

Sports and I

There was a time in this once boys life that relatives and friends thought that there was a remote chance of turning him into what they thought was a normal boy. I well remember the effort to indoctrinate him into the field of sports. Now there is nothing wrong with sports. The thing is that it has never been of importance to me.

It seems that from the very first my interest gyrated towards history, collecting and preservation. There is little doubt that my maternal grandfather had much to do with this choice. I do not know if he was involved with sports when he was young. I rather think his approach to sports was much the same as his feeling about playing cards. He said: "playing cards is the best way to waste time that I know of." So I guess like grandfather like grandson. My father showed no great interest in sports either until my brother came on the scene 18 years after I did. My own failing in relation to sports seemed to stem from not being synchronized if that is the proper word to use. When I tried to play baseball I did not catch the ball; it caught me someplace. An early attempt at baseball saw me as catcher. I was too close behind the batter. A very heavy bat caught me full in the nose. The blood flew and I do not like to see blood, mine or anyone else's either. That unused bat came to Stone Arabia in 1948 along with others. I sold them to a baseball collector, thus got a few dollars from someone who treasured them and I was glad to see them gone. I could have thrown it away years ago but throwing anything away was against my nature. That is another trait inherited from my thrifty ancestors.



That darned tennis racket.

On a recent visit to a close Amish friend he showed me recently acquired tools. Along with the tools he had a small tin can with a tight fitting cover. The lettering on the can read "gut" along with other instructions I fail to remember. Upon opening it I found the contents were to be used to string tennis rackets. I asked him why he had acquired it. He said: "I liked the can." I suppose he could have come with an answer that an old friend made to a similar question. He had some object whose use was unknown to him. When he was asked why he would bring something home like that his reply was: "Because I did not have one."

When I looked into that can and learned what it was for I thought of my experience with a tennis racket. As I said before, relatives had decided that normal boys were enthused with tennis. So they gave me a tennis racket. It stuck around during many of the years I lived along the creek at Marshville. My mother, harboring the same hope for me as others had, wrote my full name on one side and "Skippy" on the other. I suppose she hoped that would prevent its theft. She would not know that worry. It turned out much like the man who was injured trying to throw away a worn out boomerang. Here is the rest of the story as the saying goes. In 1948 when I left the home at Marshville I gathered my scanty collectables and things most people called junk for the trip to Stone Arabia. Across the road from the Cooks Corners house was a building with lots of storage space over head. That space caught lots of things including that tennis racket. There it lay for some 60 years unused and unwanted. Then came 2012 and the building was to be torn down. Friends were invited to take what they wanted, then a small amount was carted away with a truck. Then the Building was gone. All that remained was the foundation wall and the cement floor. It was raining when I made my last inspection of the stones in that foundation. I looked down at the wet floor and can you guess what I saw? There lay that darned old tennis racket in a pool of water. It seemed that anything that wanted to survive that much should be given the chance. It now lies with other things overhead of another old Stone Arabia building. I must admire its charmed existence.

Skip Barshied, Stone Arabia, June 25 2013