to raise money. It was a big production and was being promoted throughout the city. It was predicted to have sellout shows. However on opening night, tragedy struck. One of the cast members, Keri Shryock, suffered a fall from a suspended position during the performance. She was attended to by emergency personnel as quickly as possible and transferred to the hospital for intensive care, but Keri did not survive.

I hoped maybe our Noah could find Keri and show her the way and ease her transition. I cannot imagine what her family must have went through. Christmas will never be the same for them.

I found Shoe #268 the morning after her passing on the road in front of that church and felt obligated to photograph it and dedicate it to her. It seems that many of my lost soles have become dedications to actual lost souls. I am not sure how I feel about that connection.



Keri Elizabeth Shryock
1985 - 2008

SHOE #268



East Gregory Street
Pensacola, Florida
N30.417885 • W-87.201665
December 29, 2008

Upon driving through Pensacola with my friend Jason we came across Lost Sole #272, and of course I stopped to photograph it. We then drove to play disc golf. On the way we passed the scene of a bad auto accident. The car had a tarp drawn over it and we both knew straight away that someone had passed away. Right then I knew I had to dedicate that lost sole I discovered earlier to that person.

That person, as I found out later, was Gail Horne of Pensacola. The accident was the result of a man who got behind the wheel after drinking and actually fled the scene, only to be caught hours later. Gail was described by her family in the local newspaper as very, very funny . . . She had a great personality and a fantastic sense of humor. She lit up a room and was a fantastic lady.

Within a couple of hours after posting the dedication on my website a man wrote a comment that was so poetic and heartfelt that I felt compelled to email him and ask if he knew her or had he just wrote it to be nice. On the right is what he wrote and what I received in response to my email.



Written by Sole_3 on January 5th, 2009 at 4:19 pm

Sole_#272 was a lost sole as Sole_3 has been/is. I walked along the shores with Sole_#272 in the Pacific Islands, Caribbean, Canada, the wine country of California, Big Sur, European cultural centers, islands and countryside. I recall sitting on a blanket beside her in beautiful grass on the riverside near Hampton Court. That day is etched into my memory forever. The list seems almost endless, but it has ended and so has the possibility of friendship ... forever now.

Only memories remain and there are so very, very many.

She had a good heart, perhaps the best I have met in my life. Her innermost secret was that she wanted to be very, very beautiful so I think she perfected that on the inside. Everyone who knew her will attest to that. She never met a stranger; they knew her from the first smile. She laughingly referred to herself as the entertainment committee of one. The world was too small for her wants and needs that stemmed from childhood. She searched but never really found the understanding that she needed from life. The privilege of expressing love and regret are no longer an option for Sole_3.

I will look for her in the sparkling of the water on the ocean, above the white puffy clouds in the endless blue sky and every time I hear laughter. It has been so many years, yet I miss her terribly. Wherever you are Sole#272, I miss you.
Love, Sole_3"

Here is what he sent back as a reply to my inquiry

I knew her very, very well for many years. Not many people understood what made her tick. I appreciated the anonymity yet opportunity for expression there. There was much more to her than people saw or could know.

Thank you,
Sole_3

SHOE #272

Gail Ann Horne
1951-2008



I-10 Eastbound
Pensacola Florida
N30.503791 • W-87.239866
January 11, 2009

Not long after the Gail Horne accident and dedication, Sharon and I were driving north on I-10 to the Pensacola Fairgrounds. In the distance we could see a plume of black smoke billowing into the sky. It looked to be coming from the side of the highway ahead of us. As we came around the ramp to merge on I-10 west we were able to see what the source was. It was a tractor trailer that had veered off the side of the road into a grove of trees and the cab was engulfed in flames. There were no emergency vehicles on the scene yet so we knew it just happened. I got a horrible feeling in my gut. We debated on stopping but several cars were already stopped and we felt we would just be in the way. But the whole time at the fairgrounds we wondered what the fate was of that truck driver.

We had to drive back past the accident on our way home. The emergency vehicles were now lined up. Our hearts really sank now. Then just as we passed the scene we saw a boot on the side of the road. We didn't stop, instead we got off at the next exit to eat lunch and find out what had happened. I called a friend to look on the Internet, and he told me the bad news. The truck driver had not made it. We knew what we had to do.

Driving back to the scene made me sick. I hated getting out and photographing Lost Sole #274 but I felt it was my duty. I immediately posted it, accompanied by a dedication on my blog. At the time his name was unknown so I dedicated it to the unidentified truck driver (later identified as Jeffrey Pierce Rodgers) who lost his life on I-10, he may have been a husband, he may have been a father, but at the very least he was someones son and will be surely missed. It was not even an hour later that someone responded with this incredible comment.

Written by Sherry on January 12th, 2009 at 4:59 pm

"Lost Sole #274, Jeff was his name. He was a father, a husband, and of course a son. His is with now with his lord, pray for the family he left behind.

He is married to my cousin. I am not sure if his name has been released, as she has not yet been able to view his remains. We are a few states away trying to understand this tragedy. Your blog gave a human/eye-witness perspective to it, I was very grateful. Another "journalist", for lack of a better term, blogged about how jokes were spoken at the site. No ID, just BBQ.

If I can release more information, I will. However, I also want to respect the unimaginable situation my cousin is having to make her new reality.



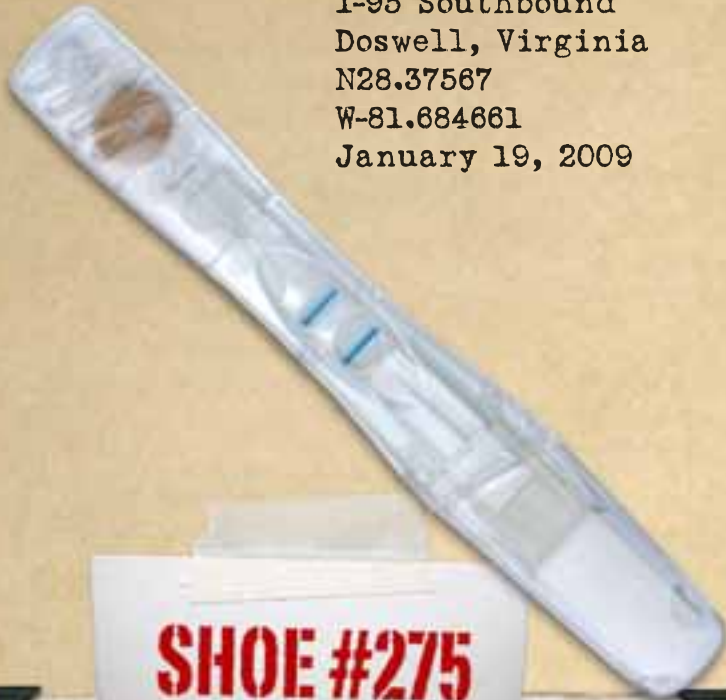
Photo by Bruce Graner bgraner@pnj.com

SHOE #274

Jeffrey Pierce Rodgers
1957 - 2009



1-95 Southbound
Doswell, Virginia
N28.37567
W-81.684661
January 19, 2009



SHOE #275



The recent events of the Lost Sole connections to actual lost souls had me a little freaked me out. So when we got a call that Sharon's Grandmother (Nanny) fell very ill we may have over reacted. We packed and immediately drove to Maryland to see her for what we feared would be the last time. It was very tense.

During the journey to Maryland I saw numerous lost soles on the side of the road but refused to acknowledge them. I did not want to jinx Nanny and be responsible for her passing. A few hours into the trip we received encouraging news that Nanny was doing better. However we kept going.

We stayed for a week so that Sharon could help nurse her back to health and spend some quality time with her. Sharon wanted to stay longer so we decided that I would drive home alone and she would fly home later.

The evening before I left, Sharon confided in me that she thought she might be pregnant. We had thought that same thing a few months earlier to no avail. So we did not want to get our hopes up. I ran to the store and got a few home pregnancy tests. We followed the instructions and waited. Two lines showed up, and we knew what that meant...positive! We did another just to be sure, and it also revealed a positive result! We seemed to be blessed once again. And yet again we were caught off guard with a pregnancy.

After a few months of failures we had stopped actively trying and became resigned to the fact it might take a year or so to get pregnant. We did not tell anyone of the news and promised to remain silent until an official test. We were so full of mixed feelings, including fear, anxiety, and joy, but most of all, hope. It gave me a lot to think about on the drive home.

My solo trek back was on the day before Obama was to be inaugurated so I left early to avoid traffic. It was just outside D.C. when I spotted Lost Sole #275. I figured since Nanny was doing well it would be safe to stop and get the photo. I was not thrilled with the skull image on the shoe, as it might be a bad omen.

Nanny fully recovered, Sharon made it home safely, and Obama was not assassinated. I just prayed the omen did not have anything to do with the pregnancy.



SHOE #276



Hunan's Parking Lot
Scenic Highway
Pensacola, Florida
N30.4320094
W-87.175759
January 24, 2009

One night while Sharon was still out of town a few of us guys got together and had a night out. It was a fun time. Nothing crazy, but I did drink a little too much and felt pretty rough the next day.

Chinese food always seems to settle my stomach so I ordered some carry-out lo-mein noodles for lunch. In the parking lot of the Chinese restaurant I stumbled across Lost Sole #276. It was a woman's high heel that actually looked worse than I felt, which was pretty bad. Finally some humor surfaced in the shoes again because the recent lost sole dedications were weighing on me, and had been casting a dark shadow on the project.



**E. Cervantes St.
Pensacola, Florida
N30.421795 • W-87.213621
January 30, 2009**

This past Christmas our very good friends, Dave and Beth, purchased a star in Noah's honor from the Star Registry. It is a bright star located at the end of the big dippers handle, making it very easy to find. We cherish that gift as it will be something we will always have and will forever be able to gaze upon and think of Noah.

Without any collaboration, our other friends, Randy and Jen, gave us a Christmas ornament on the same night that was a little boy riding a shooting star, with the Noah's name painted on it. The emotions became overwhelming. We could not help but get choked up. This would have been his first Christmas.

Some months later, upon crossing the Three Mile Bridge in Pensacola I was looking up at where Noah's star is located, when right from that spot a shooting star streamed down to earth. It appeared to fall right over our house and disappear. It brought up an overwhelming feeling of hope and joy. I felt Noah's presence whole-heartedly. I couldn't help but entertain the thought that the star was his way of showing me he had come back to us.

The next day Sharon went to a doctor's appointment and it was confirmed that she was indeed pregnant. We were now officially pregnant and it felt safe to tell a few select people, as we could not sit on such a secret any longer.

We were scared. What if something goes wrong? It was still very early and miscarriages do happen. We had to push those negative thoughts from our heads so as not to invite a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom.

Shoe #278 was spotted just after coming across the bridge the night of the shooting star but I did not have my camera with me. I went back for it the next night after the news of the pregnancy and took my time setting up the camera for a perfect night shot. This is a very important lost sole to me, and one of my favorite Lost Sole images to date.

SHOE #278

EAST

98



Pensacola High School Bleachers
Pensacola, Florida
N30.435059 · W-87.226966
March 12, 2009

Our first ultrasound appointment, to check on whether or not it was a viable pregnancy, came up quickly. We decided to go with Dr. Maher, the same doctor that delivered sweet Noah for us. We had connected with him and trust him fully. There is no one else who we would want to deliver our baby

Going back into the same office we had been to so many times before with Noah's pregnancy was tough. Memories and feelings rushed back when we walked through that door. We were so naive to the inherent dangers of childbirth during with Noah's pregnancy, where as now we feel jaded a bit now, or perhaps more enlightened. There was a couple that sat across from us that had been waiting to see if their pregnancy was doing all right. This was not their first try to get a viable pregnancy however it seemed that the third time was a charm as the proud father clutched the ultrasound photo of their little baby in his hand. He just kept staring at it and analyzing the data that was imprinted on it as if to reassure himself that what he was experiencing was real.

They were glowing. They asked us if this was our first baby too. We didn't have the heart to tell them the truth. We just nodded and said yes. We told them we are just a little quiet because we are nervous. But in reality we were almost paralysed with anxiety. We just sat in deep thought waiting our turn until we were jolted from our inner trances when the nurse opened the door and called us back.

Walking down that hallway plastered with pictures of newborn babies was serious Déjà Vu. I remembered them so vividly from last time. I remembered thinking about where we would stick Noah on the wall? Would he look cute as a newborn, or like a wrinkled old man like some of them? Never thinking for an instant his picture would never make it up there. We stayed as stoic as we could throughout the exam, almost having to disconnect from what was going on so we would not have panic attacks.

After the exam we waited for a short time before being led back to the ultrasound room. Again, the feeling of Déjà Vu was haunting me. The ultrasound tech brought up an image on the screen of a tiny embryo that look like a peanut. She went on to try and find the heartbeat. The emotions rushed over me, I felt a panic as she quickly searched for it. And there it was, a strong, thump thump...thump thump. It was a sound that we wanted to hear so desperately just a few months back when they looked for Noah's heartbeat that day in the hospital and there was none to be found.

Finally we asked the question, "Is everything okay? Is it a viable pregnancy?" She looked at us with a reassuring smile and told us, "everything is just fine, she looks like she is around 7 weeks which puts her due date approximately Sept. 23rd". Talk about relief. However we still restrained from being too happy. We try not to be overly confident or too happy. Life is so fragile and anything can happen, and we have to protect ourselves this time as I am not sure we could survive another loss.



SHOE #284

Lately I had started running up and down the bleachers at a nearby high school to stay in shape and burn off stress. After the ultrasound I went there to release the anxiety that had built up. That is when I came across Lost Sole #284 tucked up under a bleacher bench.



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



This little Croc, Shoe #286, which I am pretty sure is a girl's Croc due to the zebra striped fur, was found the day before we were to go in to get another ultrasound to find out the sex of our baby. However I felt we got our answer from this lost sole. We believe Noah has communicated with us through the Crocs and this was his way of showing off for his mommy and daddy that he already knew we were having a girl.

The next day at the appointment we went in pretty confident that the news would be a girl. So when they finally did the scan and announced that we were having a girl we were not surprised. We even had the name already chosen. She would be named Nora Jessie after Sharon's great-grandmother Nora and her grandmother Jessie (Nanny).

I can't lie though. There was a big part of me that was hoping for a boy. Partially because I wanted to raise a boy and share in all the things little boys like to do. Mainly I think I wanted a boy because I wanted to believe. I wanted to believe in all the things that happened to us. Such as the dollar bill and the unsolicited prophecies by a few psychics that seemed to point to us having another little boy. Plus if we had a little boy I really could have the hope it was my little Noah that came back to me.

Perhaps I misinterpreted the symbolism of the girl's Croc? Could it mean that even though we were having a girl, it would be Noah's spirit that was returning to us? I guess his soul does not have to return as a male. I am sure somehow we will know. Either way Nora and Noah will forever be connected. Whether they are one in the same or that Nora has a guardian angel forever looking out for her. When she is old enough we will tell her the story of her big brother Noah.

SHOE #286





SHOE #288

Bayview Dog Park
Pensacola, Florida
N30.432174 • W-87.191354
April 14, 2009

After going through the tragedy of Noah we began to meet others that belonged to the same horrible group as us. It is the group of parents who have lost a baby before, during, or shortly after birth. These parents began showing up more than we cared for.

Our neighbors around the corner, Jason and Stacy, whom we had spoken to throughout Noah's pregnancy, shared with us that they too had lost a baby boy during birth just 2 years earlier. Baby Walker was his name. We immediately bonded with them as they reached out to help us find hope. They had two children already when Walker was lost, Wyatt and Mary Raine, and went on to have another little girl, Grace. They were an inspiration for us.

This shoe was found right around the time when Walker Coffey was lost during birth. I want to dedicate this little boy's shoe in memory of him. I am sure him and Noah have become friends wherever they may be.



They also had a big boxer named Cajun. Our dogs loved him. We would stop and say hi to him everyday as we did our daily strolls. Having three children they were unable to take Cajun to the dogpark. So we started grabbing him on the weekends and stuffing him into the van with Jack and Jinjer to go to the dogpark. He was a great dog. Shoe #288 was found resting atop a trash can at the park one day and in the background you can make out long-legged Cajun.

The Coffey's have since moved to Louisiana and the neighborhood is not the same without them. We actually do not even walk down past the house anymore. It feels sad and the dogs get depressed not seeing their big buddy at the fence.

TT Wentworth Museum
Pensacola Florida
N30.408744
W-87.213149
January 15, 2008

My counterpart in the Hand and Foot Shows, Linda Bills Shirley had put on a solo exhibition of her gloves in Downtown Pensacola Museum and asked me to setup the One Shoe Diaries outside to attract people on opening night.

During that show Linda introduced me to her artist friend McKenzie Oerting who was also exhibiting at the museum.

When I met McKenzie that night at the museum she was full of life, so energetic and enthusiastic. Her hair was dark purple and she was wearing a gothic-style outfit, complete with big ol' clunky black leather boots that had to have added almost six inches to her height, but she still struck me as little. She gave off a cool artist persona. I was very impressed with her art. She had a style that I really appreciated and even envied a bit. We got to talking and she became very interested in my One Shoe Diaries and wanted to hear all about it. We clicked on an artist level, but both Sharon and I loved her spirit. We agreed we were all to hang out sometime together. But we never got the chance.

It was later that evening after leaving the Museum that I found out McKenzie was ill and may not make it much longer. I was devastated. How could someone so vibrant be dying? The next day, Linda sent me a photo that McKenzie had taken after speaking with me that night. It was a shot of one those great boots she was wearing all by itself lying on the floor.

The photo struck a sad and poetic note with me. Inside I knew that photo would become a tribute to her someday. It would symbolize her exiting this world and leaving an impression as big and as unique as that boot.

She eventually succumbed to colon cancer at the age of 54 just a few months later. I dedicate this photo to her memory, and although I did not take it, I feel I am its keeper so I am giving it a number, Lost Sole #289. I believe it has earned its right to be in my collection.

McKenzie Oerting
1954 - 2009



I-110 Northbound
Pensacola Florida
N 30.349257 • W -87.218094
July 12, 2007

Sharon and I traveled to Destin to visit with our great friends, Alice and Wayne. I have mentioned them many times in my blog and in our books. They have become our extended family. We always have a good time with them and they have helped us through some rough times. They take great care of us.

Wayne and Alice were there with us through all of the Noah tragedy. Alice was in the room with us holding Sharon's hand when she delivered Noah. She helped Sharon and I more than she will ever know. She comforted us in a time of need and now it would be our turn to return the favor.

The first day of our visit Sharon and Alice had to attend a continuing education course in Panama City over an hour drive down the coast. I decided to go play volleyball at Fort Walton Beach like I often do when I am down that way. After playing volleyball, I came off the court to glance at my phone and it showed 12 missed calls! All from Sharon. Something was very wrong. My heart stopped and I felt like I was going to throw up. I called her back immediately thinking the worst, that something is wrong with Nora, only to find out it was something totally different but none the less tragic. She told me Wayne's father had just been murdered in his own home by a deranged neighbor with a gun. I didn't know how to react because on one hand I was relieved it was not Nora, but felt such sadness for Wayne. Mostly I was shocked. Sharon was already in the car with Alice driving back from the class and they still had a 30 minute drive to get Alice back home to be with Wayne. My heart ached for the pain their family must be going through and what they will have to endure over the days to come.

Later that day I got a little more information about what happened. Wayne's father lived in Wetumpka, AL. in a quiet neighborhood, except for that day. Apparently two neighbors were disputing a property line, the difference of around a foot. The one neighbor, Paul Norman Jones, was a retired military guy who just recently moved in with the help of Wayne's father. Mr. Jones was disputing the line the most and made a big deal out of it. Well Wayne's father tried to help the situation out and calm him down by mediating between the neighbors. But I guess Wayne's father sided with the other neighbor, which seemed to have ignited a rage in Mr. Jones as he left and got his shotgun. He first gunned down the neighbor and his wife, then went over to Wayne's father's house and gunned him down in cold blood through the screen door.

I did not personally know Wayne's father but from what I hear, and if he is anything like his son Wayne, he was a good and gentle man. He was well-liked around the community and never harmed anybody. It is so hard to fathom such a senseless act of violence was committed to someone like that. I had been reading about stuff like this on CNN and always wondered if a tragedy like this would ever hit close to home.

Wayne's mother had passed away several years ago and I like to believe they are re-united again and his father is in a good place. I just hate that Wayne, Alice and the Barrett family is going to have to live on with this event always in their minds. It will forever shape the way they live.

Shoe #291 is dedicated to Frank Barrett whose life was snuffed out violently after living a peaceful life for over 86 years. I found this Lost Sole on Hwy 98 in Destin while driving back from the beach to Wayne and Alice's house immediately after hearing about the tragedy. I wish I had my good camera with me to give the proper justice to this image, but it is not about that. It is about capturing a memorial to pay tribute to a life that has been lost. Our prayers and sympathies are with the Barrett family and all those who were affected by this senseless act of violence.

SHOE #291

Frank Barrett
1924 - 2009



I must prefix the article I have copied here as it has some facts wrong. Frank was NOT intervening, he was sitting on his porch like he always does, when he saw the shooting of his neighbors take place. He then went into the house and called 9-1-1. Mr. Jones made his way over to Frank's house and shot him through the screen door.

One dead, two injured after neighborhood shooting

One Article taken from Channel 12 News Online, Montgomery, AL on May 4, 2009

WETUMPKA, Ala. (WSFA) — It's something Paula and Travis James never saw coming, especially in Wetumpka's Meadowbrook community.

An argument between Paul Norman Jones, 80, and his neighbors quickly got out of hand—reportedly due to a long standing dispute over a wooden fence. "The fence has been here as long as we've been here, and [Jones] just bought that house 2 years ago and insisted that [his neighbor's] fence was on his property line," explained Paula James of Wetumpka.

What happened next shocked the city.

Jones reportedly opened fire on his neighbors, Gerald and Linda Ingram. Witnesses say Frank Barrett, 85, intervened at some point during the argument.

Right after shooting the couple, Jones reportedly walked over to Barrett's home and shot him point blank in his doorway. Travis James ran over to help. "There wasn't much I could do, other than hold his hand and tell him to hang on, and that help was on the way. And that he wasn't by himself," Travis explained.

"[Jones] was retreating to his residence at the time officers arrived on the scene," said Deputy Chief Anthony Crenshaw of the Wetumpka Police Department. Barrett died soon after. Meanwhile, authorities made their arrest and neighbors confronted the gunman. "I said [to Paul Jones], 'Why did you shoot Mr. Barrett?' He looked at me square in the face and said, 'Because he was the nosiest S.O.B. I've ever seen,'" Paula James explained.

Mr. Jones does not deserve to have his picture appear in our book.

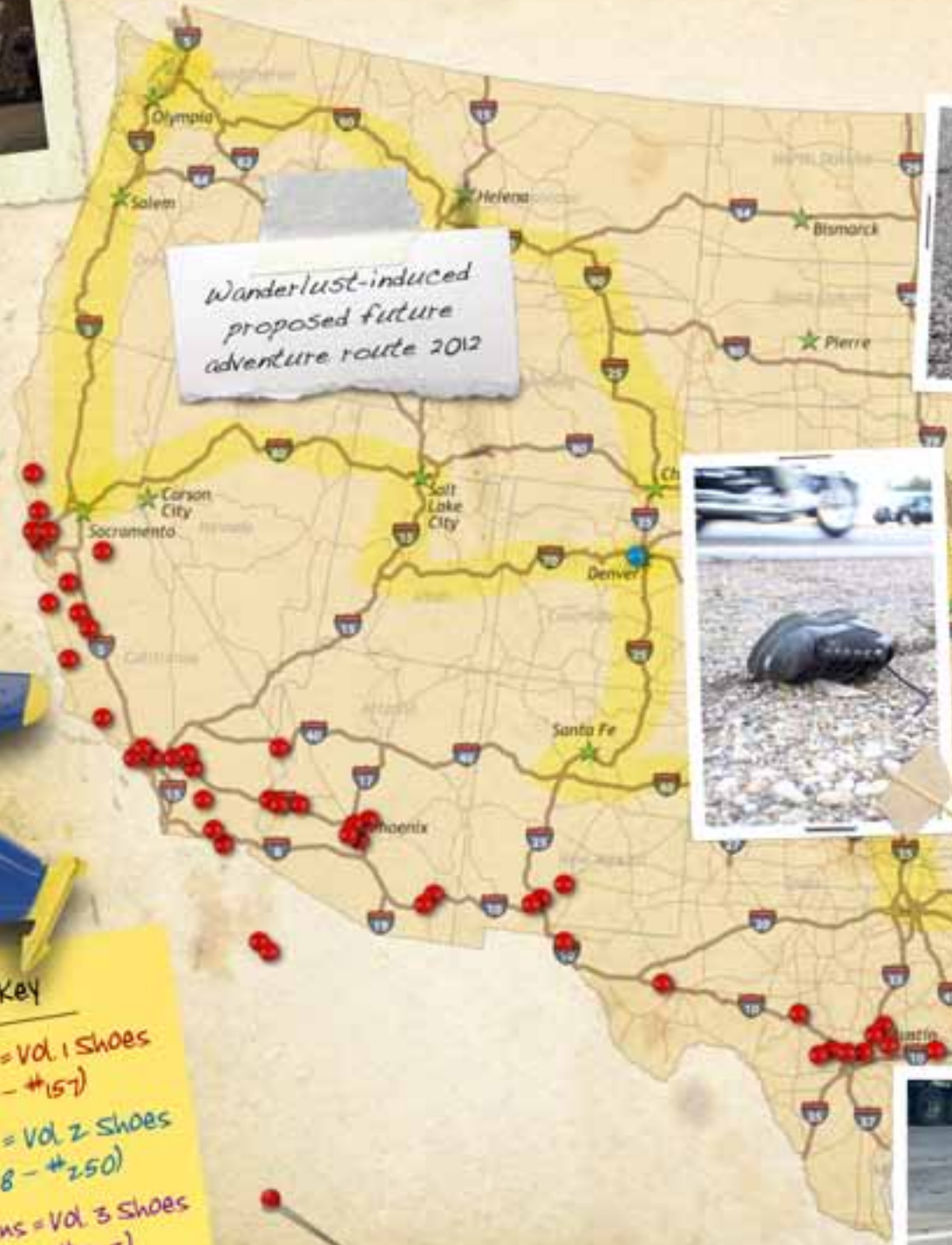
Paul Norman Jones, 80, Jones is in the Elmore County Jail without bond. Police are charging Jones with Capital Murder and two counts of attempted murder.



Tigger



Wanderlust-induced
proposed future
adventure route 2012



Map Key

- Red Pins = Vol. 1 Shoes (#1 - #157)
- Blue Pins = Vol. 2 Shoes (#158 - #250)
- Purple Pins = Vol. 3 Shoes (#251 - #323)





Romy



I-10 Westbound
Midway, Florida
N30.528245 • W-84.522408
July 8, 2009

Wanderlust – wan-der-lust \wān-dər-ləst\ noun

German, from wandern to wander + Lust desire, pleasure: Wanderlust is a loanword from German to English that designates a strong desire for or impulse to wander, or, in my case, to travel and to explore the world.

Lately I had been developing a serious case of wanderlust. I longed for the days of the motorhome where we bounced around the U.S. exploring something new everyday. We had not traveled anywhere in over 6 months and I was itching to get out and have an adventure. We planned to travel south to Port Charlotte to see her sister Rachie and my friend Scooter. It was nothing exotic, but at least there was the possibility of discovering a lost sole somewhere other than Pensacola.

I found none on the drive down and it was not until the drive home that I found one. It marked the first time in months that I had stopped and laid down on the highway to take a Lost Sole photo. This shoe, #297, does not come with a great story tied to it, but at least it was found outside of Pensacola.

During that drive home I find my mind wandering back to the days of the motorhome journeys. I miss the sounds of the road while driving in the Cruisemaster. The sound of the engine as it hummed down a flat, country back road. The sound the aging engine made as it labored up a steep grade, never knowing if perhaps it would be its last hill. Trucks roaring by us was never much fun at the time, they made the Cruisemaster rock and sway in their wake, but now that is something I would like to feel again.

Driving during the daytime was great because I could hunt for lost soles. I hated the thought of missing one because the night hid it from me. However driving at night did have its advantages. The Cruisemaster seemed to run smoother and there was a lot less traffic. The cooler night air felt peaceful coming in the open windows.

I especially liked driving on back roads at night during the summer. I loved seeing lightning bugs glowing in the open fields. I remember how the chirping of the crickets got louder as we passed by woods and then fade off, only to return again. It was that waning roar of crickets that mesmerized me at times and made the miles on the road seem to fly by. I enjoyed watching the mile markers change and to see 150 miles to our destination dwindling to 50, then to 0. There was something very gratifying about reaching a destination.

Although sometimes not reaching the destination can be part of the adventure. Having to do an overnight stop in a foreign rest area or far-off truck stop is another one of those things that at the time seemed like an inconvenience. But it was at those stops that we felt most free. We had our home right there with us. We had no boundaries. We could live anywhere. It is that freedom that my soul longs for the most.

Now don't get me wrong. I like having roots, somewhere I can call home. Sometimes though I just want to loosen the leash and wander off. To wander off to somewhere I have never been. Where an adventure lies waiting to be discovered just around the bend. And of course with a lost sole perched for me to find.

A photograph of a brown leather sneaker with laces, positioned on a gravel road. To the right of the shoe is a white sign with the text 'SHOE #297' in red. The background shows a highway with a red van, a white truck, and other vehicles, with trees and a clear sky in the distance.

SHOE #297

Ron The Sign Man Parking Lot
Highway 98
Navarre, Florida
N30.410810 • W86.802607
July 9, 2009

Our future may be located down in Navarre, Florida, at a little sign shop that I have been doing freelance work with for around 10 years. I built up a great business relationship with the owner, Ron Yrigoyen, who is planning on retiring and leaving the business to me to run. This could be a huge opportunity for us.

In addition to running the sign business, we also have access to a 10,000 square foot warehouse that has been renovated to include a large 1000 sq/ft. storefront area. The space is perfect for a gallery and design office. We plan on calling it The Lost Sole Gallery. In the photograph of Shoe #298, taken on the sign business property, you can make out the warehouse in the background. We will be using much of the space to promote the One Shoe Diaries project but there will be plenty of room to host other local artists work along with my non-shoe photography.

What we are hoping for is that it can become a tourist attraction. There is very little to see and do in Navarre, yet quite a few tourists visit there each year. It has also become a popular Snowbird destination. I foresee the Lost Sole Gallery possibly becoming a little piece of Americana that is a must-see when in Navarre. Perhaps people will come see the shoe-guy and his collection of Lost Sole photographs. I know it may be just daydreaming, but you never know what might take off until you try it.

Ron Yrigoyen is a very interesting man and full of personality! Born with Bask heritage and raised as a Chicago native. Fast-talking Ron got his start in sales selling ladders to hardware stores around the North eventually taking a job with the Kennedy Sign Company in Louisiana. He then made the decision to go out on his own and started Ron the Sign Man. "Those old-timers didn't want to teach us anything because they didn't want us to become the competition," said Yrigoyen, his T-shirt stained with a large streak of green paint, "I had to open my own business."

Well that was almost 30 years ago, and today Ron the Signman is a lucrative sign company serving the Southeast producing almost a million signs a year.

In his spare time he commutes back and forth between Tarpon Springs, FL where he has a second home. Being a seasoned pilot, Ron utilizes his small private plane to make the journey.



SHOE #300



Byrd "Bud" Billings
1942 - 2009



SHOE #301

East Blount Street
Pensacola, Florida
N30.428379 • W-87.216278
July 10, 2009

Pensacola was rocketed into the national media spotlight in July 2009, when a prominent local couple were murdered in their home. It was done execution style during what was believed at the time to be a robbery gone wrong. However after weeks of investigation, it was uncovered that it may have been a contract hit with connections to the Mexican Mafia. It was a media frenzy! CNN, Fox News, ABC News, Good Morning America, 20/20 and more were all in Pensacola to cover the story. I copied an article from the Pensacola Independent News (posted on the following page) if you would like to read more about the murders.

The day the murder happened I drove past these two lost Soles #301 and #302. They were both on the same street only 100 feet or so from each other. One a man's flip flop, the other a woman's. I didn't think much of it at the time and actually passed them by because I was in a rush. It was not until later that day when I heard about the murders that it dawned on me that I needed to go photograph those shoes and do Lost Sole dedications to the victims, Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Details have come out to reveal a shady past for Byrd, but nonetheless, he and Melanie did not deserve the fate they were dealt. And definitely their children, many of which are special needs adoptions, did not deserve this. This type of stuff makes us think this world is a scary place to raise a child.

Florida Murders a Contract Hit

By Rick Outzen, Daily Beast Oct. 17, 2009

Byrd and Melanie Billings were shot to death by masked intruders inside their secluded home in rural Beulah, Florida, on July 9. Nine of their children were in the house at the time of the murders, and three saw the men in the home and may be witnesses to the shootings. Eight people have been arrested in connection with the murders, including Gonzalez.

The suspect said that the contract price was between \$20,000 and \$50,000, according to the sources—who requested anonymity, fearing possible reprisals—along with whatever Gonzalez and his alleged accomplices could remove from the Billings residence.

Representatives from Escambia County Sheriff's Office refused to confirm or deny the allegations.

The motive for the alleged hit on the Billingses appears to be connected to Byrd Billings' financing of used car lots in the area, the sources said.

The suspect added that Gonzalez and his alleged team—which included his father, a day laborer who has served time for killing a man; an Air Force staff sergeant; two auto detailers; and a teenager—had been planning the hit for several months, the sources said. Much of that planning was allegedly conducted at the home of Pamela Wiggins, a wealthy Florida real estate investor and family friend of Gonzalez's.

It was in the backyard of Wiggins' home where a safe stolen from the Billings home was recovered, according to Escambia County Sheriff's Office reports. Wiggins also allegedly owns the red van that was used to transport both the safe and the weapons used in the double homicide. She has been charged with accessory after the fact to felony murder and was released after posting a \$10,000 bond.

An earlier attempt to invade the Billings home—which may have been only a "dry run"—was made after dark, according to the suspect. However, Gonzalez and his accomplices allegedly fright

East Blount Street
Pensacola, Florida
N30.427838 • W-87.219307
July 10, 2009



I-10 Eastbound
D'Iberville, Mississippi
N30.450473 • W-88.903658
August 4, 2009

My friend Trish came down from Cincinnati to stay for a while. One of the things she wanted to do while visiting was to take a day trip to New Orleans and photograph the various historical and mysterious places around the city.

Our first stop was the Crescent City Brewery and Restaurant. I have to say it was one of the best brewpubs I have been to. The atmosphere was great. It is located in the heart of the French Quarter. Not only did they brew a dunkle-weiss, which is my favorite brew, they also had an incredible gourmet menu. Since we did not want to get full yet, we opted to split the seafood cheesecake appetizer. I cannot properly describe how delicious it was, you just have to go there and try it for yourself.

We strolled around the French Quarter snapping shots here and there before wandering into St. Peters Cathedral where we lit a candle for Noah. Next we headed for the cemeteries so Trish could hunt for antique marble angels to photograph.

We ended our afternoon by getting dessert at one of Oprah's favorite places, Sucrll on Magazine St. They are famous for melt-in-your-mouth macaroons. Everything looked so good! Sharon and I split a parfait and Trish got a caramel stuffed cupcake. Of course we bought some macaroons to take home. And let me tell you, they were divine!

It was a great day. Driving home was going so well until we hit major a traffic stoppage. We were at an almost standstill for two hours. Just minutes before the stoppage I had come across Shoe #304. So you can imagine what was going through my head when we saw it was an accident that was holding us up. I thought it had happened again. That the Lost Sole I found earlier was a precursor to a lost soul. My stomach got that all too familiar sick feeling when we passed a mangled tractor-trailer.

When I got home that night I could find nothing about the accident. It was not until the next day after scouring the Internet that I got information on the accident. I am happy to report that the driver was not seriously injured. Upon reading the news my anxiety levels dropped with a big exhale. I take no pleasure in dedicating my lost soles to lost souls.



SHOE #304

NIKE



Juniper Creek
Blackwater River S.F.
Munson, Florida
N30.801303
W-86.892825
August 9, 2009

Juniper Creek
Blackwater River S.F.
Munson, Florida
N30.801323
W-86.892846
August 9, 2009

Juniper Creek
Blackwater River S.F.
Munson, Florida
N30.801331
W-86.892838
August 9, 2009

After Noah died, many of my friends sent gifts. One of the most thoughtful of which was given by Dave and Beth, which was mentioned earlier in this book, when they purchased a star in Noah's name.

Dave decided to take a small vacation and come down to Pensacola. It coincided with Trish's visit, which made it fun for all of us to hang out.

Trish was due to leave a day earlier than Dave so the two of us had to find something to do without her. We opted to go kayaking on a small stream about 30 minutes north named Juniper Creek. I had paddled it shortly after Hurricane Ivan and it was littered with downed trees. This was now over five years later, surely it would be cleared by now.

In order to utilize one vehicle we hid our bikes at the take-out point of the kayak trip and drove the van to the put-in point with the intention of kayaking to the bikes, then riding the bikes back to van. Eventually grabbing the kayak on the way home.

It was not 10 feet after starting down the creek that we discovered that it had not been cleared yet. In fact, it even seemed a little worse. But we were determined and I knew that if we could just get through the first few miles, the stream opens up and should be clear.

The journey seemed an unending mess of logs overlapping each other with small branches broken off resembling daggers ready to impale us at any misstep. We clambered over and under logs. Winding around some, limboing under others. Mostly we had to pick up the kayak and guide it across logs while balancing over five feet deep water. The stream itself was only 10 feet at its widest and surrounded by thick, impenetrable brush.

At one point while gently gliding under some logs that were just barely high enough to get under, Dave noticed he was not alone. A water moccasin snake was draped over the branches just inches from his face! He screamed like a little girl Snake! Snake! I pulled on some branches and backed us out quickly. He was in a panic and the rest of the trip he was ever on the lookout for possible stowaways. Apparently Dave has a bad fear of snakes :)

After taking 3 hours to go 2 miles we made it to the cleared section of the stream. We were exhausted so we stopped for a snack on a sand bar where I came across Shoe #306. The stream ended up being littered with lost soles but being afraid we might run out of daylight, I opted to not stop for all of them.

The rest of the kayak trip seemed an eternity. We finally got to the take-out point and that is where we had to bike nine miles back to the van. What seemed like a good plan earlier, now, was not so good. Once we finally made it to the van we each enjoyed a cold beer that we had stashed in the cooler. It was one of the best tasting beers I have ever had.

SHOE #306



SHOES 307-309



SHOE #305



New Yorker Deli
Parking Lot off
Scenic Highway
Pensacola, Florida
N30.424743
W-87.181992
August 5, 2009

It had been one year since Noah's passing. He would have been a toddler, perhaps walking and talking. So to celebrate we decided to send him birthday wishes via balloons. We had read about another family that did it for a child they lost. It was documented in Angela Dubois' book, We Are Their Heaven. Mrs. Dubois is the real-life medium upon which the character in the hit TV series "Medium" is based on. It was during a reading for the family in the book where the deceased child made clear he gotten the balloons they launched and he started more next year.

At first we were going to host a party for the ceremony. Instead we decided to make it a personal affair just between us. However many friends and family across the U.S. floated their own balloons for Noah on that day as well.

We chose the spot where we hung out with family the night before on Pensacola Beach by the point break known by the locals as the Cross. It was a rainy day but cleared up just in time to allow the launch to happen. With our messages to our sweet angel attached, we released all the balloons at the same time.

Not to leave Nora out of it, we launched a love pin balloon as well. That pink balloon somehow broke off from the pack and soared higher and faster than any of the other balloons. We joked that we were witnessing sibling rivalry.

We stared at those balloons as they floated slowly up into the sky and over the gulf for what seemed an eternity. Tears welled up the whole time. There was no holding them in. It was very emotional and really showed me that the scars are still there and always will be. Words cannot express how much we miss our little Noah. We felt his presence with us that day. Eventually the balloons disappeared into the distance and it was time to leave the beach.

This little boy's Croc, Shoe #10, was found the very next day in the parking lot where we had lunch. It was not found the same day as the balloon watch, but it did serve the purpose letting me know he is still with us and did not float away with the balloons as I had feared.

This balloon, with the words Baby Boy on it, was found in a neighbor's yard the day I began laying this page out. Just another occurrence in a long list of coincidences.

SHOE #310



Fort Pickens, Battery 234
Gulf Islands National Seashore
Pensacola Beach, Florida
N30.321881 • W87.285315
August 6, 2009

In honor of Noah, last year I placed a dollar with his name on it on the wall of a popular restaurant in Pensacola where the tradition of placing dollar bills has ballooned to over \$750,000. If you recall from Volume 2, the moment I stapled the bill on the wall my phone stopped at 5:50, then shortly later the Irish Unicorn Song about Noah and his Ark played over the speakers as we exited. It was quite an emotional moment, and one I will never forget.

Well that day I promised that every year to commemorate Noah's birthday I would put another Noah dollar up on the wall there. So this year I did what I promised.

I hung the bill up, silently wondering the whole time with Sharon whether or not anything would happen to let us know he was watching. Nothing happened. I sat back down at our table, secretly disappointed. I pulled out my camera and took a photo of the dollar and we did a toast in Noah's honor.

We went on about lunch and casually headed out of the restaurant when there it was. The Unicorn song was playing!! I could not believe my ears. I knew it could be just a coincidence, but WOW! What a coincidence! In my heart I believe Noah was showing us he was still watching. That he appreciated the gesture and was smiling with us.

We are getting spoiled with his antics to reach out to us. I find myself wondering what will happen next year when I put up his dollar. Will the Unicorn song play again? Or will he get inventive and do something different. Stay tuned

The Unicorn Song

A long time ago, when the Earth was green
There was more kinds of animals than you've ever seen
They'd run around free while the Earth was being born
And the loveliest of all was the unicorn

There was green alligators and long-necked geese
Some humpy backed camels and some chimpanzees
Some cats and rats and elephants, but sure as you're born
The loveliest of all was the unicorn

The Lord seen some sinning and it gave Him pain
And He says, "Stand back, I'm going to make it rain"
He says, "Hey Noah, I'll tell you what to do
Build me a floating zoo,
and take some of those..."

Green alligators and long-necked geese
Some humpy backed camels and some chimpanzees
Some cats and rats and elephants, but sure as you're born
Don't you forget my unicorns

Old Noah was there to answer the call
He finished up making the ark just as the rain started to fall
He marched the animals two by two
And he called out as they came through
Hey Lord,

I've got green alligators and long-necked geese
Some humpy backed camels and some chimpanzees ...



SHOE #311

Shoe #311 was found while Trish and I were exploring Fort Pickens out on Pensacola Beach the morning before we ate lunch at McGuire's where we placed the dollar bill in honor of what would have been Noah's first birthday.



Fort Pickens Rd.
Pensacola Beach, FL
N30.318114
W-87.242113
August 6, 2009

While at a local restaurant bar that we frequent often, I started up a conversation with the bartender, Heather, who was a friend of a friend. She was obviously pregnant but I didn't want to get caught in a classic fopaux, so I waited until SHE mentioned it. I inquired to her about how far along she was and if she knew what she was having. She told me a boy and that she was 24 weeks along.

I started to note a striking amount of similarities between her pregnancy and Noah's. She was planning to do a home birth using the same Midwife we had. She had Dr. Maher as the backup physician. And she was due right around the same time Noah had been. Heather was also best friends with Elizabeth who was at Sharon's side during Noah's birth and who, unbeknownst to Heather was 16 weeks pregnant. I told her my wife Sharon was around 20 weeks.

Eventually the conversation moved to a place I knew was coming but wished could be avoided. The dreaded question of whether or not this was our first child. I normally tell people the truth out of respect for Noah, but do I dare tell a pregnant woman? I went ahead and told her as I knew she would find out later from Elizabeth when they spoke. I sort of glossed over it, but I could tell it affected her a bit.

We exchanged numbers with the intent to get her and Sharon together to co-experience the joys and woes of pregnancy. I just knew her and Sharon would instantly click. And click they did. The three of them, Sharon, Heather, and Elizabeth started hanging out. I began referring to them as the Granola Girls because they are all heavy into natural childbirth.

Sharon, as well as Elizabeth, got invited to be at the home birth of Heather's little boy Rowan. Sharon got the call one morning that Heather went into labor at around 3:00 a.m. and she headed out to be with her. The labor progressed slowly throughout the day and Sharon called periodically to give me updates. It seemed to be lasting forever. It was almost midnight when Sharon announced that they were heading to Baptist Hospital because Heather was not progressing fast enough. It had been almost 19 hours that she had labored without drugs. Heather was exhausted.

I met them at the hospital to help get Heather into a wheelchair and into the hospital. I did my job and went back home to wait. The next phone call was Sharon telling me they left Baptist Hospital and were now at Sacred Heart Hospital. Apparently the doctor at Baptist refused to deliver naturally and opted for a C-section without even examining her. Which is NOT what Heather was wanting.

At Sacred Heart they were blessed with a wonderfully patient doctor who let things happen naturally. When the doctor asked her "You have done everything else on your own, would you like to catch your baby as well?" She didn't hesitate and reached down to grab little Rowan, heaving him out and unto her chest. Heather gave birth to little Rowan with Sharon looking on at around 7:30 a.m. Sharon sat with her heart stopped waiting to hear Rowan cry. When he started crying, her friend Stacy, Heather's mom, Elizabeth, Sharon, and of course, Heather were all crying with him.

It was through that birthing experience that Sharon became bonded with Heather and little Rowan. Sharon decided right then that it was only fitting to invite Heather to share in Nora's birth.

The day before Rowan's birth I found Shoe #312 out on Pensacola Beach. I think it is only appropriate that it is dedicated in honor of the birth of Little Rowan. May he live a full and happy life for many, many years.



SHOE #312



East Gregory St.
Pensacola, Florida
N30.418116
W-87.198635
August 14, 2009

One of the rituals the granola girls planned to do for each other was a Blessing way. A blessing way is an ancient ritual rooted in Native American culture. It involves essential oils, the blessing of the house with sage, creation of a mobile to bring good spirits in and the wearing of hemp ankle bracelets by all the participants until the baby is born. However there is no chanting like I had jokingly told people.

My contribution for the ritual was the driftwood that was used for the mobile. I went out that morning and collected a bundle from the seashore out on Pensacola Beach.

Sharon had attended Heather's blessing way just a few weeks before hers was scheduled to happen. Unlike a baby shower it is a very small group of women, all of who must believe or be open to believe in order for it to work. Only five girls were at Sharon's, she intended to invite a couple of others but the date snuck up on her and she didn't have the chance.

I am not really into such things, but after all that happened after Noah passed, I believe anything is possible. So if this can possibly help Nora come into this world safely, I am all for it!

Needless to say I left the house during the blessing way. I went over to have a few beers with Elizabeth's husband Taylor with the puggles in tow. On the way over I came across, quite literally, a lost sole. It is now in the Lost Soles collection to commemorate Nora's blessing way as Shoe #313.



The Granola Girls
from left to right
Sharon with baby Nora,
Heather with baby Rowan
and
Elizabeth with baby Eamon



SHOE #313

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

8:12 a.m. - Randy has a feeling today will feel like an eternity.

We were feeling too anxious to continue with the pregnancy so Sharon and I decided we would have Dr. Maher induce and get Nora out. We first had to get an amnio to check for lung development. During this process, and the labor, I uploaded status updates via Facebook to keep friends and family informed of what was taking place. I decided to include those updates in this story, please note that they are in red.

4:46 p.m. - Sharon just got the amnio completed (she handled it like a champ!) we are tentatively scheduled to be induced at 7:00 (CST) this evening

7:17 p.m. - just learned Nora's lungs have been found to be fully developed, the induction is a go!

After Sharon was given something to soften her cervix she was then administered a low dose of Pitocin to gently nudge her along. The induction started to take effect around 3-4 a.m. resulting in Sharon experiencing her first mild contractions. Of course I can say mild because they were not happening to me.

4:25 a.m. - Randy is watching Sharon wince as early labor starts. And so it begins :)

At this time it was just Sharon and I, along with our friend Heather and her baby Rowan. Sharon was still in good spirits handling each contraction as they came.

9:39 a.m. - update: 5cm dilated and 90% effaced, and Nora is right there trying to get out! Sharon is still handling everything great. Thanks for all the support. Time for her to get into the tub for a bit.

Come to find out there were a hundred or more people "tuning" in to see how things were progressing. It was really impressive and humbling to see the outpouring of support everyone was giving us. It really helped keep Sharon's spirit up through the rough times, and allowed me an outlet for some humor to help alleviate a bit of my stress.

11:06 a.m. - Update: Getting more intense, Sharon still in tub taking it all like a champ, she and the baby are doing great. No yelling at me yet

Our friend and labor coach Stacey arrived shortly later carrying essential oils and a vaporizer to help for calming and centering. She had been there with Heather during her labor just two weeks earlier, and played an important role in helping Heather through the tough contractions. So we were happy to have her there for support. Sharon continued to labor, even spending a few hours in the tub.

11:43 a.m. - time for pushing is upon us I believe

I made the mistake of calling the first part of labor over, and so did the nurse, but after checking Sharon's cervix she was only 6cm dilated.

12:20 p.m. - false alarm, getting rough a bit, but she and baby are okay, daddy is a wreck!

It was at this point, which I did not realize at the time, our friend Elizabeth who was watching the drama unfold on Facebook called Stacy after seeing my post and told her to check on me. I remember Stacy asking me if I was all right. I did the obligatory response of "I'm fine," but thinking, "how did she know I was struggling?" It helped just being asked and then told "don't worry it is all going just fine." I relaxed a bit, allowing me to focus better on doing whatever Sharon needed. I even got my sense of humor back.

1:31 p.m. - still laboring all is as good as it can be without tequila shots

She made it to 7cm before she opted for an epidural. However, as sometimes happens, it did not go perfectly and only her right side was numb, and not all the way at that. So it seemed the pain was centered on the left groin area for her like a knife turning in her. So that was not good at all.

2:08 p.m. - not much to update. at 9cm. doing as good as one can during labor

She had just made it to 100% effaced and 9cm dilated when our midwife from Noah's pregnancy showed up at just the right moment to help us along. This too was orchestrated, as I found out later, by Elizabeth. Come to find out she was on the phone and texting Heather the whole time. Elizabeth was one of the people who played a major role during Noah's pregnancy and was there when Sharon went through labor and delivered Noah. She was one of the angels that day that helped Sharon survive such a horrible experience. We cannot say enough about how awesome it was to have her there with us. She would have been with us this day, but she had come down with a nasty stomach virus, and with her being 37 weeks pregnant it was just not possible to be there physically.

4:13 p.m. - now the calm before the storm. Sharon is a trooper

Sharon was now in the transition phase where contractions ease up, she even seemed to nap in between. I was relieved to see her look somewhat comfortable. If even only for a few moments. It was pretty soon after that when Sharon was checked and found to be 10cm. Time for the pushing to begin!

5:04 p.m. - 10cm!!!! Starting to push!!! Its the home stretch!!!!

The nurse, Dawn, got Sharon's legs into the stirrups and got things in place. After the first round of pushing, Nora's little head was visible. Time to page Dr. Maher. Sharon pushed a couple more times through the contractions when it was apparent Nora was coming sooner rather than later. The Dr. walked in and immediately "suited up" and got into position. Talk about in the nick of time! Then after only two more contractions and rounds of pushing, little Nora's head slid out first. Then her whole little body came out. It was an incredible sight that has to be experienced to be appreciated.

What instantly hit me was the remarkable resemblance Nora had with Noah. I mean they looked identical! My heart stopped as I saw how grey and pale she looked. However, I saw her move so I knew she might be all right, but still I was stuck in a moment of sheer panic. Dr. Maher suctioned out her mouth and nose then turned her over and told us, "she isn't going to like this."



He proceeded to start rubbing her back with his knuckles quite vigorously. Suddenly we heard it. It was like an angel crying out. Nora let out a loud wail!! She was crying, Sharon was crying, I was crying. I think everyone had tears. But for the first time in a long time, they were tears of happiness instead of sadness. Baby Nora had made it out alive and healthy. He then clamped off the cord and handed me scissors and I cut that cord with such joy. We had delivered our baby girl. It all came full circle at that moment. I could feel Noah smiling with us.

5:35 p.m. - We have a healthy happy little girl; as of 5:29pm cst!!!!!! Sharon was amazing!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Okay, so there we were in the delivery room after I had just cut the cord when they placed Nora on Sharon's chest. We were all three as a family at last. The moment was perfect yet fleeting, but not lost. A great moment like that becomes forever etched into your mind.

6:54 p.m. - Quick update, Little Nora is breastfeeding, she came out weighing 6lbs 4oz, and around 18.25 inches. I will be uploading photos in just a moment. Whew! Thank God that is over, I need a beer!

The next action was to make the round of phone calls. I had so many people to inform that it was a daunting task because My mind was tired and numb and my hands were shaking. I hope I called everyone and did not leave anyone out, I am sorry if I did. As each and every person in my life is important to me. I cherish my family and friendships. Upon exiting the room, our good friend Bryan was standing outside the door, he had arrived at the hospital room right when we were delivering and heard everything through he door. He was smiling ear to ear. It was really great to see him.

The mood was the same during each call I made. Sharon's family members were all giddy with excitement as was mine. I sat in the same room from where I called them all about Noah just slightly over a year ago which made it that much more emotional. I made my calls brief as I was dying to get back to my baby girl.

I re-entered the room and saw more nurses and people than were there before. They all seemed to be sharing in the joy. The nurse Dawn, who had helped us that day to deliver Nora, was also there during Noah's delivery. As a matter of fact, when she first saw us earlier she immediately remembered us. We too remembered her and had liked her back then as well. When we first checked into the maternity ward to be induced, the two nurses there also remembered us as Noah's parents. They said they had thought about us a lot after that tragic night. I remember how gentle and caring they were with Sharon throughout Noah's delivery. It was really comforting to know that the people, who were going to be with us to deliver Nora, knew our sweet Noah's story.

When I held Nora again she had opened her eyes for what was maybe the first time outside the womb. They were filled with wonder and amazement and then they locked in on me and opened more. She stared, and I felt like she was thinking, "I know you, you're my daddy." There was something very familiar in those eyes, it really took me back. I felt Noah and Nora both there. I continued to watch her eyes squint in the bright light, trying to take in where she was. It was really amazing for me. I could have held and stared at her and that little button nose all night, but it was mommy's turn. I handed her off and went back outside the room to finish making calls.

When I walked outside I was amazed to see our other friends Tami and Annie Marie also out there. They had been following on Facebook and decided they had to come see Nora right away. It was really cool to have them there. I made some quick calls and then took them and Bryan in to see little Nora. She was already being passed around the room while wrapped up like a little burrito.

Being the storyteller I am, I had been thinking all day, "How am I going to find a shoe to go with this incredible story so I have an ending for Volume 3?" I tried to have faith that one would find me, just like one did to tie in to Noah's story in Volume 2. Well, wouldn't you know it? The perfect shoe did find me.



Just before leaving, Tami and Annie Marie were dying to show me something. They told me earlier that day they had taken a photo of a shoe just down the street a bit. They pulled out the phone to show me the pic and I was speechless. I could not believe what I was looking at. It was an image of a little girl's pink Croc!!! They found a \$10 & pink CROC I yelled in my head. That was it! I got my storybook ending. How could it ever end any better. It made for a Hollywood ending that I can only assume I owe to Noah. Him and his damn Crocs!! :)

Since Noah's passing the Crocs have become synonymous with his presence. I feel so blessed to have the One Shoe Diaries, because without it, I would not have had those Crocs as a source of strength and faith. Although I believe Noah would have found another way to get through to us, he is quite the manipulator.

Wow! I was overwhelmed and could not wait to go out the next day and photograph the shoe myself. Thank you so much Tami and Annie Marie for being in tune to me as a friend and sharing in my passion for lost soles. Tami has been a great friend for many years and someone who I have the utmost respect for. She is a true class act. Annie Marie we have known for only a couple of years now, but has endeared herself to us with her sweet personality. She will always be a friend to us.

That night when we went to the recovery room, the nurse that checked us in was also involved that night with Noah. She told us that she remembered us vividly. That she could not get the tragedy of Noah out of her head, that it hit her really hard. She was the nurse who had to care for his little body. She was there when Angela, the photographer from NILLMETS, took those beautiful images of Noah. When she saw Nora she told us that she immediately reminded her of Noah, that she could be his twin. That nurse was so sweet in the words she said to us about Noah. It seemed little Noah left indelible impressions on so many people.

When Dr. Maher came back to examine Sharon the next day, he was delighted to see her and Nora doing so well. In the delivery room the day before I had seen him examining the placenta pretty thoroughly. I asked him if he had noticed something wrong, as it was the placenta last time that was Noah's demise. He explained that it had not formed properly once again and that if we would have waited longer to deliver her, the cord would have become weak and fragile like Noah's was last time. It took the wind out of me to think we could have lost Nora. It made us feel so much better about the decision to induce early. He then joked to us about seeing us again in a year. But there is no way. We are too old to go through this again! *LOL*

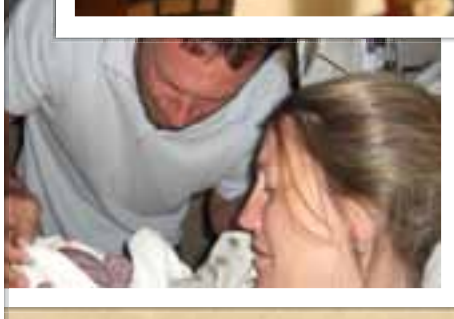
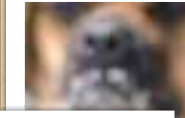
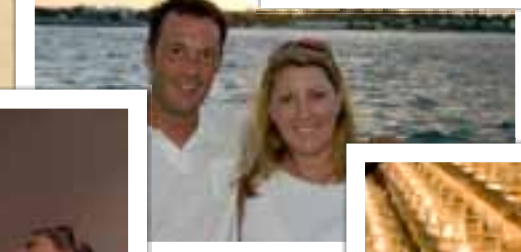
Nora and mommy were both released from the hospital quicker than we thought. Sharon was doing incredible. She was not sore and walked out of the hospital on her own. Despite being swallowed up by her car seat, she rode in it like a big girl with no crying at all. We left the hospital this time overjoyed. And like many other first-time parents thinking, now what we do? :) :) :) :)

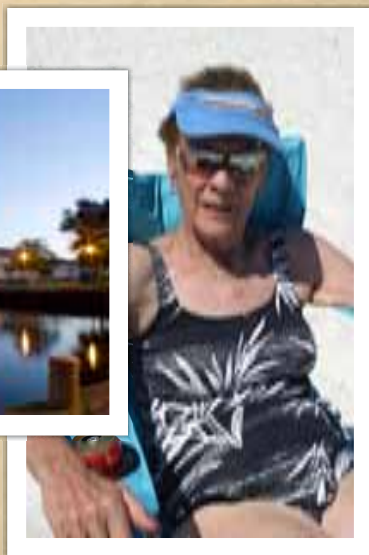
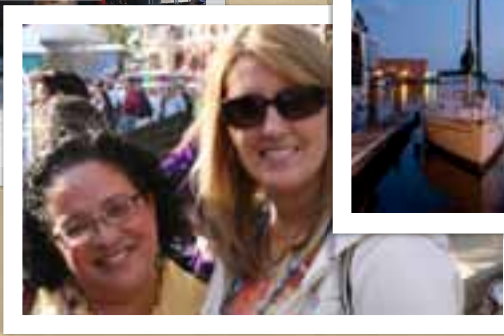
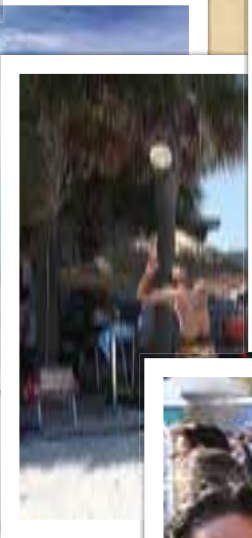
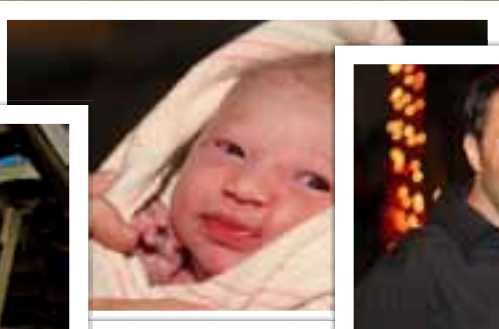


This photo was taken when Nora was just a week old by Arielle Langhorne of Pensacola

SHOE #323







SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The photos displayed on this were submitted to us via email or through the One Shoe Diaries Website, with the exception of Shoe #305. We encourage anyone who discovers a lost sole to photograph it, and post it on our website.



This is the original photo of Shoe #323 that my friends Tami & Annie Marie took using their cell phone to show me in the delivery room after Nora was born.



Tami and Annie Marie with Shoe #324 in the foreground



*Heather Suhr
Pensacola, FL*

*Margaret Shannon
Campbell*

*Colleen Gretska
Pensacola, FL*

*Brandi Benson
Cincinnati, OH*

*Kelly Costello
Cincinnati, OH*

*Jeff & Whitney
Penton,
Springhill, AL*



This Volume brought everything full circle for us. It was a journey full of ups and downs leaving us with a storybook ending. This book is dedicated to our little girl, Nora Jessie Hamilton, to commemorate her coming into our lives. It may be a while before another volume is created as these are truly a labor of love.

- Randy, Sharon, Nora, Noah, Jack and Tigger