

PART

I



THE
COLLECTOR
AND HIS
PASSIONS

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My Passion for Collecting

I'm a collector. I've always been a collector. As a kid I collected Brooklyn Dodger autographs, baseball cards, comic books, stamps, coins, bottle tops, and anything else that could fit into one drawer in the bureau I shared with my younger brother (and even some things that couldn't, like tropical fish). I never threw anything away (except the dead fish), much to my mother's chagrin.

"What are you gonna do with all that junk?" she asked imploringly.

"It's gonna be valuable someday," I responded, pointing with pride to my neatly organized treasures.

And they would have been valuable someday—at least, the comic books and the baseball cards—had my mother not thrown them out the minute I left home for law school (I lived at home while attending Brooklyn College). I once found a T-shirt that well summarized my plight (and that of an entire generation of young collectors). It said, “Once I was a millionaire . . . then my mother threw my baseball cards away.”

My mother, who was a frugal survivor of the Great Depression, didn’t throw away my stamps or coins. Those she gave to my brother and younger cousins, who kept them until they left home, when these collections were promptly recycled to yet younger relatives. Because I was the oldest among my more than thirty first cousins, the recycling went only one way, with me being the involuntary recycler and never the recyclee of any good stuff. Where my treasures are now, no one knows, and I suspect that the statute of limitations has long since passed on any replevin action (a lawsuit for return of property) I might have had against cousin Norman. The comic books, the baseball cards, and the autographs my mother simply threw into the garbage, because—unlike the stamps and the coins, which were currency—they had no intrinsic value. The remainder of my tchotchkes (Yiddish for inexpensive collectibles) went to some deserving neighborhood kid or to tchotchke heaven. All I know is I never saw them again.

Nor did I really care. After all, I was going to law school—Yale, to boot. (My mother never forgave me for turning down Harvard. For years she told people, “He got into Harvard, but he went to Yale.”) I was on to bigger and better things. The Dodgers had abandoned Brooklyn for Los Angeles, and I had abandoned baseball (at least until I moved to Boston and joined “Red Sox Nation”). Who

needed comic books when I could read Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Law*?

My penchant for collecting didn't abandon me, however. It just went in a different direction. I'd managed to find three volumes of an early American edition of Blackstone. (I'm still looking for the fourth to complete my set—the 1791 edition. If anyone has it for sale, please be in touch.) I started to collect autographs of Supreme Court Justices, Vanity Fair prints, and old books. I have found first editions of books by Lewis Carroll, Theodore Herzl, Anne Frank, and others. When I became a full professor at Harvard in 1967 (that's when my mother finally stopped complaining that I had chosen Yale), Professor Henry Hart gave me an original copy of the complete transcript of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial that had been owned by Felix Frankfurter—who had been one of the lawyers in the case—and had been given to him by Frankfurter when Hart became a professor. These volumes are part of a large collection of historic trial transcripts, many from England, that I have accumulated over the years.

I also collected old newspapers with contemporaneous accounts of significant historical events, such as the assassination of Lincoln, the death of Hitler, the establishment of Israel, and the duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. It was fascinating to read how these events were reported at the time. It helped me to better understand why journalism is called “the first draft of history.” When Harvard Law School put its vast newspaper collection on microfilm, I bought several volumes of old editions of the *New York Times*. The ads are an especially interesting window to the past.

I did not have much money when I was young, so I was always searching for bargains. I went to the used book

stores that lined Fourth Avenue in Manhattan and to flea markets, garage sales, library de-acquisitions, and junk shops. This was before eBay, *Antiques Roadshow*, and magazines dedicated to the art of collecting. To me, collecting was not an art; it was an addiction.

“What are you looking for?” my friends asked. “What do you expect to find—the original Declaration of Independence?”

“No,” I assured them, knowingly. “The original is in the Archives. But an early copy?”

There is an urban myth—maybe even a true story, who knows?—of someone who found an early copy of the Declaration in an old frame behind a print of dogs playing poker that he had bought for five bucks at a flea market. He sold it for a fortune. I have never sold anything. For me, collecting is a one-way street. I *collect*. I don’t *distribute*. I also look behind every print I buy. So far, no luck. The best I’ve come up with are some interesting old newspapers—one that announced Hitler’s death. But I did manage to find a beautiful nineteenth-century facsimile of the Declaration that hangs behind my desk in my home office.

My wife, Carolyn, who is the opposite of a collector, is known in the family as “Swoop,” because she throws away anything that’s not bolted to the ground. Opposites do attract. Carolyn tolerates my passion for collecting as long as I keep my stuff in my home office, which is overflowing with tchotchkes, books, old newspapers, art, and antiques. She is thinking about imposing a new rule: for every new purchase, I have to get rid of something of equal size. I can’t. I won’t! Off-site storage seems like a reasonable compromise.

My wife and I do share a passion for collecting real antiques and art. In general, we have to agree on an object before we buy it, but we each have the right to buy art for

our own home offices, based on our individual tastes. Several years ago, my wife and I were in Los Angeles visiting my son, Elon, who is a film producer. As usual, I was looking for antiques and my wife was exploring one of her many passions—shoes. I walked down Melrose Avenue and saw a store with old amusement park gizmos on the sidewalk. (We have an old Coney Island bumper car in our living room.) When I went in, my eyes were drawn immediately to the rear third of an old Cadillac from the late fifties—you know, the ones with the enormous fins and shiny chrome. Some enterprising artist had turned it into a couch, with the trunk as the seating area. It was beautiful.

It was also nostalgic, reminding me of my teenage years, when I and several friends chipped in to buy an old Caddy that barely worked. It went a mile on two gallons. Our interest was not in a driving machine, however, but in a place to make out with our girlfriends. We were more interested in the backseat than in the front. We made up for the cost of the car by renting out the backseat to friends. (Fortunately, nobody ever got beyond second base, so we could not be charged with operating a house—or a car—of ill repute.)

The Cadillac for sale on Melrose Avenue was a lot nicer and shinier than our beat-up old one, but it still evoked fond memories. I had to have it. But would my wife approve? I couldn't find her, and the salesman warned me that there had been a lot of interest in the car-sofa. So I bought it, rationalizing the decision by thinking that I could always shoehorn it into my home office. To my delight, Carolyn loved it as much as I did, though she pleaded the Fifth to my rigorous cross-examination about *her* teenage experiences in the backseats of cars. The Cadillac now sits proudly in our living room (next to the bumper car) and has frequently been photographed for magazine spreads about our home.

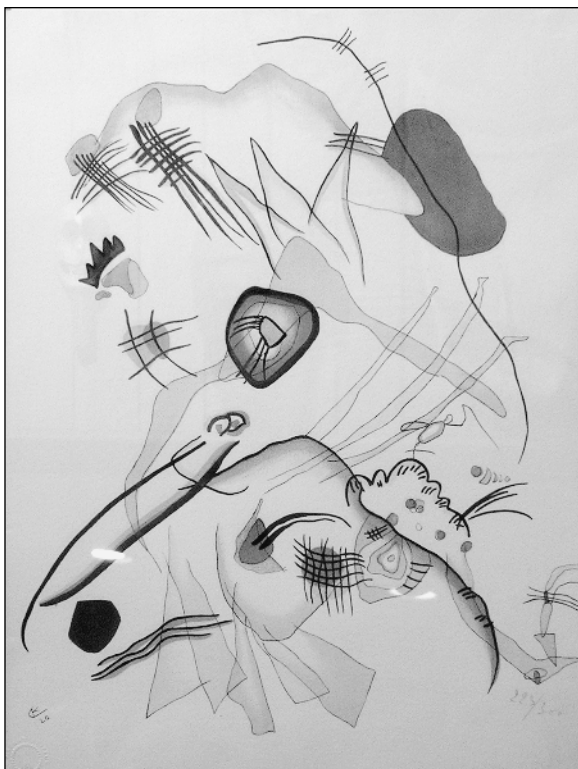


This photograph appeared in a Boston Globe article about my collections (“Inside This Crusty Lawyer Is a Warm and Cuddly Collector,” July 24, 2003). My wife, Carolyn—aka Swoop—is a good sport when it comes to my collecting. To my delight, she loved the Cadillac sofa pictured here at right as much as I did.

Carolyn and I do not always agree, however, about my large acquisitions. Following the Cadillac coup, I became overconfident and bid at an auction on an enormous painting by the mid-twentieth-century French-Jewish artist Mané-Katz. It shows a young Talmud student trying to study a sacred text but becoming distracted by the image of a voluptuous nude woman hovering over him. That was me in elementary school, and I thought Carolyn, who loves art from that period, would share my enthusiasm. Boy, was I wrong. She hates its “cartoonish” look, and she isn’t crazy about the theme. So into my office it went, on a back wall where Carolyn doesn’t have to look at it when she pops in to say hello. (If anyone is interested in buying the Mané-Katz, I suggest that you call my wife when I’m not home. She might offer you a really great deal!)

I never thought I could afford to collect great art, since I had always lived on a budget. But I bought my first piece of real art for \$25 in 1965, when I was a twenty-six-year-old assistant professor. I was sent on an all-expenses-paid trip to Paris by the dean of the law school. His pretense was that he wanted me to look at schools of criminology, but I have always suspected that he really wanted to expose me to European culture, since I was probably the only Harvard faculty member who had never traveled abroad. Although I still spoke with a Brooklyn accent and certainly didn't exude culture, I had always loved classical music and opera (as evidenced by the fact—for which my wife and kids have never forgiven me—that I turned down a chance to see the Beatles in concert during my Paris trip and instead went to a mediocre performance of *Rigoletto* at the Paris Opera House, where the Chagall paintings on the ceiling were better than the singing on the stage). I also have always loved art and spent considerable amounts of time in museums—once for a sustained period of time when I was suspended from high school for throwing a dummy of myself off the roof. (I tell the full story in my book *The Best Defense*, on page 12.)

While in Paris, I went to a number of art galleries. At one of them I saw a Kandinsky lithograph with which I immediately fell in love (see the illustration on page 10). The asking price was the equivalent of \$50 (the franc was quite weak then), but I bargained the owner down to \$25. It still hangs proudly in our home and was recently appraised for considerably more than I paid. (So what? I'm never going to sell it!) In Paris I also bought an oil painting by a Lithuanian artist named Vytautas Kasiulis, who I thought would be the next Picasso. It, too, hangs in obscurity in my home office. I paid an immense sum for it—at least by 1965 standards: \$200. It's now worth at least half that.



I purchased this Kandinsky lithograph during a trip to France when I was twenty-six—an all-expenses-paid mission by the dean of Harvard Law to get me a little “cultcha.” It was a good find at only \$25; since then, good finds in my collection have been known as “Kandinskies.”

The Kandinsky purchase was the first of many. Some turned out to be what we refer to in my family as “Kandinskies”—bargains that became far more valuable. Others turned out to be “Kasiulises.” Not all of our art is great, but each piece reminds us of something we experienced. I’m reminded of the bon mot by the director of a

French museum, “Certainly we have bad paintings, [but we] have only the ‘greatest’ bad paintings.” I have at least one “bad” drawing; it is a signed series of sketches of faces drawn by Picasso on the back of a French menu. I suspect he paid the bill—39 francs—with the drawing. Today we own more than a hundred pieces of art—none very valuable, but most of them fine works that we treasure. (Because of their sentimental value to us, we have a top-of-the-line security system to



This painting, by a more or less unknown Lithuanian artist named Vytautas Kasiulis, was less of a find than the Kandinsky and less of a bargain. Inauspicious purchases are thus known as “Kasiulises.”

protect them, so don't get any ideas!) Some of our art now hangs in the homes of my children, which gives us great pleasure.

Over the years I have found a watercolor by the late-nineteenth-century impressionist Paul Signac in an old frame at a flea market (I paid \$75 for it), an early pen and ink Rockwell Kent drawing at a book fair, a Dalí lithograph in a California junk store, and an alleged drawing by Egon Schiele in a rural French flea market. The Schiele is probably a fake or a student drawing (I paid \$50), but I also have a real Schiele, which I bought at an auction (for considerably more). We own four related pieces of art—all bought separately—by four Jewish artists who lived in the same house in Montmartre during the second decade of the twentieth century. When we purchased them, we were not aware of the connection. The first is a painting (a self-portrait) by Chaim Soutine, the second a drawing by Amedeo Modigliani, the third a painting by Mose Keisling, and the fourth a sculpture by Ossip Zadkine. Although their styles are quite different, they were called the “emotional school,” probably as the result of some Jewish stereotype. After we learned of the connection, we bought a drawing of Soutine by Modigliani. Keisling was also sketched by Modigliani, but I was outbid for it at a recent auction.

I always buy items of Judaica that I come across in Germany, Poland, and other European countries, since I consider it almost a sacred obligation to liberate these remnants of the Holocaust and return them to Jewish hands. I intend to donate the ones that my family doesn't want to keep to Jewish museums. Once, on a visit to Munich, I saw in an antique shop window a Jewish pocket watch with Hebrew numerals and the words *Shana Tova* (a good new year) engraved on the back. When I bought it, the store owner

asked me in broken English whether I was interested in “more items like that.” Thinking that he was referring to Jewish items, I said yes. He then took me to a back room and retrieved a box from the closet. He opened it and showed me dozens of items of Nazi memorabilia, some with Jewish stars—armbands, ID cards, and the like. This is what he meant by “items like that.” Nazi memorabilia cannot be sold or displayed openly in Germany, so he kept these objects in the back room, displaying only the “Jewish” items. I bought a small doll of Hitler with a movable arm that performed the “Führer salute.” I wanted people to see what some Germans are still buying. I display it in a corner, facing an American World War II Hitler doll whose large rear end is a pincushion. If only voodoo had worked!

I have a considerable collection of old and not-so-old anti-Semitic posters and hotel ads that exclude Jews, but my prized possession within this genre is an actual blood libel leaflet from Nuremberg dated 1492 that portrays a Jew “bleeding” a Christian child for Passover matzoh. It calls for revenge against the Jews.

I have a large collection of Yiddish postcards—particularly, New Year’s cards from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many are remarkably secular, featuring new inventions like the airplane, the phonograph, and the radio. I also collect photographs, drawings, and books relating to the French trial, conviction, and ultimate vindication of Alfred Dreyfus. I have a prayer book from the Polish city of Przemyśl, where my grandfather once lived. It was published there on the eve of the Holocaust and managed to survive, though its owners almost certainly did not. It has a wine stain on the page with the Kiddush (the blessing over wine). I often think of the child, now long gone, who spilled the wine while making Kiddush, as I intone the same prayer

seventy years later. When I visited the city of Przemyśl in the 1990s, the official who showed us around denied that a Jewish community had ever been there. I sent him a Xerox of the first page of the prayer book showing that it had been published by a Jewish publishing house in Przemyśl in 1936.

I used to own a valuable collection of “Responsa” volumes by eminent Jewish legal scholars dating back to the sixteenth century. These books contained legal opinions given in response to questions put by members of the community on the widest range of religious and secular issues. They constituted the “common law” of the Jewish people. Recently, I donated my collection to the Harvard Law School. I kept one volume of responses from the Holocaust written by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry.

My Judaica collection includes a remarkable Marrano chalice with a fascinating history. When the Jews of Spain were required, on pain of death, to convert to Catholicism, many merely pretended to do so but secretly continued to practice Judaism. The converts were called “Marranos,” which means “pigs,” and those who continued to practice Judaism were called “crypto-Jews.” From the outside, the Marrano chalice appears to be an ordinary silver decorative object, but when it is taken apart, it contains secret compartments that hide Jewish religious objects, such as a scroll of Esther, Sabbath and Chanukah candelabras, a mezuzah, a Kiddush cup, and a spice box. It tells an important story of Jewish persecution and resilience. It is among my most prized possessions, and it became a “character” in one of my novels (*Just Revenge*, published in 1999). I lend it out to schools to bring alive the history of the Inquisition.

In 1989, my wife and I spent the Passover holiday in Egypt, where we attended one of the last seders in the home of an old Jewish-Egyptian family in Cairo, which is now



A Marrano chalice from my collection of Judaica. I love pieces with an interesting history. This chalice was used by Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism during the Inquisition. On the outside it appears ordinary, but within it contains secret compartments for hiding Jewish religious objects.

without a significant Jewish presence. The next day we were taken by our Muslim guide to the Jewish cemetery, where the caretaker sent his grandson into a small cave in which the Jews of Egypt—there had been a large Jewish population until 1967—had buried their sacred books. It is called a *geniza*. (This was not *the* famous *geniza* discovered a century ago, but a smaller, more local one.) He came out of the cave carrying some old scrolls and books. He showed them to us and was about to toss them into the trash bin. I asked whether I could have them. He gave them to me, and I stuffed them into my pockets and Carolyn's handbag.

When we got back to our hotel and could inspect them, they turned out to include some real treasures: the first part of a seventeenth-century Torah scroll, an old Passover

Haggadah, a cardboard sign from the front of a synagogue, and an invitation to a Hebrew concert during World War I. When my daughter was bat mitzvahed fourteen years later, we presented her with the framed Torah fragment since it contained the Torah portion she read in the synagogue.

I also collect antiquities, ranging from Canaanite idols to Greek, Roman, and Etruscan statuary. (I am fortunate that an old friend from Cambridge, whose family owned a wonderful antiquities shop on Brattle Street—which became Burdick’s Chocolates, so I can’t complain—is now in charge of antiquities at one of the major auction houses.) One of my favorite antiquities is a four-thousand-year-old Syrian mold from which multiple gods—talk about polytheism—could be shaped out of clay. Another is a three-thousand-year-old erotic sculpture—from the Arabian Peninsula—of a couple engaged in an exotic form of sexual intercourse. Such a sculpture produced in today’s Saudi Arabia would result in an exotic form of punishment.

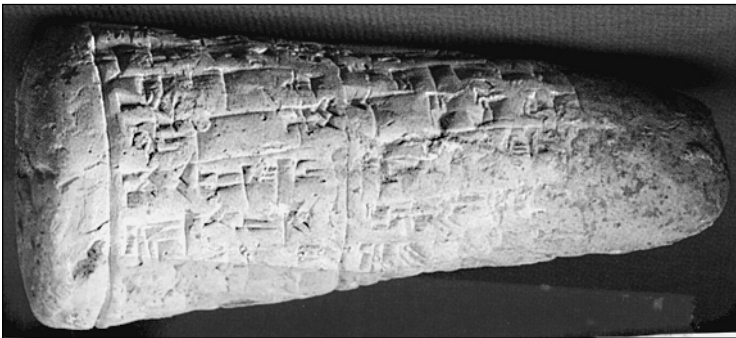
Several years ago, I represented a British antiquities dealer who was accused of peddling fakes. He offered to pay me in—you guessed it—antiquities, which he insisted were real. Although we eventually won the case, I still demanded to be paid with money. (“Would you want to be represented by a lawyer who would accept payment in antiquities from a client who was accused of selling fakes?” I asked him rhetorically.) He did, however, give me an antiquity as a bonus. I checked it out. (I had to, because I needed to pay tax on its value.) It’s real.

I have a stone façade from a first-century synagogue, an Egyptian sarcophagus, a Roman mosaic, an Etruscan head, a pre-Columbian sculpture of a “Thinker,” and a Byzantine cross. One of my Orthodox uncles was appalled by my placement of Jewish religious objects in close proximity to

Christian, Muslim, and heathen objects, but my placement decisions are made on aesthetic, not religious, grounds. For example, the ancient sarcophagus hangs opposite a brightly colored contemporary “sarcophagus” by Keith Haring.

One of my favorite antiquities, because it deals with the law, is a nearly four-thousand-year-old “building cone” from Sumer. It contains an inscription by King Lipit-Estar, who wrote one of the earliest legal codes in history, which was a source for the Code of Hammurabi and the Bible. The inscription reads as follows:

I, Lipit-Estar, humble shepherd of Nippur, true farmer of Ur, unceasing provider for Eridu, [a] priest fit for Urek, king of Isin, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, favourite of the goddess Inanna, when I established justice in the land of Sumer and Akkad, I built the “House of Justice” by the irrigation canal, the pre-eminent place of the gods.



Objects that relate to the law, in particular, have a special attraction for me. This four-thousand-year-old Sumerian building cone contains an inscription by King Lipit-Estar, who wrote one of the earliest legal codes in history, which was a source for the Code of Hammurabi and the Bible.

I love objects that are both aesthetically beautiful and historically meaningful. My bias is toward objects that have a personal significance to me as a lawyer, as an American, as a Jew, and as an academic.

I have documents signed by Presidents James Madison, James Monroe, and Andrew Jackson, as well as by Henry Clay and Aaron Burr. I also have personal letters from modern presidents—Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, as well as an autograph collection of every president of the United States (including, I hope, the next one!).

The joy of collecting lies generally in finding an item that appeals to the collector's aesthetic, historical, or personal sensibilities. Finding the object is an end unto itself: holding in one's hand a piece of the original Dead Sea Scrolls (which I was allowed to do in the vaults of the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem), beholding the signature of one of the collector's heroes, and touching the piece of paper on which this person wrote. But the joy is magnified when the item has a value beyond the intrinsic—when it teaches us something we didn't know.

As I was writing these pages, I read a *New York Times* obituary of a man named Ira Brilliant, a Brooklyn native who in his life had done many great things, among which was to gather the finest private collection of Beethoven artifacts. I identified strongly with him when he was quoted as describing his feelings upon first seeing Beethoven's signature: "It's one of the most beautiful signatures I've ever seen. . . . The signature sparkled up at me. I washed my fingers and then I touched the letter in the corner and said to myself, 'I have accomplished what I wanted to do.'"

I have experienced that same joy. But I identified even

more strongly with Ira Brilliant when I read that he had acquired a lock of Beethoven's hair, which had both intrinsic value to him as a Beethoven lover and added value when he was able to test the hair and discover high levels of lead. This discovery led some medical historians to conclude that Beethoven may have met his early death—at age fifty-six—from lead poisoning. Not quite the Salieri-Mozart scenario of one musician being murdered by his jealous competitor, because lead was omnipresent in Beethoven's time, but still an addition to history. So the perfect historical find is one that allows the collector not only to hold something touched by, or written by, one of his heroes, but actually to use current expertise to expand our knowledge of the historical figure. I aspired to such a find.

As I was editing this book, I read the posthumously published autobiography of my law school classmate and friend James O. Freedman, the former president of Dartmouth. He, too, was a collector and posed the following question:

Why is it . . . that some people are collectors—indeed some people seem to have a genetic predisposition to collect—and others are not? Even young children, after all, feel the impulse to collect—baseball cards or postcards, seashells or colored stones, campaign buttons or license plates. And why is it that of those who are collectors, some choose to collect books rather than other objects?¹

Jim was an eclectic collector who “sometimes . . . wished that [my] collecting habits were less eclectic, so that my collection could achieve a greater coherence or a more specialized focus. But I assured myself that, for now, I was laying the foundations; I could begin to specialize in a later year.”

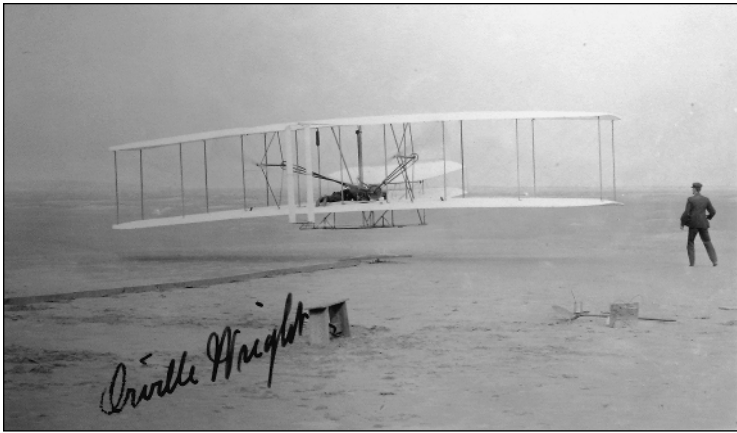
Jim quoted Congressman Cyrus King of Massachusetts during the debate over whether Congress should pay to acquire the great library of Thomas Jefferson: “The bill,” he said, “would put \$23,900 into Jefferson’s pocket for about 6,000 books, good, bad, and indifferent, old, new, and worthless, in languages which many cannot read, and most ought not.”²

Eventually, my friend Jim concentrated on books, especially autographed ones:

As my book collection grew—probably to several hundred volumes by the time I entered law school—I came to appreciate the special satisfaction of owning books signed by their authors. John Updike has written of the “fetish of the signature,” and decried the burden of facing lines of collectors, clutching one of his books and awaiting his signature, “As if a book, like a check, needs to be signed to be valid.”³

I, too, loved signed books, letters, and photographs, but I collect almost anything connected to my interests and those of my family. Recently I acquired an actual photograph of the first moment of manned flight, with Orville Wright at the controls and Wilber Wright observing. The photo was taken with Orville Wright’s camera and signed by him. My nephew Adam, who is an aeronautical engineer and pilot, will eventually own this important piece of history.

I roam flea markets, used-book stores, garage sales—and now, occasionally, eBay—in search of the perfect purchase. Mostly, I have found memorabilia from my youth—a Captain Midnight Ovaltine mug; a Captain Marvel tie pin; a *Hogan’s Heroes* lunch box; a Howdy Doody swimming tube; a Perry Mason cigarette lighter; items from the 1939

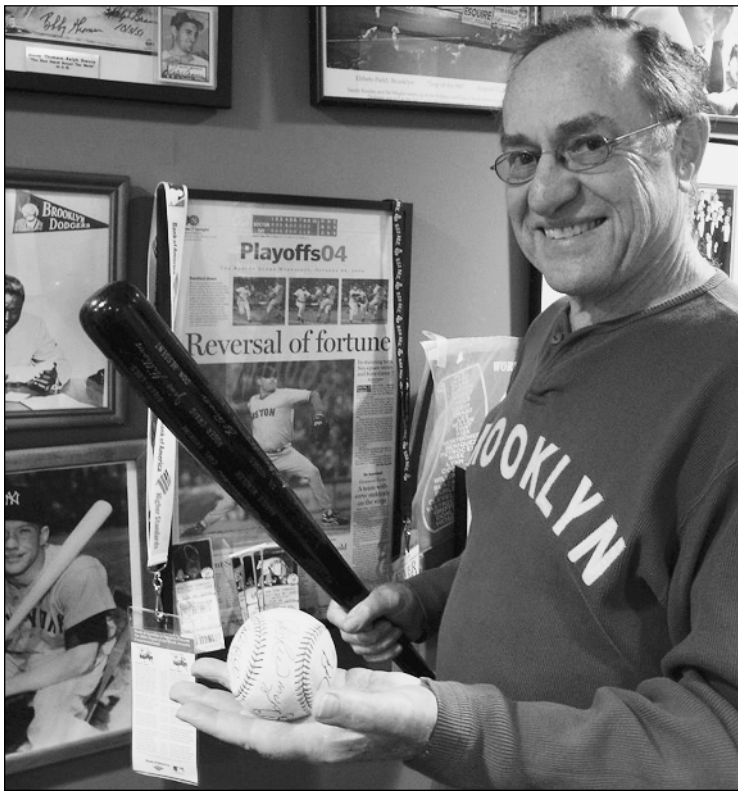


This photo with Orville Wright at the controls and Wilbur observing shows the first moment of manned flight. The photo was taken with Wilbur's camera and was signed by Orville.

World's Fair in New York, to which my parents took me in my baby carriage; and assorted comic books (some of which I could swear were the originals thrown out by my mother). When I come upon a piece of nostalgia, it makes my day. I reminisce, I call my old friends to brag about my find, I feel young. Then I feel old, but a good old. I once came across a copy of one of my own books, autographed by me to a friend, who obviously valued it so much that he sold it to a used-book store for two dollars. That didn't make me feel so good.

I thought I had made the perfect buy about five years ago at the Chilmark flea market on Martha's Vineyard, when I found a baseball bat autographed by the 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers—the only Brooklyn Dodgers team to win a World Series. Although the autographs were machine imprinted, still it was an authentic 1955 bat. I bought it from a Protestant minister who earns extra money selling sports memorabilia at

flea markets. We discuss the Bible, baseball, and the beach interchangeably. My kind of guy. A man who wanted me to take a case once gave me a Hank Greenberg bat. I took the case. Another guy gave me some Brooklyn Dodgers autographs to encourage me to speak to his group. A school at which I spoke presented me with a framed piece of Ebbets Field. I have several signed baseballs and basketballs



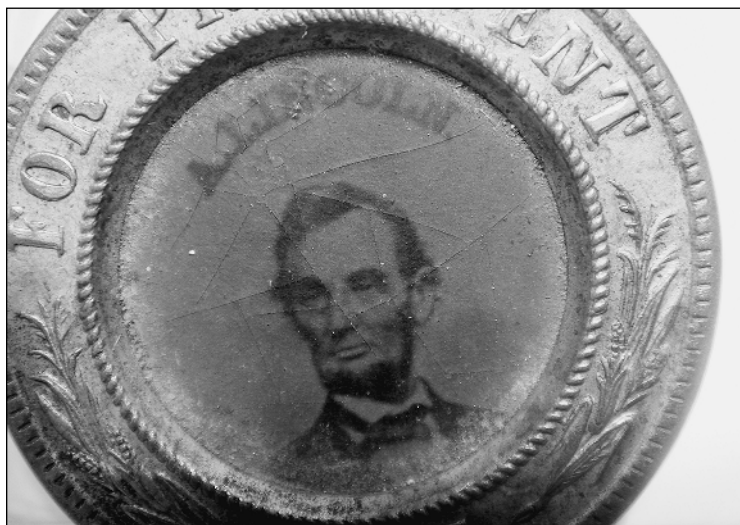
Here I am showing off one of the treasures I found at the Chilmark Flea Market: a 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers autographed bat that I bought from a Protestant minister. The baseball was autographed by Boston Red Sox players.

as well. I also have two old seats from Boston Garden signed by two of my basketball heroes, Larry Bird and Bill Russell. (My grandson Lyle, who is following in my dusty footsteps, talked Barry Bonds into signing his baseball.) This generally has been the nature of my finds and acquisitions.

Then about two years ago, I came upon a real treasure in the New York City flea market on Sixth Avenue and Twenty-fifth Street. A Russian man, from whom I had previously bought some Soviet war medals, called me over and asked, “Do you ever hear about some American president named ‘Link-lon?’” (as he pronounced it).

“Sure,” I replied, “Abraham Lincoln.”

“Well, whatever his name is, do you want to buy a small picture of him?”



Flea markets often have amazing treasures for those willing to look. I found this 1864 Abraham Lincoln campaign medallion at the flea market on Sixth Avenue and Twenty-fifth Street in New York City. The photo of Lincoln is pristine.

I asked to see it, and he produced from his pocket an 1864 campaign medallion, with a photograph of Lincoln on one side (I think it may be by the famous Civil War photographer Mathew Brady) and a photograph of Andrew Johnson, his running mate, on the reverse side. The Johnson photo is a bit damaged, but the Lincoln is pristine. I bargained him down from \$400 to \$225 and bought it. (I would have paid much more if I'd had to.) It is a remarkable historical item, and up until then my perfect purchase. (It's also my wife's perfect purchase, since it is so tiny.)

Having achieved the nirvana of flea-market purchases—short of an early version of the Declaration of Independence—I thought I was about ready to retire, perhaps not undefeated, since I had bought some fakes and other disappointing objects over the years (particularly on eBay, which provides little



I search for hidden treasures at the Chilmark Flea Market in July 2007.

protection against fraud), but still a tchotchke champion. I quickly discovered, however, that the pull was too strong. I was really addicted. There was something out there—in someone's garage, in an obscure flea market, in an old bookstore—that had my name on it, that I must have.

I continued to patronize the Chilmark flea market when I was on Martha's Vineyard, the Sixth and Ninth Avenue flea markets when I was in New York City, and my favorite used book stores. My passion remained unsated. There was still that one Holy Grail, that impossible flea-market dream, that remnant of a Dead Sea Scroll, that lost item of Americana, that missing piece of some puzzle. I had to find it.

And I did. On September 8, 2006, in an old bookstore in New York.

This is the story of what I found, how I found it, and why it is so important to me—and to history. But first, a few words about my other passion in life—my professional passion as a lawyer and a teacher—and how my two passions were simultaneously satisfied by what I found in that New York bookstore on that hot September day.

