

Updated. 05/05/08 - I am rereading the prologue and find it is a little contrite and somewhat difficult to read. I am leaving it unedited and hope you will stick with the story, it does get better. I was told this part needed work to draw the reader in to the story but have not had the time to make changes. My intention to create a work that would help others was well meant, but the writing here is, again, a little contrite. Being older now, I have experienced a bit more and have found a deeper humility. - Thank you, Alex

## Lonely Shoe On The Road

### Prologue:

#### 1

Life is a journey. It may begin pleasantly or not so pleasantly, regardless at birth the journey begins. Then it is up to us, no one else, to be responsible for our actions and inactions from that point forward. An author wrote this simple idea so succinctly – we are free to color beautifully on the pages of life; we are also free to scribble and create nonsense on them as well...your choice.

This small journey of mine, within the much larger journey of life, was an idea, a vision quest. It was an idea in the beginning because all things are ideas or wisps of smoke in the mind until undertaken in the here and now. So, this journey was to be a quest within, yet turned out to be so much more than I imagined.

From the time the thought started to rattle the bars of my mind's cage to first speaking with Steve Habif from the Vermont Children's Aid Society. Part of the idea was to be in service to people, a part of the inner growth I was experiencing pushing me towards this aim. I thought about that for a while and thought about all the great agencies helping people. Then Steve and VCAS popped into my thoughts. Steve had been bringing in computers from the society to the repair shop where I work for a couple of years. It seemed right to approach him with my idea.

We met and he was excited about the journey, not only because of the possibilities to bring awareness and raise funds for the society, but he is an avid bicyclist as well. The collaboration was meant to be and he was kind enough to bring me into the fold, so to speak.

I do mean it when I say he was kind to accept my offer to help. He knew me just as the guy behind the counter fixing his PC, a few words exchanged between us and that was about all. He took my offer seriously enough to come to the office one early morning in March 2006. We spoke for about an hour, a very good hour of communication, of excitement and possibilities. There are a lot of things he could have said or done, told me it was very nice and he would get back to me, or could have said he would think about it and...get back to me. A lot of ways to nicely say "Not interested", but he didn't. Though I didn't notice it at first, this was the first lesson in being humble...and grateful.

#### 2

So began my service to The Vermont Children's Aid Society. We had several meetings to discuss the trip and events to bring awareness to VCAS. Both he and Cheryl Herrick, also from VCAS, made me feel welcomed and in a sense, special, however, this was not supposed to be about feeling special, it was a journey of learning to be humble. Not to say I am not special, we are all uniquely special and one within the tapestry of life, but in the sense no one is more special than another.

My first real sense of helping was manning a table at the Winooski Riverwalk grand opening. So many friends helped along this journey. Earl's Cycles had sold us a bicycle for cost to raffle, and another friend had donated candy and little trinkets to give away. Though the items brought a handful of children and adults, how many actually saw past the giveaway items to the reason we were there, I cannot say. Was it for me to judge

Other children dove right in pulling out double-fisted cornucopias of plenty. Those children kind of bugged me, and I realized was judging.

A band began playing after a while drawing a small crowd including a group of three gentlemen who caught my attention. They did so because they were unique in their appearance. They appeared to be within the realm of the department of mental health services. I judged again but this time I was also taught humility for my judgment.

One of the fellows I'll refer to as Ozzie, because he reminded me of the singer. He had the long hair and mannerisms of the Oz but without the tattoos. They seemed like pretty cool guys, but still I judged my special-ness against theirs. That is until the Oz came over to the table. He had a gift for the children, a personal alarm (a little key chain type of thing with a panic pin which when pulled causes the thing to shriek like a banshee). At the moment I accepted it, he extended his hand to shake mine, which I did and thanked him, but inwardly thinking what is a child going to do with this thing? I judged again, ah it is never ending awareness.

It was not until later that night thinking about the day that it really struck me, I had another lesson in being humble, thank you, God! Ozzie had given me a gift. It does not matter his status in life nor mine. What he had to give came from his heart, and I know this because I saw it in his eyes, his eyes had been alight with the simple happiness of giving, he was siked! I was siked because I was given a lesson of being humble; I still had a lot to learn, but we all have to begin somewhere.



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The next event that gave me time to work on ego and being humble was the annual Craftsbury Fair to benefit VCAS. The day taught me about how attached to my special-ness I was/am. The day was turning hot, for me anything over 65 or 70 degrees is hot. My car at the time needed brakes. How do I know this? Every time the brakes were applied, the front end shook furiously. That became a main focus over the hour and a half ride. The other focus was Annie, my dog, who becomes car sick from time to time. She made it almost all the way without being sick and I was hopeful. Four miles, four miles from our destination she becomes ill. I was starting to feel ego call...heellllllloooooo....!



It was mentioned that I would set up under a tent, out of the blast of the sun. I assumed I would be under a tent. As it turned out I set up at a lonely table with no shade and no tent. Well now, attitude was forming in a very special way. I had agreed to volunteer at this event, to sell some of my photos to benefit VCAS, I was biking to Maine by God, and why wasn't I being treated more special?!; Funny how ego always wants to be special.

I was volunteering... really I was pouting, and it reflected in the low sale of photos and raffle tickets. I could have chosen to see this opportunity in an infinite different ways, but I chose pouting and feelings of special-ness. Everyday we are given opportunities to learn, to grow, to play, and to become better

human beings. I once again was learning humbleness. This day was throwing all kinds of curve balls at my very well planned game. I laugh now at it and applaud the play! All the world's a stage and all the people in it but actors...it can really be quite fun when looked at it in this way. Thank you, Shakespeare; thank you, God; thank you, Steve; thank you, VCAS. Everyday applaud the play; laugh, cry, sing, dance, live and die but always remember to applaud the play for it is the ego that is actor and the soul playwright.

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By the time the final event arrived, which was the Pre-ride Party on August 13<sup>th</sup>, I was a little further along the path, but then again, I had been fooled by ego before. We need ego to a certain extent to live in this space-time, to communicate and learn. It is when ego takes over that we run into trouble. I believed I was a little better at applauding the play and I'm getting better at it all the time.

It was party time! We had earlier reserved space at a café in Winooski called The Blue Star. I had worried that it may not be big enough, yet as it turned out, it was a small gathering of seven people, and they were just the right people. It was perfect exactly as it was. And although I usually avoid such situations where I am the center of attention, I think my ego kind of liked it this day.

It was a great party, and I was humbled, once more, by all the caring people at this send off party for my journey. All the plans were made now, the equipment checked and the ego was bagged. I had great expectations and I was learning humility and service. All systems were green and I was on a quest! This was going to be a grand adventure!

Once again this is where one laughs and applauds the actor's ability for not anticipating the unexpected. We laugh, we cry, we live and we learn... that is what it is all about.

