

One mans quest to find spirituality in spite of childhood trauma, toxic religion and social difficulties.

Ovilla Road: A Pedaler's Quest for Spirituality

By Eric Cupp

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://booklocker.com/books/13971.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**



Ovilla Road

*A Pedaler's Quest
for Spirituality*

Eric Cupp

Copyright © 2025 Eric Cupp

Print ISBN: 978-1-959623-67-0

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88532-050-4

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2025

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Cupp, Eric

Ovilla Road: A Pedaler's Quest for Spirituality by Eric Cupp

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025908867

Dedication

To every person who has been part of my ride: good or bad, positive or negative.

To each of my kids: Erica, Whitney, Parker, Madeline and Campbell. You now know more about your dad than you did before. I pray you also know more about yourselves.

To Missy, my best friend and wife of almost 30 years. She is my safe place. The best thing about being with her? She gets me, she always has.

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Mobility	5
Chapter 2: Places to Go, People to Avoid	11
Chapter 3: My Happy Place.....	17
Chapter 4: Receiving Instruction Before Gaining Wisdom	25
Chapter 5: You Cannot Ride Around Hell	31
Chapter 6: Grand Street.....	37
Chapter 7: The Wheel and The Window	43
Chapter 8: Headed to The Promised Land?	51
Chapter 9: Once a Duck, always a Duck	59
Chapter 10: Worms and Wheels.....	67
Chapter 11: The In-Between.....	75
Chapter 12: Back on a Bike	83
Chapter 13: Ovilla Road	87
Chapter 14: Titanium	93
Chapter 15: Moments.....	99
Chapter 16: One Time.....	109
Chapter 17: Iwo Jima	115
Chapter 18: Cloudcroft	121
Chapter 19: Gratitude.....	127
Chapter 20: The Undertaker	135
Chapter 21: Truth	141

Chapter 22: Spirituality	147
Chapter 23: The Dream Bike is Sold	155
Chapter 24: Now	161
Books, Authors, and Attributed Quotes.....	169

Chapter 1:

Mobility

“Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of riding a bike.”

J.F.K

Would you be surprised to know, I was mobile before six years old? Being born in Ballinger, Tx., my dad worked at a Texaco station where sales reps sometimes gave workers pedal cars for their children. Since my dad was a hard worker and a smoker who had not blown the station up, he got one. I had a red vehicle that I cannot describe today, only to say that it was a little auto that a kid sat in with a round steering wheel and enclosed pedals attached to the rear wheels. I was not going to go anywhere fast but I wore that little car out. I wish I had it today because it would be worth big bucks.

My first taste of what mobility offered lay at the end of our street. I have very few memories of those days. I kind of remember the house. I remember the driveway, covered in gravel and the place where my mom backed over our dog. I think. I can recall a backyard fence. I remember my brother and sister leaving me in a hole because I was being obnoxious. I don't remember being obnoxious, but I don't doubt it. I remember the hole. There may as well been no neighbors because there is a big blank spot in my recollection. But I remember the challenge of the street because it went uphill from our house. Pedal cars are not very efficient and to a three-year-old that street may as well been Pikes Peak. It was hard pedaling and required a strong pull on the steering wheel to increase torque and that risked some scraped chins against the metal dashboard that was sharp on the edges. I have no idea why but one day I got out and pushed my little car with no

doors a long way up that street. Who knows where or why I decided I had gone far enough but at a certain point I turned the car back toward the house and got in. I took a pedal or two but quickly realized pedaling was not necessary. I was whooshing down the street (likely at 5 mph) with pedals still moving with the turning of the wheels, trying to keep my feet from jamming the works and I imagine myself grinning like a banshee from ear to ear. I crashed. I cried. I didn't run in the house. I distinctly remember going back up.

Somewhere in my toddler brain was implanted the belief, unarticulated, uncomprehended, and mystical:

Mobility equals possibility.

Also seeded in my psyche was an intense fear of immobility, of being stuck, of having no options, of being powerless. Born were nightmares of having invisible weights on me that held me down, horrors of being restrained by people, things or circumstances. Also born were dreams of being able to fly, more accurately, float, only by thought with no effort required. Freedom.

Mobility is far more than just simple movement- it is holistically connected to all we are in terms of freedom, opportunity, health, growth and joy. Mobility allowed me to make choices that I might not make in other settings (such as my mom walking along beside me and my pedal car) and allowed me to engage the world on my terms. Just saying the following is therapeutic for me: movement brings independence. Being able to move freely, and in my case on a bicycle, opens me up to experience and to see life from 16 miles per hour rather than 75 mph or even worse from a screen. Mobility keeps me strong, sharp and connected to the real world of my creation, not the one determined by others. But, best of all, mobility can be a spiritual exercise bringing about greater emotional intelligence, enhanced

empathy, compassion and a conduit to the divine. Cycling alone through the countryside is as empowering as Superman's fortress of solitude and as healing as Jesus going to the other side of the lake to just be unattended and quiet.

So, back in Sweetwater on the oppressively hot summer evening I sat on my bike for the first time. My dad held the back of my seat as if he were my biological training wheels, anticipating that I would have to learn to balance. I'm not sure if I had ridden friends' bikes before, maybe not, but I said thanks dad, see ya! I took off like a shot, being a predecessor to Captain Kirk headed off to "strange new worlds, to boldly go where no man has gone before." I never told my son that he got his first bike at 4 and of course it was new, complete with training wheels. He was a quiet kid and disparagingly looked down at the training wheels and then sarcastically back up at me, indicating those extra wheels were not staying attached. So, outside of his mother's approval, I took them off, set him on a very slight incline and let go. He never hesitated, never looked back and soon took a sharp turn off the street and onto the sidewalk and reversed course. That's my boy. The difference is that he wanted to conquer. I wanted to explore and not ask for permission when I was not being monitored. In those days, not being monitored was far better accomplished by being out of eyesight.

"Freedom was mobility and mobility was a bicycle"

Imagination was my governor, limiter and throttle and my imagination is large. I was never told how far I could travel on my green steed mostly because my parents did not appreciate the boundaries of my imagination, personal belief in my abilities, not the heights of my curiosity. They also did not understand my need for silence and seclusion. I did not tend to be a dishonest child but I also felt no need

to share the details of my day, so they very often knew nothing of my daily exploits.

A common phenomenon I have noticed in adults is the temptation to go back to their own childhood, viewing that chapter in their lives with the maturity and experience they have attained, rather than from the youthful vantage point they possessed. That is good for learning and applying lessons at a later date I suppose, but one's remembrance of youthful motivations, understandings and cognitions are often very skewed. What I am saying is we are often guilty of transference with our own childhood selves! It happens in myriad manners and perhaps the worst when childhood involves trauma. I have known grown men who witnessed their mothers being abused when they were a mere five years old and feeling guilt for not being able to rescue their mother from the attack. Somehow, they think a horrified baby should have fulfilled the responsibilities, capabilities and sensitivities of a forty-year-old. Countless times I have seen women, distressed over sexual abuse as a kid, bearing shame for what they feel was empowering their rapist by not telling anyone about the nightmare. They seem to forget that little girls believe the evildoer when they say, "It will destroy the whole world if you tell." At the same time, we often go back to H.G. Wells time machine and attribute deep thoughts to the us now grown, forgetting that the thoughts we now possess were formulated in the forge of growing up. So, please understand that what I know now about my experiences then, are certainly skewed by foggy recollection, possibly inaccurate details, transference to little Eric, denial, and so much more. Here is one thing you can bank on – the emotions are real and spot-on. The feelings are accurate. I could not have told you back then why bicycles gave me such a release, but I could have easily told you that a ride would make me smile. I could have told you that riding in the rain was better than walking in the sunshine. I don't think I could have articulated that freedom gave me

solace from disappointment, but I know I could have told you that I absolutely loved being at the creek and somehow it just made me happy. I could not have told you that biking gave me security in a party of one nor explained why I resented it, then and now, when others wanted to ride with me. I could have told you that I planned every non-school day to be out the door at sunrise and I did not intend to return home until dark. As they say, "Life, on a bike, was my oyster."

Your life is a discovery; your bike is freedom.
It doesn't matter where you are when you are in the saddle;
you're taken away."

Doug Donaldson

Chapter 7:

The Wheel and The Window

“Getting everything you want is not as fun as you think it will be.”

Kurt Vonnegut

On one of my excursions downtown, I happened to ride by the Western Auto store. I had very little interest in the business and really didn't know what they sold but “auto” gave me an idea it was not my kind of place. However, something in the display window caught my eye- a blue bicycle with a tall sissy bar, a gear shift (that was fake) and a steering wheel with sparkles cooked into the plastic. I did not say handlebars – I said steering wheel. I didn't go into the store, I just stood and stared at this dream cycle. It was Huffy's answer to the ultra-cool “Krate” line. It was not a Schwinn, so I figured it was not as expensive – but with a steering wheel, who knew? The Schwinn sting ray, lemon peeler, apple krate, orange krate, pea picker and fastback carried price tags of \$60-\$100. Forget about it! I craned my neck around enough to read the tag - \$35! That was still a fortune, but it was more like a Plymouth than a Cadillac. Too much to hope for but just right in the storehouse of dreams.

I believe it was the summer before my 5th grade year, the year that my world literally fell apart. Both mom and dad were working which was awesome because I could do literally anything I wanted to do all day, coming and going as I pleased. I was large, in charge and free and I took complete advantage. On my birthday (July 28th), I woke up with no cognizance of the turning of another year of life. I don't remember what I did, but eventually I wandered to the front door, ready for the day's adventures. Sitting on the front porch was “The Wheel” as I had seen at Western Auto. I may have been sleepy or just dense, but I did

not know why it was there. I got the old landline telephone with the thick tight coils and called my mom at the Holiday Inn restaurant where she was a waitress and informed her that someone had left a bicycle on our front porch, and it was just like the one at the store! Mom cackled and told me it was mine. I almost fainted. I don't believe I thanked her, I just got off the phone, ran for the door and climbed on my new ride. I must admit, the steering wheel was not as intuitive as one might assume. Note to self: nobody rides this but me in fear of them crashing it.

I am fully capable of pride and there have been plenty of times when I wanted to be noticed, both in youth and maturity. I suppose the attention I gained when riding down the avenue on my new wheels may have been nice. The "wow, look at that" statements would turn any boys head and perhaps it tilted mine. A surge of ego might have entered a poor boy's heart as I now had the capability to rub it in the faces of those who had the best of everything. But alas, in that culture, a bike was still just a tool. The exception to that were the krates, not the wheel. My new bike was an oddity, not an example of excellence. The tall sissy bar was only good for a second rider, and I certainly did not want one of those. The gear shift was fake unless you got the high dollar model with three speeds. It was not fast and reached the no torque cadence quickly. And that may be why I loved it so much. It reflected what I believed about myself: a façade thought to be something I wasn't. Talk to my family members from the past and they will often describe a person that doesn't exist and never did.

"In our possessions, we see the quiet language of our soul: the hopes, the habits, and sometimes even the contradictions of who we are."

Anonymous

As much as I loved my new bike, I soon realized that it brought a lot of attention which I did not desire. A bicycle with a steering wheel is conspicuous and it threatens one's solitude. Anonymity became difficult. "The boy with the steering wheel bike was in the jet." "I saw the boy with the blue bike skinny-dipping." "Why does the boy with the tall sissy-bar ride around at night." I didn't see it coming. The bike brought me into conversations that I didn't want and forced me into interactions that I was riding to avoid. The kids wanted to race, which did not matter to me. I didn't even want them there. While as an adult, I have bought into status symbols at times, I did not want one in 5th grade. I also learned that my social status was affected. I had new kids wanting to hang out because I owned a desirable object. I just wanted to be the same kid who had owned the green, used bike with a dog named Jacque waiting at the school's rock fence who happens to have a new, unusual bike now. I fell into the trap of things that sparkle, and it caused me to be misjudged.

"Too many people spend money they haven't earned,
to buy things they don't want, to impress people
they don't like."

Will Rogers

I promise Will, I did not intend to do this. I guess my parents had the money. I really loved the bike. I didn't care what anybody thought but, in the end, it didn't change their perspective nor their bold intrusiveness into my peace. I have internalized the lesson.

"Wealth consists not in having great possessions but
in having few wants."

Epictetus

It wasn't long before the bike didn't matter. The newness wore off, kids got used to it and there were better things on which to focus. My

sister did enjoy it though. She liked me to let her ride it and I could ride the old one or a friend's bike and off we would go and she would laugh going downhill when it just couldn't go any faster because the torque was gone and there was no use pedaling. Honestly, I thought she was going to extinguish herself and mom would find her dead on the side of the road. Thank God that didn't happen because as you will discover later, she was to save me.

Life began to unravel early in 1969 as mom and dad's marriage hit stormy seas. "Rough patch" or "challenging times" or "rocky ground" doesn't begin to tell the story. My brother was grown and gone, my sister was soon to leave, and mom and dad created a hell designed to destroy children. Not even "the wheel" could save me from this one.

I am not trying to justify my parents' behavior, nor condemn them. Buried in mid-life and crippled with ignorance they had demons dancing in their psyches daring them to deal with a painful past. For the sake of balance, I must say that they both loved me and after this period they did a much better job of rearing me. I became concretely aware of what was going on. They despised each other in a way that only misguided love can accomplish. I think my father's infidelities finally burnt through any remaining sinew of a relationship. Perhaps my mother undertook her own affair as payback. I simply cannot give you all the details because I don't know them, and I consider that a gift. I can share the dysfunctional environment my sister and I were forced to endure then, and I know was even worse on my brother earlier.

"If parents don't live their unfinished childhood wounds,
they will make their children live them instead."

Carl Jung

“Some parents will damage their children and
then accuse them of being broken.”

Anonymous

I knew who the mistress was, and I knew the paramour. I was there when my dad went to confront the man and tell him to back off my mom so they could attempt to save their marriage. The magnitude of the hypocrisy was simply unbelievable, even for a grade-schooler. My dad was not a drinker but in this era of his life he was a frequent boozier. One night my mom was waiting tables at the Holiday Inn diner, complete with its lime green table covers, venetian blinds and stained menus. I sometimes went there and sat at a booth when my mom didn't feel good about leaving me at home. Adults can be such a mixed bag when they are messed up- imagine the intellectual process of “I will see my lover after work, but I don't want my little boy to be home alone.” My dad stumbled in making a scene. Mom was checking someone out and dad was harassing her. He began to shake violently and fell over. I thought he might die. I must have been quite pitiful looking to the man in the booth of whom I asked for help. He helped me get my dad to his car being the compassionate fella he was. As the man walked away, his parting words struck me like a clap of thunder on a clear day – unexpected and jolting, “Damn drunk.” There it was. Daddy wasn't sick. He didn't have a fever. He was not overcome with emotion. He was drunk. Sotted. Stoned. Tanked. Wasted. And if you must clean it up, he was inebriated. Cleaning up the words didn't clean up the vomit I left in the courtyard by the pool between the boxwoods. I did not want to be at the Holiday Inn. I had no bicycle. The walk was several miles through “the other side of the tracks.” I had no mobility, no freedom and no hope. The paralysis inflicted on me was unbearable.

It got worse. They began to fight at night. Oh, I don't mean "don't raise your voice at me" type arguing. I'm talking about knockdown, drag out, screaming, cursing throwing stuff and hitting type of fighting. I didn't know what it meant to lose it, but I really thought I was losing my mind. We were not going to church that I can remember but I thought about prayer. So, when they started in at night I would pray on my twin bed, backed into the corner, looking out the window thinking I would rather be anywhere but there. I asked God to make them quit. They didn't. I saw a picture of a boy praying at nighttime, bowing on his knees on the side of his bed, elbows on the bed, fingers laced, and head bowed. That was it! I was praying wrong, so I changed my approach. I prayed that God would make them quit. They didn't. So, I figured I needed more effort and ended up face down on the floor of my bedroom, across the hall from the powder bath and just a bit down from the master bedroom. I asked God to make them quit. They didn't. This is not an emotion that I remember and share with you; it is a deduction. I did the calculations, formed the hypothesis and came to the only conclusion that made sense. God didn't care about me. One must be worthless if even God won't listen to you. I would make a lot of mistakes because of this misguided belief. To believe such is to be attracted to a faith based on fear and guilt. Such theology lends itself to harsh legalism and a "love by performance" mindset. Thinking such can lead to depression and anxiety and the inability to accept love from others. And worse for me, such belief can lead to seeking worth in unhealthy places, relationships and pursuits.

"Nothing can separate us from the love of God."

Paul

I don't know if it was the last night at ringside, but the end was soon to come. On the last torrid night of sparring that I remember, I was sobbing in my room. I couldn't hold it in and all at once I was wailing

like the little dead boy's mama. I then understood the powerlessness of inconsolable grief. I knew what it meant to breathe broken glass, and I knew that there was a drowning under invisible tides. It was as if my lower jaw had become dislocated like modern day vampires and a continuous guttural howl came from a sinister cavern that exists only to address the demons in the room. I was detached from reality. My sister, Brenda, 7 years my senior, who saved my life and gave me a reason to push through, came in and held me like she had done so many nights. All at once she ran into my parents' room with me closely behind. Her words amazed and astonished me. I saw what indignation looked like. I knew what breaking the rules sounded like. Her fury woke me up and gave me strength. In the most eloquent cursing I had ever heard she called them "bitchin bastards." I now know she said, "You bitch and bastard!" Once again, like the store owner, someone had stood up for me. This time it was my sister, and it was way better. Soon she would leave home, an act for which she felt guilty. What she did not understand was that she was blazing the trail and showing me that life could be better, and mobility was still a possibility.

Within a couple days, my mom told me to go to the car. Our clothing and a few belongings were in there and we headed for central Texas, to a rented house, to be near my cousins. There would be a new school that hated outsiders. My dad was nowhere to be seen, neither was my bike, the wheel. My last view of Sweetwater was from the rear window as we ascended 9-mile hill on the Callahan Divide and left the rolling plains behind.

"Life moves on, whether we act as cowards or heroes. The road
always stretches ahead.

S. King

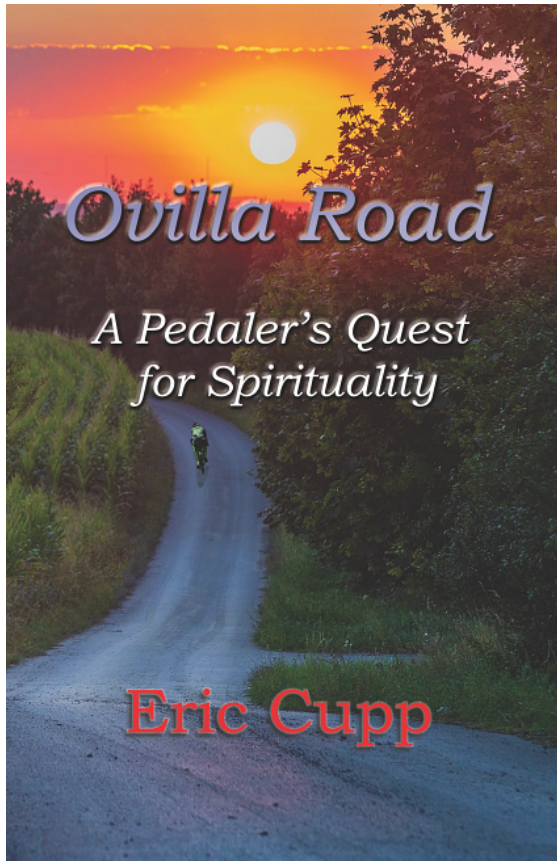
I was growing up all too quickly and my intuition and ability to read the room and grasp lessons was exponentially ahead of my academic

achievement. Looking back though that rear window, perched up on the deck, looking at the stars and of course no seat belt, I realized I had ridden a lot of streets, alleys and pathways. Some of them had nearly defeated me. Some of them had informed me, freed me and redeemed me. As Sweetwater faded in the distance, so did much of my past. The events and stories, the losses and the glory were still real, but I no longer belonged there. I didn't belong anywhere. The entwined destinies of my friends and I had come unraveled. They were going to go to Jr. High, play sports, live the High School life partying and going to the lake and in all likelihood, I would never see them again. In my little boy immaturity, I pondered the idea that if I was ever to be connected to anything larger than myself, I would have to create the affiliation. As it turned out, more often than not, I would not want to make the effort.

I went fast asleep with a slumber like one under sedation, listening to the hum of the tires, the rising and falling of the pistons and the sound of the a.m. radio. I was a Vietnam soldier, fighting a meaningless war, exhausted and unconscious under a tree in the jungle, not caring what happened next.

“I am nobody! Who are you? Are you nobody, too?”

Emily Dickinson



One mans quest to find spirituality in spite of childhood trauma, toxic religion and social difficulties.

Ovilla Road: A Pedaler's Quest for Spirituality

By Eric Cupp

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://booklocker.com/books/13971.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**