

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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One man's trash

Unused and forgotten keepsakes hold special places in students' hearts

By **Tori Foster**
THE BATTALION

When Courtney Flatt visits her parents she remembers a world before she was an independent college student. Her old bedroom is filled with many things indicative of a life before college. Some of the most important items lie upon a window sill next to her bed. The windowsill is the home to a collection of miniature perfume bottles her grandmother has given her over the years.

Though this collection may seem insignificant to other observers, these items hold a great amount of sentimental value to Flatt. Many people like Flatt may be criticized and labeled 'pack rats,' but within the clutter lies some of the owners' most valuable possessions. These items may have little monetary value, but the value each item has is seen through the eyes of the beholder.

"They are important to me because they remind me of my grandmother and all of the wonderful times I spent with her," said Flatt, a sophomore journalism major. "I cherish those memories, and I guess the bottles just have sentimental value to me."

When Flatt's grandmother began to give her the samples, she didn't know how important they would become to her. Some of the perfume bottles are cracked and empty, but Flatt said she cannot bring herself to discard any of the bottles.

"It makes me feel special that my grandmother would think of me," Flatt said. "They just remind me of how much she loved me and how much I loved her."

After Flatt's grandmother died two years ago, Flatt went to clean out her grandmother's house. She found several samples of perfume that her grandmother had been intending to give her.

"I think that the memories attached to certain objects are what keep people from throwing them away," Flatt said. "It's not that people will lose the memories if they get rid of their collections, it's that the collections are pleasant reminders of the memories."

Even though many closets and storage bins are filled with childhood blankets, things given by loved ones or even old birthday cards, all these possessions contain importance to the owners.

During hunting season, Konnie Schoenfeld, her brother and grandfather would travel to their ranch in Mason, Texas. During these hunting trips, Schoenfeld and her grandfather began to accumulate miniature condiments from 'Meals Ready to Eat' kits (MREs) that her grandfather had gotten from the military.

"I started collecting these when I was about 7," said Schoenfeld, a freshman biomedical sciences major. "I never really cared much for the condiments, but I thought the bottles were too neat to throw away."

Schoenfeld's grandfather had several friends in the military, so MREs were never a shortage for the grandchildren. The collection of condiments ranges from ketchup, mustard, relish, Tabasco sauce and sweet and sour sauce.

"My grandfather would give them to my brother and I," Schoenfeld said. "We weren't sure why he would bring them but we liked the idea of eating army food, even though we had plenty of other food to eat."

Seven years after her grandfather's death from cancer, Schoenfeld said she still clings to the condiments and the special value they hold for her. Schoenfeld made a shadow box that hangs above her bed at her parents' house for the collection.

"I've thought of throwing them away several times, but now that my grandfather has passed away I just can't bring myself to get rid of them," Schoenfeld said. "I wouldn't even think of moving the shadow box for fear that they would break."

While Schoenfeld does keep things that would seem like trash to other people, she said she tries to limit the items to things of sentimental value.

"Most people think the condiments are neat, probably because they qualify more as collectibles than some of the other random possessions people might keep," Schoenfeld said. "They are pretty much priceless because MREs aren't really made with mini condiments like those anymore. They are also priceless to me because my grandfather gave them to me, and we were very close."

While many people keep things to remind them of loved ones who have died, some people say they keep things to remind them of joyful times spent with friends.

During elementary school, Andrea Stryk, a sophomore agricultural development major, would spend her time on a ranch where her best friend's father was foreman. The ranch was owned by an older man named Mr. O'Connor who had moved into town.

During one summer, the two girls decided to explore the older man's garage. After digging through boxes Stryk found an old khaki derby hat and a baby blue clip-on bowtie. Now in college, Stryk is still unable to part with the old clothing.

"These items are now important to me because Melissa was my first best friend and just to glance at them reminds me of the fun and crazy things we would do on the ranch," Stryk said. "We always found ourselves in the middle of mischief no matter how much we tried not to."

Even though she keeps the hat and bowtie in the attic at home, she said she won't think about disposing the pair of articles.

"I think what keeps me from throwing them away is that they are one of the last strings that I have from our friendship because I moved away that summer and we drifted apart," Stryk said. "So I guess I like to keep them because just by seeing them brings back a rush of memories of all the times we spent together."

When people see the hat and bowtie, Stryk said she usually receives strange looks and most people don't understand why she would continue to keep an old man's clothing.

"People really don't understand the significance that the items have to me, so most of the time they aren't even interested in hearing why I treasure them so much," Stryk said.



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Schoenfeld said possessions may seem trivial to a bystander but within each object lies something much more priceless.

"Sentimental value can mean far more to a person than things of monetary value," Schoenfeld said. "It kind of goes with the saying 'money can't buy happiness.' I can always look at these possessions and be reminded of the good memories I have had with my grandfather but I can't think of many things of monetary value that cause the same reaction."

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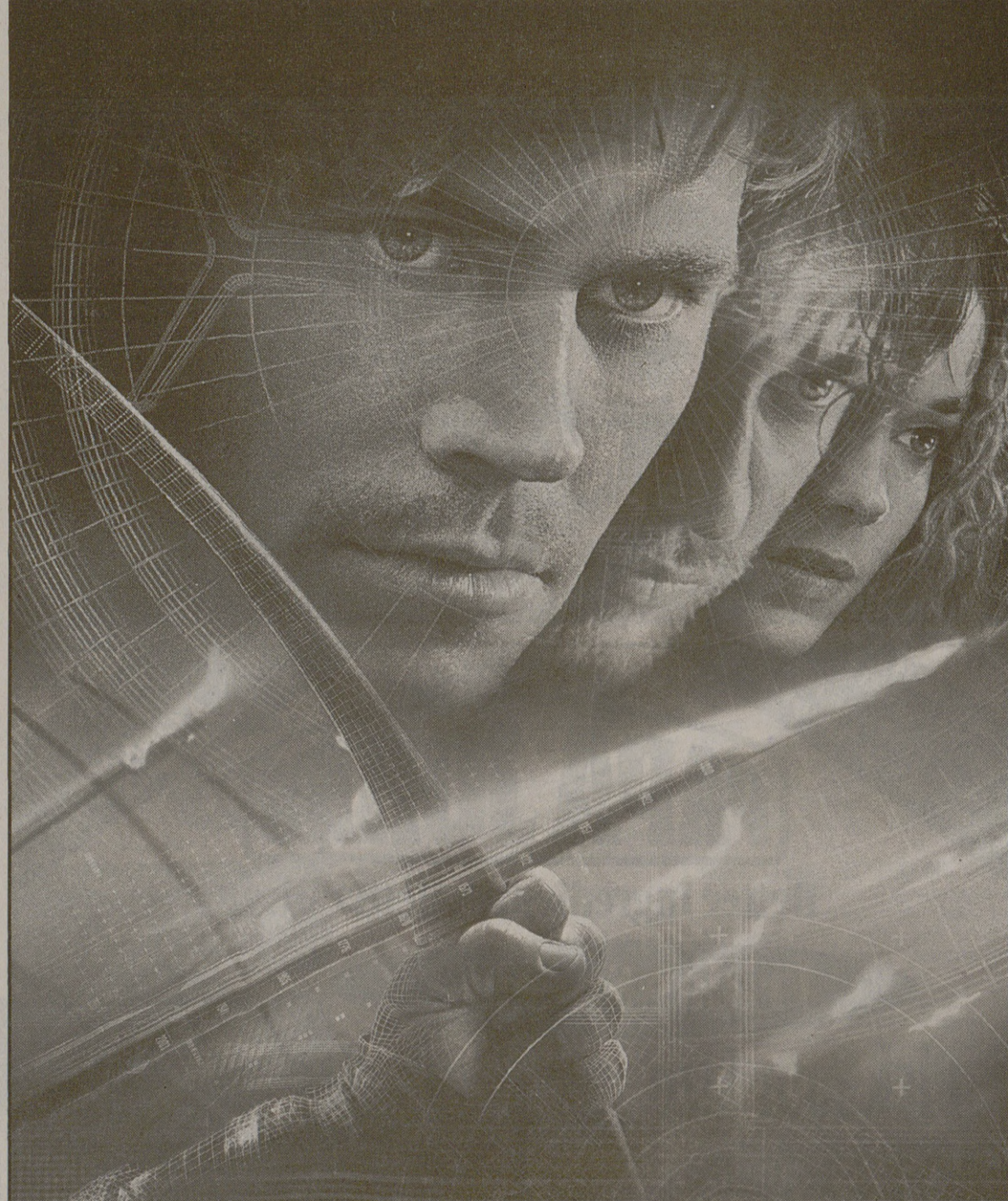
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