

DAVID GEHUE

Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia

**“I am blind, but I see all too well
what’s wrong with public attitudes.
They’re ignorant, not bad,
just ignorant.”**

I lost my sight in 1974. My foster brother and I were wrestling. He meant to kick me in the chest but the heel of his foot caught me in the eyes. So that was that, an accident, retina detachment in both eyes. Blind.

Actually, my eyesight never was twenty-twenty. I spent about ten years in Halifax, going to the school for the blind, and in one sense, that was really hell. On Friday morning, I was at an Indian school, at home. And on Monday, I was in the big city. That’s the first time I ever saw so many people, with all of those cars rushing everywhere. I thought I was going to some sort of prison. You know what I said to myself: “What the hell did I do? I didn’t do anything,” but there I was, nothing but a big bag of anger in a little boy.

No one ever explained that I was going to Halifax for my health. No one ever told me what it was going to be like, so I was scared. Everything was so different. I could not eat when I wanted to eat, and I couldn’t play when I wanted to play. And I couldn’t just be me. I lost my whole identity in that one move.

I wasn’t alone, there were four other Indians. But they were from New Brunswick, wherever that was. I caused an awful lot of problems for myself and for everybody else. If somebody would have just sat me down and explained what was going on. Hell, I thought I never would be able to go home again. And there I was, stuck in a world that I didn’t know how to handle.

I guess the school was pretty good. At least, they taught me some industrial arts, you know, canning and grass rope on chairs. I must have been a holy terror, because I was booted out three or four times. Finally, I made up my mind and said, “that’s it, I’m going home where I belong.”

When I got here, I got into a public school and I still had some problems, but before I could sort them out, I had my accident and lost my sight completely. And I never went back to school.

You know, I don’t blame anybody for the problems I’ve had. I’m sure there were good people around, but I guess I didn’t meet them. When I was twelve years old, I started drinking. How do you like that changing your life? I seemed to drift a lot after that. I drank a lot more, and I suppose I messed up quite a bit. But people around here didn’t give up on

me. I got involved in lunch programs for the kids, in housing, just about everything.

I was pretty restless, and it was really tough to find a decent job. Most people think that blind people can’t work. And so, I kicked around the country quite a bit. I even looked for David Gehue, whoever I am, in Alberta and Ontario, because I knew that something was missing.

My mom passed away in 1979, and I guess that really shocked me. I came home just to tell everyone that I was going to leave. And I left. I went to Princeton, Maine, and that’s where I found God, and that’s where I found David Gehue. I’m a lot more peaceful now, and I don’t really care that I can’t see you. I just care that I can do. I want to do things just like everybody else, because I know that I can. You know, I’ve been through hell on the alcohol trip, and I’d sure like to help other people avoid the mistakes that I made. Especially the kids.

Right now, I’m working, sometimes for pay, sometimes as a volunteer, to help kids get their shit together. If you don’t grab them and give them something to cling to, then you’re just inviting terrible problems for everyone.