Footprints in the sand

One night a man had a dream that he was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to him, the other belonging to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints, and that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life...

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The Lord replied,

"My precious, precious child. I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

Author Unknown...until now

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From the Longbeach Press-Telegram

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by Chris Christensen

Chances are you've read "Footprints in the Sand" sometime in your life, on a greeting card, plaque, T-shirt or postcard. Chances are also good the you've noticed it is nearly always signed "Author Unknown".

But that's not true, as Kathy Bee of Bellflower tells it.

Bee, whose real name is Kathy B. Hampton, is a singer-songwriter who has in her possession what she believes is a dated original copy of the inspirational poem, loaned to her by a woman who says she is the author. Its edges are torn, and you can barely read parts of the backhanded, penciled handwriting, dated 1939 and signed "Mary Stevenson."

It is something the 42 year-old mother of two would like to share with the world. "I want people to know about Mary," says the woman who is like a daughter to the ailing Stevenson, 74. "And I want to prove she's the author before she dies."

Bee met Stevenson while appearing at The Palomino nightclub in North Hollywood back in 1979. Stevenson was in the audience, and after the performance, invited Bee to her home for dinner.

At Stevenson's Buena Park house, Bee remarked that she particularly liked one of the many poems hanging on her wall. "Mary said, 'Oh, you like that? I've got plenty more,'" Bee recalls, and she went into a bedroom, brought a box and dumped it on the table.

"There must have been hundreds of poems," Bee says, "and as I went through them, I discovered the 1939 copy of 'Footprints.'"

Bee was flabbergasted, and pulled out a little card to show Stevenson. On it was Stevenson's famous poem, something Bee's mother had given her before she went on the road.

Bee had seen it in every truck stop on tour, but never thought she'd meet the author. Or hear the story of how it was first written on a piece of scratch paper in 1936 by a poor and abused 14-year-old, while locked outside in the cold on the front porch of her childhood home in Chester, PA.

Stevenson, who says she is a descendant of Robert Louis Stevenson, told Bee how it broke her heart to see it in the public domain, signed "Author Unknown"

As a young girl with a strong spiritual side, Stevenson had never thought about copyrights. And she couldn't have afforded one if she had. She just

http://www.wowzone.com/fpnews.htm

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enjoyed sharing her work, passing out hundreds of handwritten copies to anyone who asked, including every chorus girl she met during her days as a follies dancer at the Troc theater in Philadelphia. That night at Stevenson's house Bee decided to do all she could for the woman.

"I encouraged her to copyright 'Footprints' in 1984. And I wrote music to one of her poems about child abuse, which won Song of the Year from the California Country Music Association in 1986. We gave the proceeds from my concerts to child abuse agencies."

Since then, author Gall Giorgio has written a book titled "Footprints in the Sand," which chronicles the Stevenson's difficult life, and Marla Maples Trump, a long-time fan of Stevenson, obtained the movie rights for a TV film.

There's just one hitch.

Over the years, many have challenged Stevenson's authorship, one of them a Canadian woman who claims to have written the poem in 1964.

That's impossible, if you believe Stevenson's handwritten copy to be authentic, and author Giorgio's 1958 diary entry that says "Footprints" is her favorite poem.

"But Maria won't produce the movie until we get a lawyer to prove it," says Bee, who has hired an attorney who aims to strengthen Stevenson's case with additional pre-1964 copies of the poem or signed affidavits from people who recall seeing it before then.

Meanwhile, Stevenson, mother of two sons and author of thousands of poems, lies in a nursing home in Las Vegas, suffering from heart and respiratory problems.

"She's gone into complete respiratory failure four times. Each time I tell her, 'Don't go away yet. We need you,' and she comes out of it," says Bee, who has spent the last two decades telling everyone she knows about her friend's struggle.

"Mary has the greatest faith I've ever seen," Bee says. "It's a child-like faith, and I believe it has kept her alive."

I've seen the original copy of "Footprints," and it would be hard to believe that the young Stevenson, who lost her mother and brother as a child, did not pen the faded words for inspiration back in 1939.

It still makes her smile, Bee says, that others find inspiration in the old poem.

Bee asks that those who have pre-1964 copies of it, or are certain they saw it before then, call her at (562) 803-5530.

"I just hope somebody out there can help us," she says.