



Ken's Korner

By Ken Hall

New children's book has an antiques slant



A new children's book titled "Grandpa For Sale" (Flashlight Press, \$15.95), is a funny tale about the value of family and friendship over money that takes place in an antiques shop. The book, written by Dotti Enderle and Vicki Sansum and illustrated by T. Kyle Gentry, was released into bookstores in April. It just might be the only children's picture book ever written with an antiquing theme. In any event, it's a fun way to introduce kids to antiques and collecting. The book is geared toward children ages 4-8 and has 32 fully illustrated pages.

Darwin's letters now on view at online site

Charles Darwin was one of the most important figures in the history of science. He forever changed our understanding of life on Earth. Now, nearly 5,000 letters to



and from the scientist, held in a database at the University of Cambridge in England, are available to the public online, in an effort called the Darwin Correspondence Project. There's a lot to look through; Darwin was a prolific letter writer, exchanging correspondence with nearly 2,000 people during his lifetime (1809-1882). He is best known for his book on evolution titled "On the Origin of Species."

Getty may return Aphrodite to Italy

The J. Paul Getty Museum in California appears close to returning one of its most prized artifacts to



Italy—a 2,400-year-old statue of the goddess Aphrodite (shown), acquired by the Getty in 1988 for \$18 million. Italy has been

pushing for the statue's return, arguing it was illegally excavated, in either southern Italy or Sicily. The museum concedes Italy is probably right. The statue's precise provenance (like that of many antiquities) is unknown. But the Italian government says its country has been looted in recent decades. A ban on antiquity exports was issued in 1939.

Italy and Greece (and many archaeologists) have been arguing for years that museums like the Getty actually encourage looters to ransack ancient sites because of the institutions' willingness to pay huge prices for their collections. The Getty has been at the epicenter of the dispute for the last ten years. Marion True, its former antiquities curator, remains on trial in Italy, answering to charges that she conspired to acquire looted objects for the museum. Meanwhile, in a goodwill gesture, the Getty unilaterally said it will return 26 of 51 other disputed artifacts to Italy.

Sunken treasure may be richest in history

The Tampa-based firm *Odysey Marine Exploration* recently



chartered a cargo jet to haul into the U.S. hundreds of plastic containers packed with 500,000 Colonial-era gold and silver coins it discovered in a shipwreck somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. The whereabouts of the wreck are unknown; *Odysey*, which has dubbed the project "Black Swan," will

not yet disclose the precise location of the find, nor the coins' condition or even country of origin. What is known is that the coins may be worth up to \$500 million to collectors and investors.

That figure is based on an educated guess that the coins—most of which are silver and in uncirculated condition, according to *Odysey*—will fetch an average of \$1,000 each, although their value will ultimately be determined by rarity, condition and the legend behind them. Court documents revealed that the booty may have come from the wreck of a 17th-century merchant vessel that sank with valuable cargo aboard, about 40 miles off the southwestern tip of England. If the coins do fetch \$500 million, it will be a new record for sunken treasure.

Studio makes 40,000 Silver Surfer quarters

In a publicity stunt designed to generate interest in the film "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer," which opened in



theaters June 15th, 20th Century Fox emblazoned 40,000 quarters with an image of the lead character, Silver Surfer. The coins were released into circulation on Memorial Day. Anyone finding one was invited to visit the movie's Web site and register to win a trip to the London premiere, or other prizes. The first four people to report finding a coin were promised a private screening of the film. The rest will probably end up on eBay.

The humble Frisbee sails into its 50th year

Frisbees—the simple flying discs, so-named (according to legend) because students at Yale University in the 1930s would throw pie tins from the *Frisbee Pie Company* and yell out, "Frisbee!"—turned 50 this year. The



universally recognized inventor of the Frisbee as we now know it was Fred Morrison, a former pilot who came up with a plastic disc that could be tossed. That was in 1948. Morrison

(who is still alive) said he was inspired by the popcorn tin lids he'd toss at family get-togethers. He called his invention the Pluto Platter. In 1957, Morrison sold his invention to *Wham-O*, the same novelty company that sold the Hula-Hoop. Six months later, *Wham-O* changed the name from Pluto Platter to Frisbee as a nod to the Yalies. In 1964, *Wham-O* added ridges to the top of the Frisbee, dramatically improving the disc's flight stability.

Mint introduces a John Adams coin

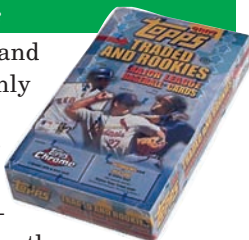
Are you collecting the gold-colored presidential dollar coins?



George Washington was introduced at the beginning of the year (and some were released as mistakes, with no lettering along the edges). The coins are being issued sequentially, in order as the presidents took office. The John Adams dollar coin has been introduced as the second one in the series. Much less is known about Adams than Washington, but he was an intriguing fellow, one of only two presidents whose son (John Quincy Adams) also became president. Adams was Washington's vice president.

Upper Deck wants to purchase Topps

Upper Deck and *Topps*—the only makers of licensed Major League Baseball cards—may soon be on the same team if a proposed \$10.75-a-share buyout (worth \$425 million) of *Topps* by *Upper Deck* is approved by shareholders. It's a case of the young upstart looking to buy the grizzled veteran. *Topps* is 70 years old and has printed some of the most coveted cards in baseball history. *Upper Deck*



is just 20 years old. It is the sole maker of National Hockey League cards. The deal, if OK'd, would put the \$700 million-a-year baseball card industry in a single company's hands.

Damien Hirst's skull is worth \$80 million



Artist Damien Hirst, 41, has created a diamond-encrusted human skull worth a staggering \$80 million. It is believed to be the most expensive piece of contemporary art ever made. The 18th century skull is covered in its entirety by more than 8,600 jewels. New teeth were made at a cost of about \$22 million. The centerpiece of the creation is a pear-shaped pink diamond, which has been set into the skull's forehead. The skull is real, bought from a shop in Islington (just outside London). It belonged to a European who lived between 1720 and 1810. Hirst said he was inspired by an Aztec turquoise skull he saw in the British Museum. He has titled the work "*For the Love of God*," and remarked, "I wouldn't mind if it happened to my skull after my death."

Falwell memorabilia is for sale on eBay

Since his death in May, Jerry Falwell has continued to thrive, at least online, where items associated with the late founder of the Moral Majority numbered over 300 on *eBay*. The memorabilia included an autographed bobblehead doll of the controversial evangelist holding a Bible (\$145); a Bible autographed in 1978 (\$90, with the money going to Falwell's Liberty University); a Falwell biography from 1976 (\$100, also donated to Liberty University); and a 1976 family photo Christmas card and set of Moral Majority tokens from 1983 (\$20 each).



Once ubiquitous items now gone

USA Today recently published a list titled, "The Long Goodbye: 25



Things That Have Left Us." Of those, some are intangibles, like indoor smoking, civility and the Soviet Union. But others are the stuff of a whole new genre of collectibles, the icons of our youth that no longer exist (except in our attics, drawers and storage boxes). Typewriters (shown), vinyl records, rotary dial phones, beverage pull-tabs and even carbon paper...when was the last time you saw any of these things (not counting in an old movie or TV show)? It's scary, but they're gone forever.

Rounding out the Top 25 are full-service filling stations; *New Coke*; the *Betamax*; phone booths; videos on *MTV*; the Baltimore Colts; the *Oldsmobile*; "*American Bandstand*;" the West African black rhinoceros; hand-crank car windows; hair bands (like *Poison*, *Ratt* and *Cinderella*); the afternoon newspaper; transistor radios; *Checker* cabs; and Michael Jackson. All have either disappeared or, in the case of Michael Jackson, are on extended hiatus (he's living in Bahrain, for the record).

Gold Afghan artifacts to be exhibited in U.S.



A deal struck between the National Geographic Society and the government of Afghanistan will bring a rare cache of gold artifacts to the U.S. in a traveling exhibition, beginning in May 2008 at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. The ancient pieces, part of the 2,000-year-old Bactrian hoard, will also be shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. The deal is worth \$1

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million, a figure some say is too low and that Afghanistan should be compensated more. The hoard includes over 20,000 pieces of gold jewelry, funeral ornaments and personal items from the Silk Road culture of Bactria, an ancient nation that comprised parts of what is now Afghanistan.

Original JFK death certificate is for sale



The original death certificate for John F. Kennedy—prepared after his assassination in 1963 but never

issued because of a typographical error—will be sold at a live auction, according to *Worldwide Group Auctioneers*, based in Indiana. The document listed Kennedy's address as 600 Pennsylvania Ave., not 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., and was about to be thrown away. Don McElroy, a funeral home worker who helped load Kennedy's casket into a hearse at Dallas Parkland Hospital, asked his boss for it. McElroy, now 68, has kept it all these years.

The Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas is reportedly interested in buying the flawed certificate. *Worldwide Group Auctioneers* originally posted it for sale on *eBay*, but pulled it down after not finding a buyer. It then issued a statement saying *eBay* was "the wrong venue" for a document of this importance and announced it would try again at a live auction. It is also trying to sell the hearse that carried Kennedy's body. A bid of \$910,000 was submitted at a recent auction held in Houston, but that fell short of the \$1 million asking price being sought for the historic vehicle.

Soldier's dog tag is found after 63 yrs

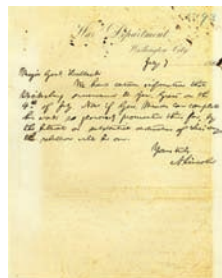
An Englishman combing Omaha Beach in France, site of the Allied D-Day landing in World War II, has discovered the dog tag of a 20-year-old American soldier killed during the battle. The tag belonged to Pvt.



William Bernice Clark of Huntingdon, Tenn., a small town about 90 miles west of Nashville. The tag was black with age, but still showed Clark's identification number, religion (Protestant) and blood type (O). It was returned to family members on June 6, exactly 63 years to the day that the D-Day invasion was launched in Normandy.

Note reveals Lincoln sought swift end to war

A handwritten note from President Abraham Lincoln to the front lines immediately following the battle of Gettysburg has been discovered



by a clerk at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. In the note, Lincoln writes that "the rebellion will be over" only if "Gen. (George) Meade can complete his work" through the "substantial destruction of (Gen. Robert E.) Lee's army." Meade led the Northern troops in the battle, seen by many as a crucial turning point in the war. He did not, however, follow orders and aggressively pursue Lee.

Archivist Trevor Plante said he was looking for something else when he found the note tucked away in a drawer. He realized he'd stumbled on something special when he recognized the handwriting and signature. The National Archives stores billions of pages of historical documents in a massive building on Pennsylvania Avenue. Gen. Meade has always been taken to task for not closing in on Lee's army. A week after Lincoln's note, the Confederate army slipped across the Potomac River into Virginia. The war dragged on for two more years.

Slave tunnel unearthed at Washington's home



Archaeologists digging at the remains of George Washington's presidential

home in Philadelphia have unearthed a hidden tunnel used by his nine slaves. The underground passageway was designed so Washington's guests would not see the slaves as they came in and out of the main house. City officials are now deciding whether the ruins should be incorporated into a new exhibit at the site. When he died in 1799, Washington had more than 300 slaves, most of them at his Mount Vernon estate in Virginia. In his will, he made arrangements for them to be freed.

Whale shot twice, 117 years apart!

Fishermen hunting off the coast of Alaska shot



and killed a 50-ton bowhead whale recently, and when the 49-foot male was carved up, a weapon fragment was dislodged from deep inside his blubber. It was later determined that the whale had been shot once before—117 years earlier, to be more precise. The 3 1/2" arrow-shaped fragment helped researchers estimate the whale's age—about 125 years. The lance fragment, which had lodged in a bone between the whale's neck and shoulder blade, was probably made in New Bedford, Mass.

Researchers also conjecture that the whaler who hunted this elusive catch probably fired his shot from a heavy shoulder gun, around 1890. The metal cylinder was filled with explosives and was meant to detonate within seconds of entering the whale. But because it entered in a non-lethal spot, it probably just annoyed the whale, which carried it around in his body for more than a century. Whales can live up to 200 years, although it's often difficult to discern their age, a process usually done by using amino acids in the eye lenses of the mammal. ■