

## **The Tree Where I Tied My Shoelaces**

As a boy, I would chase my friends through the local woods. When we reached the clearing, we found enough breath to laugh and would stretch our aching muscles against the trunks of old evergreens.

I would rest my trainer against the raised root of one well-etched tree, and retie my laces. Its bark flaked off at the smallest touch but the root proved a sturdy enough place for me to sort myself out. Not for long, though.

During my teenage years, I occasionally took my girlfriend hiking and camping in those woods but only crossed that tree a couple of times.

Then came the thunderstorm. I was driving home for the weekend and saw the devastation the previous day's wind and lightning had wrought in that clearing.

I parked my car nearby and investigated the damage. All of the evergreens had been scorched and split down the middle but only one was in pieces. The one with the flaking bark and raised root. My heart sank to see it ripped from the earth and scattered.

I salvaged what I could of that tree and brought it home. Having recently started up as a carpenter, I did what I could to repurpose the obliterated wood. At the time I made small things, sculptures really. I took that childhood evergreen and gave it a new practical purpose that still seemed quite poetic.

A shoe tree. I still use it for my trainers. You have too.

I bet you never realised that.