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Chippewa Discursion

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"The map is not the territory,"
under Tom and Chair Prof's dictum
and truer it could not be
for every wiggle and lost corner straight
and lakes never on the right side.

Tent anarchonist in RV heaven-haven
and motors replace feet in the most progressive scheme of
evolution
by loss of brain capacity or devise —
demolocate — either suffices.

Forest is un trodden and all wildlife in the shape of Native
American —
displaced myths, of land
and field, only to drink to the demons of history.
Turtle mounds can be spun to face any enemy.
Carve a new head and face it capitalward
for a nice change.
Ojibway learned it wasn't the Dakots to scorn and how does
Bob Mosomo
sleep at night
while listening to the Viking-Saints latest exhibition
while he's listening for Gess lee ze day bwan
in search of ancestor's bones.

(You see, they appointed Brave Bob to guard the site
from evil-seekers and revenge doers.)
Now Mosomo walks with axe in hand and ear to ground
and Old Mortality in his palm.
All is a watershed — not just a divide
between Mississippi and Hudson, but Native and Interlope
with nowhere to portage.

— Lee Kesselman

IF I GO

if I
go
to
sleep here
I will
dream
dreams
bulging
with
unwelcome
visitors
everyone
but
you

if I
lay
awake here
I lay
alone

come
and
visit me
somewhere
will
you?

— Kathy Cerra

Kesselman: Chippewa Discursion

MY GRANDFATHER'S BOX

by Joseph B. Bagdonaas

I imagine there has been a time in everyone's life when
they cherished a box of some kind. A certain special box for
keeping secrets, or a box for souveniers. Little boxes for
hair pins, big boxes for marbles or pretty boxes for well read
letters. There was such a box in my life. It belonged to my
Grandfather.

The box was ordinary in shape, almost square. It was made
of dark wood, probably cherry. The wood was deeply en-
graved with designs that intrigued and mystified me as a
child. As the years passed and my intelligence grew, I was
able to see the design had continued as the carvers imagina-
tion had expanded. Grandfather had made the box when a
young man. It was his first carving and according to him, his
last.

It would hardly qualify as an artwork, being crude in struc-
ture and primitive in design but none the less was very
appealing to me. The box was heavily coated inside and out
with a lacquer or shellac. Inside it were three smaller boxes,
one on top of the other. They came out through the top, one at
a time.

The large box locked the three little ones inside with a
roughly made brass key, which hung on a nail in the kitchen.

During cold winter nights on the farm, the crackle of the
kitchen fire could be heard above the sound of the wind
outside. This created an intimate atmosphere which brought
our family close together and provided a time after supper
when Grandfather told stories in wonderfully expressive
Lithuanian.

He would take the old brass key, open the box, and with
the contents of the first small box spread on his lap he would
begin a story. His stories were always different, but they
were always connected with, or inspired by, the objects in
the box.

The first little box contained an ancient bullet, a beribboned
medal, a spoon and a piece of leather thong. Grandfather
described how he acquired these things many times. Every
time I begged for the "really true" story, he would settle
down, eyes twinkling, and spin a story, diametrically differ-
ten from the previous explanation.

I learned a great deal of the folklore and history of the
people of Lithuania and Russia during these stories. Grand-
father told of his days in the Russia Army, when he had
served with the Cossacks and his boyhood on his fathers
farm. He told of his first visit to a large city so vividly I felt
we had made the trip together.

He took each item from the box and held it until it was
included in the story. The end would come after the last item
was used in the tale.

As I think back, I know everyone in the family enjoyed his
stories. The kitchen was always quiet save the ticking of the
clock and Grandfathers voice drawing word pictures for us in
his melodious Lithuanian dialect.

His stories were exciting, sad, dramatic or quite often
laced with side-splitting humor. I remember the whole family
rocking with laughter at some of the anecdotes. I know now
the stories I considered mine alone were enjoyed by every-
one.

If fortune smiled on us, Grandfather would weave a tale
with the contents of the second box. This box contained a
black stone as big as a robin egg, a gold tassel, some coins
and a feather. The feather was that of an eagle, hawk, falcon,
or duck, depending on Grandfathers story.

The third and last box was wreathed in mystery. Upon rare
occasions Grandfather would let me handle it, shake it per-
haps, but open it, never! My curiosity was so great that
when alone in the house I would search everywhere for the
box. Search as I might though, I never found it.