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Rudy's Shoe

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At the bottom of this page is a painting of my best friend's left dress shoe which I painted in honor of his passing; this has not been an easy year for anyone. I painted his shoe because he was *cremated* before I had a chance to experience the proverbial funeral grieving and burial. I chewed over what to do, and remembered my father's wonderful adage, "Funerals are for the living; the dead are elsewhere." So, with Rudy's ashes gone and no "place" to go to grieve, I felt I had to create something to memorialize his passing – for me – to have a tangible place or thing. My wife suggested I paint a portrait of him; he was a good friend, but I didn't necessarily want him eerily peering over my shoulder all day and night like a postage stamp stuck to the right corner of my life, so I asked *his* wife if I could have his best, left dress shoe, to sketch then paint. I knew the colors, black and polished, would be interesting since I paint using nail polish. I mean, he can't wear it anymore, and I reasoned, if I only paint one, it's like he's sort of walking with me with just one shoe; thus, he'll have to sort of walk a bit awkwardly in this journey forward, like we all are. The visual of him with just one shoe made me smile, too. A sort of defiance of death in that Rudy still has a few things to do; he's not quite finished, yet. That's why there is a nail-polish black shoe in the corner of this page. Like I said, it's been an awkward year, a drunken discovery of the human condition when we are all suddenly thrust onto one path with only one shoe on a long mysterious journey forward. We are bound to step on a few rocks, but perhaps walk a few beaches, too.

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Forces Editor – R. Scott Yarbrough



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