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# The Odyssey of Ulysses C. Snail



INSPIRATIONAL STORY BY **RHONDA D. WHITLEDGE**

In the mossy green undergrowth by a cool stream, I chanced upon a most curious scene! Just a small block of wood saved by sticks from the swell, and on it, an upturned and vacated shell. I saw there the remnants of a great tale of the world's most courageous traveling snail! Now, before you dismiss what I say to be so, let me first share the tale of this unlikely hero ...

Lester C. Snail dreamed of setting to sea on billowy sails reckless and free! A pirate scarf tied up around his soft head; by fair winds and North Star his life would be led. He would chart out a course without an end and discover great wonders that never have been. Then he'd stretch his soft feelers way up to the sky as a queer sort of light shone from his little dull eyes.



*Together with musician Bruce Wolfe, Rhonda Whitledge performs "Fantastic Images" in schools and other public places. Her original stories are augmented by one-of-a-kind scupplets, a combination of sculpture and puppet. For further information about programs and performances, call (219) 534-1751.*

*Regarding the above story, Rhonda reported the following:*

*"The beginning of the 'Odyssey of Ulysses C. Snail' really did happen. I had just decided to leave my 'secure' job to step into the mysterious chasm of self-employment as a storyteller. My daughter sensed my unease that day and insisted I go on a walk with her where 'In the mossy green undergrowth by a cool stream ...' I found that small block of wood with upturned shell riding aboard, and in that shell I found a story and the courage to continue my own dream quest."*



Lester's friends grew concerned that their buddy might fail, so they all rallied 'round to advise the young snail, and his friends pointed out, as friends like to do, "Your dreams are absurd Lester. What's wrong with you? You are only a snail, you live in a SHELL! You eat leaves and move slowly ... you leave a SLIME TRAIL!! Does that sound to you like a fearless explorer? You would surely be killed by some hideous horror! And what's more" his friends chided, "We don't mean to pester, but who EVER heard of a hero named LESTER?"

Now Lester tried to stop dreaming to end their commotion, but he always went back to his star-studded notion ... and he tried to stay put beside his small pond, but he could not help wandering hither and yon. 'Til one day poor Lester could stand it no longer. Though his fears were convincing, the calling was stronger. Lester gathered his friends up, one warm breezy day, said "You've all been fine friends, but I'm sailing Away."

They all smiled, unbelieving, "Les, you're much too lazy. And to build a ship snail-size, the idea is crazy!"

"Here's my ship!" Lester motioned where his dream vessel stood.

"You fool!" his friends gasped, "That's a plain block of wood!"

"Oh, it's not the fine ship I had hoped for, I know. But when dreams call, you take what you've got and you go."

"When it comes to reality Bud, you're a mess!" His friends cried, "Whatever happened to our plain old friend LES?"

"Please, don't call me 'Les' there's so much more to me. I shall christen myself, ULYSSES C.!" Then slithered aboard and slipped off in the pond, as a playful wind caught him, he waved, and was gone.

They all stood there, astonished, finally one of them said, "That boy is plain out of his wee mushy head! He'll be back by tomorrow, just give him one night. He'll come slithering back, admitting we're right!" They kept watch for a day, then a week, then a year. Til they lost interest, turning to more pressing fears. Such as, will the rain fall too much or will it be dry? Will the plants grow too small or inconveniently high? Thus, they busied their lives away, and they never knew of the shell on the wood that I described to you.

Now don't weep for our snail friend or assume that he failed. He succeeded the moment he pushed off to sail! For each STEP is a victory, here's one way to tell ... We tend to outgrow our old comfortable shell. So don't assume by his empty shell that ol' Lester blew it. My guess is as Ulysses, he simply OUT-GREW it!

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