

Spring 6-3-1983

## My Grandfather's Box

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### Recommended Citation

Bagdonas, Joseph B. (1983) "My Grandfather's Box," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 2 : No. 3 , Article 28.  
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol2/iss3/28>

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

*Forest is untrod den 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 capitolward  
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 stalks 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 Corra

by Joseph B. Bagdonas

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 souvenirs. 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 engraved 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 imagination 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 structure 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 different from the previous explanation.

I learned a great deal of the folklore and history of the people of Lithuania and Russia during these stories. Grandfather 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 everyone.

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 robins 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 perhaps, 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.



One evening, the box was out and Grandfather lit a cigar, Vol. 2, No. 3, P. 13  
 to start a story session when some neighbors dropped in. During the moment of welcoming, I relinquished myself to temptation and stole the box away. I hid it in the soft sandy soil of the garden. Back in the kitchen I found it impossible to spirit away the key while everyone sat visiting.

The next morning, before the family awoke, I took the key from its place and went to the garden. I dug confidently for the box where I had buried it. It wasn't there. I began to dig everywhere but no matter where I dug, no box. I panicked and nearly dug up the entire yard. I found nothing. In the course of my frantic digging I lost the key.

My apprehension was beyond belief. I knew Grandfather would notice the key missing. I knew I would have to face the music when asked about it and I would have to tell the truth, but how I dreaded it.

As time passed Grandfather made no mention of the matter. This bewildered me, for as weeks and months went by, the family teased me to no end about the missing box. Grandfather took no notice of this.

One day long after, while working the fields with him, I confessed to losing the box and key. He looked at me with an understanding smile and told me the box would be mine if I found it. Encouraged by his forgiveness, I asked what was in the box. He only said it would remain a secret until I found it and opened it myself.

His words occupied my mind from time to time but as I grew older there was school, work, dates and a world war to deal with. The matter of the box lost its importance.

During my service in the war, Grandfather died. When I returned to the farm I realized the secret of the little box would never be known to me.

As the years added to my age, I married and moved to a suburb of a large city. My family grew, and we visited the farm often.

On one occasion my son John, five years old, was playing in the front yard. We came out to sit on the porch after supper and noticed him digging in the soft sand of the garden. He was banging a toy shovel against something in the ground. Out of curiosity I walked over and was surprised beyond belief to find Grandfather's box there, with the old brass key in the keyhole.

I brushed away the dirt and picked it up. Its familiarity thrilled me. All the warm memories of my childhood and of my dear Grandfather came flooding back. I remembered his worn old hands as he brought the box to the kitchen, I felt again the warmth and contentment of our simple happy evenings.

The key worked hard in the lock, and I wondered wildly for a moment how the key and the box, lost separately, had come to be united.

After some effort I opened the lock and began to remove the small inner boxes. First the top one, it still contained the old bullet, tarnished medal, blackened spoon and a shriveled and mildewed leather thong. My excitement mounted as I opened the second box. Just as I remembered, it contained a black stone, a tassel, some moldy coins and what was once a feather.

My hands now held the mysterious third box and with a determination built through the years, I opened it.

It was empty. Although I stood alone, I was startled by a chuckle. It was Grandfather's chuckle, I was sure. I felt close to him again and I knew this little box would always remain one of my most precious possessions.

All these years my curiosity had burned with a great desire and now it was satisfied. I felt no disappointment. I was glad the box was empty for anything I might have found in it would not have satisfied me.

Its emptiness was like a drained glass, the drinker having already been satisfied.

THANK YOU TIMMY'S ANGEL  
*Thank you Timmy's angel for watching over him  
 Whenever he is out of sight risking life and limb  
 Yes thank you Timmy's angel for "covering your beat"  
 When he's preoccupied with thoughts while walking down  
 the street  
 He not always remembers that cars go speeding by  
 He's busy kicking pebbles or looking at the sky  
 From the time he learned to walk and talk, (and especially  
 learned to climb)  
 You've always been behind him working over time  
 There've been collisions on the bike, snake bites on a hike,  
 So you've really been put to the test  
 It's time you took a vacation, you sure could use the rest  
 But don't forget to come back and again perch on his shoulder  
 I need you for a few more years while we've both growing  
 older!*

— Shirley Moravec

#### INTERMISSION AT THE BALLET

*Bodies claim and interpret space  
 with a potent grace,  
 reveling in the circumstance  
 of the evening's performance.*

*Fabric waves give way,  
 luminescences betray.*

*Intrude  
 on harmonious interlude.*

*A slab of light,  
 blatant white,*

*enters uninvited.  
 Elements ignited*

*severely expose  
 a consuming repose*

*before torsos unwrap,  
 wrinkled lap.*

*Breathing becomes normal,  
 return to formal.*

*Attire properly,  
 according to visibility.*

*Your movements halt  
 silence's assault.*

*An island made  
 of absent serenade.*

*Bashful immobility,  
 postponed agility*

*until darkness  
 induces the redress  
 of a naked stage  
 by studied personage.  
 Each to our place  
 an interruption to efface.*

Kimberly J. Kyp