

Remember That?

The dumbest souvenir you ever brought home



Uncle Bill Byerly's false teeth

Growing up on a small family farm in Davie County, we swapped tobacco primings with two other families during the 1940s and 1950s. As a young child, I was designated as a "hander" and worked dozens of days each summer in the shade with the women and children of the other families while the grown men pulled tobacco in the fields. It was here that many of the family's culture, values, understandings and tribal stories developed. Three or four generations worked together with many of the old grandmas who had lost most of their teeth, and there was much talk about someday getting enough money to buy a set of false teeth. Interestingly, in this era, many of the older men had dental plates, but the women did not.

My father's 85-year-old uncle died around 1950, and I went to his estate sale with two quarters in my pocket hoping to buy a hot dog or barbeque sandwich. The auctioneer put Uncle Bill's set of false teeth up for sale and no one bid on them. When the auctioneer asked if anyone wanted them for 25 cents, I forgot about the food and could not pass up this bargain, having heard the old women talk about false teeth costing \$300 or \$400.

I could not believe my good fortune and ran the whole half-mile home to bask in my mother's praise for the prudent, mature and valuable purchase. Her initial response, to my surprise, was to tell my daddy to immediately bury the set of teeth in the orchard. To her dying day, she never explained why she then chastised me for foolishness and wasting money.

*Sonny Koontz
Thomasville | EnergyUnited*

Coca

It was the early 1960s when my husband took my parents and me on our first trip to the "Big Apple." It was such an exciting time and a good break from tending four young daughters.

Television and radio game shows were just beginning, and we were fortunate to participate on both. The Coca-Cola TV-sponsored show "Finders Keepers" was one that played music to give clues for finding something hidden. "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" led me to the sugar canister, and I won the game. My choice of rewards was a cute, little white puppy or a watch. Thinking of my four little girls, and despite my husband's objection, I chose the puppy.

Yes, the puppy was car sick all the way home. Nevertheless, seeing four excited little girls awaiting souvenirs, and the years of joy Coca contributed to our family, made all our efforts worthwhile.

*Mary Southerland
Henderson*

Scorpie

Our grandson Nolan asked us to bring him a real live scorpion after hearing us say we were going out West. We promised we would try to get one for him.

While digging for dinosaur bones one day, my husband cried out, "Bring a cup of some kind!" I grabbed a cup and found my husband going after a scorpion. He said, "What a souvenir this will make for Nolan!"

We bought a container and put dirt, rocks and water into it. Being a woman, I don't like seeing a bug, but there I was collecting bugs and putting them into the container for the spider we had now named Scorpie.



After three weeks, we arrived home and gave Nolan his souvenir. Several months later, we received a phone call from Nolan: "Guess what? Scorpie had babies!"

What a surprise. We had taken a pregnant scorpion from out West and brought it to North Carolina. Later, Nolan told us a pet store gave him \$45 for each scorpion, and there were a dozen little Scorpies.

*Jewell Ross
Kings Mountain | Rutherford EMC*



Thanks to everyone who sent us their stories about souvenirs. You can see more on our Web site. Next month we'll publish your reports on how you have saved energy. (Deadline was March 15.) To see the other themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, go to page 17.

An environmental statement

This came from the beach in Mexico 12 years ago. I saw this rope which had seashells and other debris attached to it, plus other trash lying around. Instantly I wanted to incorporate it all into a work of art. After returning home, I created a mask, which I attached to a piece of plywood. I then attached the rope and other debris (including a syringe) in such a way as to communicate the fact that we are strangling on our own waste, and it is killing us.



I have been an artist and environmental activist for many years, and this is a message that gets more urgent every year. I wish I could have made it in such a way as to show that we are also killing off life in the oceans.

*Cynthia Strain
Highlands*

The old plow

The stupidest thing I ever brought home was an old 3-wheel plow that I begged my mom to get me at an auction in West Virginia. I was 14 at the time and we always raised a garden on that hill in West Virginia.

I had a 16-year-old brother, Ernie, who got the old plow out at planting time, and it was hard to push along. So he hooked me up to the big wheel and away we went around that hill. It wasn't too hard on him. He hollered to me to "go right, go left." Oh, what a headache and back ache I had.

*Jean Smith
Monroe / Union Power*

Presents from England

In April 1977, I was a junior in high school and was fortunate to travel to England. My parents worked hard saving their money for this once-in-a-lifetime trip, and I was determined to bring them back very nice souvenirs.

I bought two pieces of Royal Crown Derby English bone china from Stratford-Avon for my mother. She loved it!

As for my dad, well, let's just say I was so proud of his gift. I shopped at Harrods and bought him a genuine leather wallet for 20 pounds, which was equal to \$40 during that time. I presented him with the souvenir, wearing a big smile from ear to ear. He opened it and smiled and then laughed as he looked at the back. Much to my surprise were the following words embossed in the leather "Made in Canada."

*Tammy Johnson
Snow Hill / Pitt & Greene EMC*

D.C. feet memento

During the mid-1970s my church took a three-day trip to Washington, D.C. My husband could not go, so just my son and I went. I got a new pair of shoes for the trip.

We toured like crazy—the monuments, U.S. Mint, gardens, Smithsonian, The Capitol. My new shoes were hurting my feet so much, I took them off for a break. Then a security officer from the Smithsonian told me I had to put them back on.



Well, I went into a gift shop and this is what I found: a set of salt and pepper shakers shaped like a pair of feet. I certainly thought they were appropriate when I read the message.

*Marie Tyson
Farmville / Pitt & Greene EMC*

Sisters in business class



This is a photo of me on an airplane. I posed alongside my sister after a 14 ½ -hour flight. At first, the idea of a picture didn't seem that bad. My sister and I were excited! We couldn't wait to tell our mom and dad and all our friends. They would never believe that we were bumped up into business class without proof, but hey, here it was! Unfortunately, we looked like zombies. We had to pretend that we were "doing business" in business class, and instead we looked like two sisters who were suffering from insomnia. Ⓡ

*Ananya Mallavarapu
Matthews*

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

June 2007 One Time at Summer Camp

Your best summer camp story. Send photos, if you have any. *Deadline: April 15*

July 2007 Before Farmers Markets

Your stories of buying and selling farm products in the old days. *Deadline: May 15*

August 2007 The Class Prank

What's the best one you ever heard?
Deadline: June 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Summer Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com