

# EDITOR'S JOURNAL



## Care for a Shine, Ma'am?

**Y**ou don't see many of them around anymore. Shoeshine men were common in the 50s and 60s when I was growing up, but at least in Richmond, they seem to have disappeared from the street corners, bus stations and airports. Just a week ago, however, I was able to step back in time and shake hands with disappearing history.

I remember the shoeshine man in my hometown who had his station in a corner of the post office—an old black man with a big toothy smile, who always had a story to tell and knew all the local secrets. He never stopped talking while he worked, but you could tell he was devoted to his craft, popping his rag as he buffed. A skilled shoeshiner could almost play a tune with the snap of his rag, and for fifty cents a man could walk away with a mirror shine. I say man because I don't recall too many women getting shoe shines back in those days, or these days either.



I've shared before that my wife, Tanya, and I periodically kidnap each other for fun surprise outings, and just last week on Saturday morning at 8:15 I asked her if she was ready to be kidnapped.

Her reply: "Can I take a shower?" I said she could brush her teeth and comb her hair and that's it.

Now there's only one woman in the world that I know of who would get as excited as a child about getting a shoeshine, and that woman is my wife. I knew it was on her bucket list to get a real bona fide shoeshine from a genuine shoeshine man, and I was committed to making it happen.

So she brushes her teeth and combs her hair, and we take off out I-64. I had an impish grin on my face, and she was pumping me with questions. Where are we going? To the airport? And I said, Maybe. You'll have everything you need. And in a slight variation on Paul Harvey. *And here's the rest of the story (from my wife):*

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