

School had been dismissed and the children were coming out as I approached the front door. To my horror, a grade four child in stocking feet was coming down the steps toward me. Her cotton dress was dirty and torn around the hem. She was without a jacket. Her sweater was filthy beyond words. Her leotards had once been white, but not wearing shoes, were as black as the playground. How sad she looked?

I blocked her path. "You forgot your shoes, sweetheart. Go back and get your shoes." Her face fell. She made no reply. I repeated, "You forgot your shoes, lets go get them." I reached for her hand. Reluctantly she permitted me to take her hand and we walked through the front doors back into the school. Two teachers in the hall saw us coming. "Ladies, this girl escaped your attention. I found her outside without shoes." I looked down at my little girl, "Which is your room sweetheart?" She was silent. "Room three," one of the teachers volunteered, then added, "And she never has any shoes." "What, no shoes?" I stammered. "Its cold outside, how can she not have any shoes?"

I was still holding her hand, and together we walked to the mezzanine floor. Alex Noble the principal, was still in his office. "Look what I found outside, "Mr. Noble. I'm told she has no shoes. How can we allow her to go out dressed the way she is? She will perish."

Alex was unperturbed. "You give me a working solution," he commented rather abrasively, "And we'll live in a better world." Alex almost seemed annoyed that I had come in. "There is

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more to this problem than I realize, right?" I continued quizzing. Without looking up from his desk, he commented, "You can't clean up a kid, until you clean up the home and put some responsible parents in it. That's the only prescription. I've reported this case, but nothing's been done. How about you giving it a whirl?"

I looked down at the child. I still held her hand. The odd smile I had given her seemed to put her at ease. Obviously I was ignorant of the child's case, but perhaps I could come up with something that would work a remedy and encourage the staff. Here was a chance perhaps to demonstrate genuine Christian concern. I was hungry for a challenge.

"May I check this child out during the noon hour, Alex? I'll have her back after lunch. She seems to be quite comfortable with me." Alex flashed a skeptical grin. "Good luck to you Henry. If you're lucky, forward your formula to the social workers. You'll go down in history. Here's her address."

I had won the child's confidence for she came with me quite readily and eagerly climbed into my car. We drove down Selirk Avenue to Oretzki's Clothing Store.

"And what can I do for you?" the sales lady greeted us cheerily. I pointed to my little girl. "What can you do for her - can you turn her into a princess?" The clerk looked at my girl, then at me, again at the girl. She was slowly interpreting my request. "You want me to make a transformation?" I smiled an approval. "You got it lady. You do the choosing, be reasonable but make a good job. I'll be back in twenty minutes looking for a princess. I'll accept your judgments." She reached for the girl's hand. "You got a deal sir."

I browsed through the store for a few minutes. It was a cluttered store.



The isles were narrow, and one had to turn sideways to wedge between some of the tables. I studied a few of the customers and wondered how many articles would be going out the door unpaid for. It was not my kind of store. I strolled out the door and leisurely walked the block waiting for the twenty minutes to pass.

A clerk, other than the one that had waited on me, saw me return. "Your princess is almost ready." Two other clerks gave me a special greeting. Obviously news travelled fast in this store. And there she was dressed in jeans, flannel shirt, jacket and runners. "Well, what do you think of your princess?" I could see the clerk was proud of her job, and wanted some commendation. "Not one hundred percent!" The lady scrutinized the girl. "Really? What's not perfect?" "Something is lacking. Doesn't a princess have berets in her hair?" She added the berets.

For the first time my little princess smiled for me and reached up voluntarily to take my hand. My reward was more than sufficient. Together we walked out of the store and got into the car. "We can't be late for school sweetheart. I'll drive you home, and wait in the car while you get something to eat. I'll then drive you to school. We must hurry."

"Please lets go to school and not home?" I was surprized to hear her speak. "But I have to drive you home first. Your mother will be wondering where you are, and you have to get something to eat." She kept looking down. "Please, I don't want to go

home." I made no immediate reply, but steered to the address Alex Noble had given me. When we turned down her street, she became quite agitated. "Please, I don't want to go home. Please, lets go to school. Please, I don't want to go home." There was no let-up in her pleadings, and when she realized I was indeed going to her home, she broke into sobbing. I knew something was not right. Her pleadings were desperate. Her sobbings were real and loud. I became uneasy myself, wondering what accusations might be leveled at me upon my arrival at her home.

I stopped in front of the broken fencing and walked around to her side of the car. I opened the door. "Go get something to eat, I'll wait here for you and drive you back to school." She sobbed convulsively, "Please, I don't want to go in. Please let's go to school." I was now anxious to know the cause for her intense fear. I took her by the hand and walked to the door. The narrow verandah across the front of the house was loaded with debris and all the screens were in rags. Passers-by looked probingly at us, obviously wondering what I had done to the girl to make her sob so loudly.

She adamantly refused to enter. I knocked several times but got no response. I opened the door, funnelled my hands to my mouth and shouted, "Anybody home?" After at least three attempts, a woman appeared at the rear of the narrow hall that divided the house. "What ya want?" She was so drunken, she needed both walls on either side of the narrow hall to steady herself. Without another word, I took

my girl, who was still holding my hand, back to the car. We enjoyed soup and a pudding at a corner restaurant. Although little was said while we ate, I continued to gain her trust. When we left the restaurant, she voluntarily reached for my hand again. I took her back to the school and watched her enter Room 3.

The following day, shortly after 9am, a call came through to me. It was Alex Noble from Strathcona School. "Henry, we need you here at the school. Can you come immediately?" I pondered a moment. "Alex, I was there yesterday, is this an emergency?" Alex snapped a quick reply, "Yes it is and we would appreciate you coming immediately. Its regarding your princess, and don't ask any more questions - just come."

Alex was waiting for me. Together we walked to Room 3. He knocked. The door was opened by the teacher. "Oh yes, just a minute." A moment later the door opened again, and she presented my little princess. I was aghast. The dress she wore was many sizes too large, and filthy beyond description. Her hair was uncombed. Everything about her was grubby and unkempt. She obviously had not been bathed for some time. It took me a few moments to recover from shock. I addressed her teacher. "Is she also without shoes again?" She nodded.

To quickly end this narration, let me state, that I investigated the disappearance of the clothes and runners I had purchased just a day ago. They had been sold and/or traded for a case of beer. The girl was forthwith placed in the care of Children's Aid.

Dear Reader,

Union Gospel is presently sponsoring 48 children at Faith Christian Academy. God has provided teachers that are academically qualified, and lovingly understand how to deal with children from the core area. I have given Ladies Mission Groups tours through the school and invariably they have expressed their wonderment and delight in seeing happy and contented children learning their academics and Bible lessons, memorizing scriptures, dramatizing Bible stories, singing Christian choruses and engaging in joyful play.

The story you have just read, is repeated many times over in inner city Winnipeg. I make this appeal to you. Would you, in the name of our Lord and Saviour, invest in one or more of our children and help sponsor their attendance at Faith Academy?

Every donation will have rewards of eternal dimensions. God Bless your sacrifices. (tax deductible receipts will be issued)

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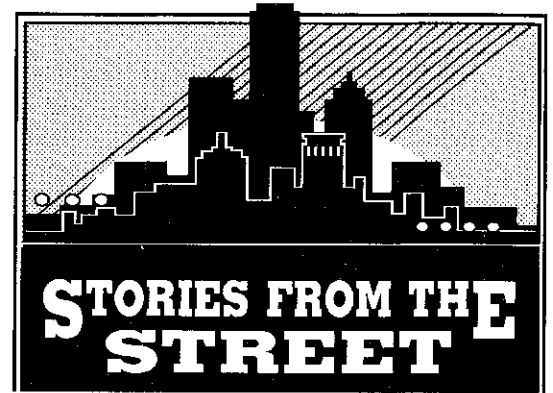
Postal Code _____

Union Gospel Mission

Box 1073

Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2X4
or call 943-9904

320 Princess Street



No Shoes



There had already been a snow flurry. Winds wafted the down-like substance across the playground. It was the first week in November and I was making my rounds to the schools as a supervisor.

I often made my visits to schools during the lunch periods. Taking a lunch bag with me, I would visit with the staff through the noon hour. Strathcona

**As told at a Banquet
by Henry Unruh**