

TOBY'S RUNNING SHOES

By Silvana Goldemberg

One cold winter afternoon of 2010, Toby, a 9 year old boy, was sitting in his wheel chair. He was enjoying a new book next to the window, when his running shoes started talking and whispering to each other.

“Hey! Can you hold your tongues, please?” asked Toby “I’m trying to read here, and you won’t let me do it.”

“Sorry, buddy!” said Right.

“What is wrong with you, guys?” asked Toby.

“It’s just that we want to see new things, other cities ...” explained Left.

“You learn about other worlds through your books, but we can’t read. We want to walk and discover other places,” said Right.

“It could be a good idea, I guess,” said Toby.

“Let’s go together,” proposed Right.

“Yeah, come with us, boy,” offered Left.

“I would like to, but I’ve got school. You two can go, under one condition...” said Toby.

“Please, keep talking,” said Right, opening up his eyelets.

“You must come back and teach me all you learn out there,” requested the boy.

“Deal,” said both shoes. Their laces hugged Toby’s ankles and they waved to him before disappearing out the front door.

After some minutes walking, a group of people boarding a huge bus in front of City Hall got Right's and Left's attention.

"This is our opportunity to travel and see the world," said Right.

"Let's get in," said Left.

Both shoes jumped into a duffel bag that was open just enough, to let them in.

They traveled first in the bus's luggage compartment; after that, they flew in an airplane's baggage compartment and later in another bus's luggage stow.

During the long trip, they entertained themselves by talking with skates, ski boots and other sport shoes, also traveling in the various luggage areas.

Through chatting with their colleagues, Right and Left figured out that those people were athletes, going to participate in a very important tournament.

Meanwhile, Toby was worried. He hadn't received any news from his running shoes.

After almost two months, Toby heard Right and Left kicking at the front door. His heart beat happily, as he went to hug his friends.

"I missed you a lot. Where have you been, guys?"

"We missed you too," replied both travelers.

"We were at the Winter Games," said Right.

"This year, they were in Vancouver and Whistler," Left told Toby.

Donning his long lost friends, Toby asked, "Now tell me, tell me; what did you see. What did you learn, out there?"

Left raised his lace up, begging to start, "One of the most beautiful things that we learned was the importance to share and enjoy sports, with shoes from different countries."

“We brought a gift for you,” said Right handing Toby a present:



“Thank you! It’s beautiful! It’s a person made with rocks, isn’t it?” said Toby

“Yes, it is an Ilanaaq, the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games emblem. Ilanaaq is the Inuit word for friend,” said Left.

“The Inuit people used to stack rocks, in human form, to create the Inukshuk. It was their marker to provide direction across the vast territories of the North,” explained Right.

“Over time, the Inukshuk has become a symbol for hope, friendship, and hospitality of a nation that warmly welcomes the people of the world, with their arms wide open,” said Left.

“Wide open arms and wide open faces,” said Toby.

“You are right,” said Left.

“No, I’m Toby,” said Toby laughing with his friends.

“Look, boy. Each stone relies on the other to support the whole Inukshuk,” Right showed Toby.

“That’s teamwork,” exclaimed Toby. “I see you learned a lot on your trip and by sharing your stories with me, you are keeping your part of our deal.”

“Wait, buddy, we have more to tell you,” said Left.

“In the Olympics, there are sports like: Skiing, Skating, Bobsleighbing, Biathlons, Ice Hockey and Curling and we learned all about them,” Right told Toby.

“We are going to teach you how to do them,” said Left.

“I wish I could do sports like those,” said Toby.

“You can! You can be one of the athletes in the future Paralympic Winter Games,” said Right.

“You could do Alpine Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Biathlon, Ice Sledge Hockey and Wheelchair Curling,” said Left.

“Thank you, mates. You are really inspiring me. You have so much spirit,” said Toby.

“Of course, we’ve got the spirit,” said both running shoes, as they high-fived each other with their laces.

“Hey, we brought something for your room, too,” said Right giving Toby a flag:



“You didn’t have to bring so many things,” said the boy, opening the flag. “Wow! My favorite colors. Do you know what the design means?” said Toby.

“It’s the Vancouver Paralympic Games emblem. You can see there’s an athlete becoming part of the coast, the forests and the sky of British Columbia,” explained Left.

“You are teaching me all you learned, so from now on, I will read out loud, so you can learn more about the world, too,” said Toby.

“Great idea!” exclaimed both shoes.

“Now let’s rest, so tomorrow we’ll be ready to start training. Time is gold,” said Right.

“The gold medal”, said Left.

“You are right,” approved Toby.

“No, I’m Left,” said Left.

The three of them laughed, and went after their dream.