

webscripts

Stories from a Long Life

HOME

Transcripts 01 – 10

Transcripts 11-21

Transcripts 22-32

Transcripts 33-43

Transcripts 44-54

Transcripts 55-65

Transcripts 66-76

Transcripts-77 and More

77-Small Things

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A Roman Dagger

My father brought back a Roman dagger from Britain after WW1 where he was in what later became the R.A.F. The dagger, much corroded, had no handle, just a tang (A tang is a projecting shank meant to connect with a handle.)

The dagger is lost now. When I had the old blade it helped me connect in my mind to the soldier or artisan who once owned it so long ago and helped me to realize the reality of history in a tangible way.

Billy Can & Billy Can't

I remember in my childhood being fascinated by two rather unusual antique Plaster of Paris figurines, small boys sitting on chamber pots on the back of the my aunt's toilet ledge in the bathroom.



One had a broad smile on his face and was labelled "Billy Can", the other sunk in gloom, had a dejected frown on his face.

He was labelled "Billy Can't".

When my Aunt, in her elder years, was getting ready to go to a Home for the Aged she was giving away different things and she gave everyone their choice and, of course, I chose "Billy Can" and "Billy Can't". I still have them.

An Ivory Crocodile

My Aunt Gertie had a little pencil holder that was quite a conversation piece.

I think it was originally meant for keeping scores in a card game, possibly for Bridge.

The piece consisted of an ivory crocodile whose open jaws held the head of a small negro boy.

When you pulled on the head it proved to be attached to a very small pencil.

As a child I was fascinated by the complacently smiling head and how it could be pulled out of the croc's jaws to reveal the pencil.

This piece, while in no way politically correct, would still, if I knew where it was, gain a good price on eBay where there is a market in inappropriate negro collectibles.

The List

I was doing a lot of cross stitch and commercial framing of finished pieces is expensive. I went to a local yard sale and found a whole box of used frames which I promptly bought. I noticed that the old faded picture in one 8×10" frame had a Jewish theme.



I took the framing assembly apart and found, on the reverse of the picture a long list of names of relatives who had perished in the Holocaust. Saddened, I knew I could not throw this memorial away, so I made it the backing for a finished cross stitch picture. They were not my relatives, nor my history, but the list remains hidden but present in my mind, behind the cheerful cross stitch picture.

Kim

A book, is something you can hold in your hand and words from over a century ago can affect you in present time.

I was enchanted by Kipling's Kim as a teenager. Later in life, I read it aloud to my daughter, a chapter a night and, perhaps influenced by the Tibetan Buddhist holy man in this book, she became a Buddhist nun. Kim is set after the 2nd Afghan War from 1878 to 1880. Today we are still hearing the echoes from that war.



In my mind I can still travel to Kipling's India and the Grand Trunk Road. Kim was Irish by birth but a child of India and carried the British Raj and the spirit of Tibetan mysticism in one small body.

The Ring

From Karin:

Karen writes:

I have a plain gold band, a ring of 22 karats, originally from England. This ring belonged to my Nana, my grandmother, who left this earth at the age of 99. She was my Dad's mother. My father, Alan, passed away when I was six. Nana wore this soft, gold ring every day to scrub floors, do laundry, and all other needful chores. I wear it proudly every day because it brings me back to my childhood and my family in those times. It reminds me of my roots, sharing my memories of days gone by.

When your parents and grandparents depart and you have no siblings, the past is like a dream. There is no-one to say "Do you remember when?"

When my first daughter was born, I named her Alana after my Dad. My wonderful Nana held my three month old daughter, just before she died.

Nana's ring will be my daughter's, and all it's family memories to be passed, in time, to her own daughter. My hope is that, even if it brings a just a fleeting moment of memory to each of them, it will remain a family treasure.

The Blackthorn Walking Stick (Shillelagh)

I have a blackthorn walking stick. The thorns were smoothed in the process of finishing and sanding the walking cane shaft, but the dark wood thorns, even when smoothed, still are capable of doing a damage.



Someone attacked my dad with it when he was posted over in Ireland in the British Army in WWI during the time of The Troubles (the Irish Rebellion). He took the stick from his attacker. This shillelagh even when one hundred years old remains a rather deadly weapon.

I've got the walking stick still, with the blackthorns sticking out of it, hanging on my wall, a bit cracked from age.

My dad used it as a cane in later years because he had a war injury that he got in WWII.

A Golden Brooch

From: Uwe

His family in Germany during the Nazi era possessed a \$25 U.S. gold coin of 24 carats.

Under the Nazis it was forbidden to own foreign currency, especially gold coins.

I assume this was because such items were of special use to those who might want to flee from Nazi Germany.

The family coin was taken to a jeweler to have a brooch fastening applied to its back, thus making it a piece of jewelry and not a coin.



Uwe has this coin still and shudders to think that its discovery might have led to a severe fine or worse.

Related to this, his well-to-do family had an imported American Oldsmobile car. It was confiscated and his father, who had to enlist, was made the chauffeur, in this same car, for Nazi officers carousing in venues he used to frequent himself before the 2nd World War.

An Old Violin

From: Marion

A merchant ship docked in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, sometime in the 1850's.

The men aboard had been at sea for two years and expected a big payday on docking. For one reason or another the payday was not there.

An Italian crew member, desperate for funds, hocked his old and treasured violin, promising to return for it.

When after 3 years he had not returned the violin was sold to the family of a small girl who was destined to be a fine violinist in the classical music tradition.

The old violin has stayed with her and has been played by her since the age of 5 all over the years to the present time. Even today she has a four piece band and they play all over Toronto to entertain seniors. She has

never had the old violin appraised. Now, aged 89, she still marvels at this instrument and its place in her life. Inside the violin is a faintly marked indication that it was made some time in the 1700s. It is hoped that it's long history will continue..



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