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Thunder-Sky, Inc.

Jim Bowsher and the
Temple of Tolerance

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**Artifacts from
the Collection of
Jim Bowsher**

Jim Bowsher has amassed thousands of unusual objects in his lifetime. He keeps detailed records of the provenance of each object, and weaves this information into the stories he tells. Secret histories, forgotten moments in time, and the lives of extraordinary individuals are all preserved in Jim’s storytelling. His collection spans subjects and genres: the Civil War, folklore and superstition, the Ku Klux Klan, murderers and World War II are all well-represented.

The artifacts exhibited here are a small sample of Jim’s vast collection.

1

Thoreau’s Spoon

Jim Bowsher met Roland Robbins, a pioneer in the field of historical archaeology, in 1967. Robbins discovered the remains of Thoreau’s cabin at Walden Pond in 1945, publishing the book *Discovery at Walden* about the find. After meeting Robbins and learning of the cabin’s true location — not the spot where commemorative markers place it — Jim relocated the site and discovered the rotting logs of the cabin’s walls and this spoon belonging to Thoreau.

2

Tintype of the Quaker Killer

This tintype was found in a box with the words “Fayette County Court #228” carved into its lid. Two things are immediately striking about the photo: the subject’s enormous ears, and the paper-wrapped package he’s holding for a posed studio photograph. Through his network of like-minded acquaintances, Jim Bowsher was put in touch with a collector of Quaker memorabilia, who believes the man in the photo to be the “Quaker killer.”

Believing himself too homely to find a wife, the Quaker man was overjoyed to find a woman who expressed interest in him. However, another suitor intervened and convinced the woman that the man's homely appearance was a reflection of his dark soul. Jilted by a woman he had hoped to marry, the man, a butcher by trade, murdered and butchered her. He wrapped her "heart and other organs" in paper and brought the package to the local police along with a signed confession, stopping along the way to have his photo taken.

3

Jim Bowsher Report Card

Daydreaming in school seemed to be a regular state-of-mind for Jim Bowsher, as his second- and fourth-grade report cards and senior-year detention slip attest.

4

Improved Order of Red Men Mask

The Improved Order of Red Men is a fraternal organization, established in 1834, which models its rituals and regalia after those of American Indians — rather, what white men assumed to be Indian customs, as the Improved Order until 1974 was for white men only. The group has its roots in the Sons of Liberty, the secret society of colonists who in 1773 disguised themselves as Mohawks to raid British ships in Boston harbor and dump overboard chests of English tea. The organization is still in existence with an estimated 15,000 current members. The mask dates to the early 20th century and was used in "adoption" ceremonies for new members.

5

Hair Wreath

The House of David is a religious society co-founded in 1903 by Benjamin and Mary Purnell in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Men in the group were forbidden to cut their hair; members were also celibate, had vegetarian diets and refused to serve in war. The group had its own amusement park, zoo, hospital, schools, and dozens of businesses, and fielded a popular and successful barnstorming baseball team until the 1950s. This wreath is made from the hair of Benjamin Purnell which was shorn upon his death in 1927, along with that of other House of David members.



Auglaize Jail discovery

Local historian/archaeologist Jim Bowsher, Wapakoneta, displays the parlor pistol and brick he found in the old sheriff's residence. Bowsher found the gun's hiding place behind the brick marked by three X's just hours before demolition of the old Auglaize County Jail began Monday. Behind the brick is a groove, large enough for the pistol to rest. The brick was placed in the facade of the fireplace. The pistol is of 1860s vintage, according to Bowsher, a worldwide treasure hunter who has gained respect from professionals at the Ohio Historical Society and Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. (See story on Page 1.)

6

Brick and Pistol

When the old Auglaize County Jail in Wapakoneta was scheduled to be demolished, Jim convinced the demolition crew to allow him one last walk through the building. Spotting a brick marked with three X's in the facade of a fireplace, Jim pried it open to discover an 1860's parlor pistol hidden in a recess behind the brick.

7

Muskrat Traps

One of the questions Jim asks in interviews of elderly people is "Did anything unusual happen in your life?" When a man in a North Star, Ohio nursing home replied that he had seen Annie Oakley shoot at his cousin's farm, and described the rifle she was shooting — an ornate gun made in Switzerland — Jim realized he had a new mystery to investigate.

The man described how his uncle had hung four muskrat traps on the door of his barn, and Annie Oakley had shot each trap through the pan from nearly 100 yards away. Jim and the man were able to locate the area where the farm once stood. Jim discovered the remains of the home and barn, and excavated the rusted muskrat traps. The pan he recovered is clearly shot through the center. Jim also found shell casings which were tested by a ballistics expert, who confirmed they were fired from the Annie Oakley rifle in question.

8

Anna-John Budd

Anna-John Budd, "The Half Woman – Half Man," performed in sideshows in the 1930s. Her left side appeared female, her right male. She was 70 years old when Jim Bowsher interviewed her in 1971. During the interview, it became apparent that her male and female halves each had their own persona, and remarks from one persona would be commented on by the other. For example, when Jim asked about performing in a freak show, Anna replied that her self-esteem is higher than John's, so it didn't bother her. John retorted that he was just more sensitive than Anna.

Anna-John agreed to mail Jim this pamphlet from early in her career. As Jim was leaving the interview, he heard the two personas conversing quietly. At the door, Anna-John said they had decided

to give Jim an ashtray, which features a man's face when viewed from one direction and a woman's from the other. It's uncertain whether the ashtray is a souvenir from Anna-John's sideshow career.

9

African American History Award

Jim Bowsher received the 2012 African American History Award for his research and teaching of the history of the Ku Klux Klan in the Wapakoneta area. The award is sponsored by the Lima Family YMCA Black Achievers Program and the Ohio State University–Lima Office of Institutional Diversity.

10

Cowbell

In the early 1890s, Columbus, Ohio, was terrorized by a series of brutal Jack-the-Ripper-style slayings ... of cows. The Columbus “Cow Fiend” began his reign of terror in 1892 with the butchering of a cow owned by dairyman John Gorman. This was quickly followed by the mutilation of cows owned by a dairyman named Clifford, C.I. Powell, Joseph Dawson and again, John Gorman. In all, from eight to a dozen or more cows were killed (accounts vary.)

Police discovered an abandoned building containing a bloody cowhide and other cow parts, as well as a small grindstone. Staking out the site, they discovered Jud Holland “skulking along the street,” eventually entering the building carrying a large bundle which he discarded when he was pursued. The bundle was found to contain several pieces hacked from a cow. Holland was arrested and in 1900 died in prison.

This bell is from a cow owned by J.W. Downs, one of the victims. Downs' cow had been partially skinned alive and hacked at with an ax. The bell was given to Jim by the parents of broadcaster Hugh Downs, who are related to cow owner J.W. Downs.

11

Ticket to the World's Columbian Exposition

This ticket to the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, was found in the home of notorious serial killer H.H. Holmes and likely belonged to one of his victims. Holmes and the nine confirmed murders he committed are memorialized in the 2003

book *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson. The ticket was given to Jim Bowsher by Mrs. Jesse Crawford, whose relative Thomas G. Crawford was a detective investigating the Holmes case. Mrs. Crawford was Jim's fifth-grade teacher, making this ticket acquired nearly sixty years ago one of the earliest objects in Jim's collection.

12 Eagle Sculpture

During World War II, a group of approximately 345 men and women from fourteen nations, known as The Monuments Men, shared a common goal: to save cultural treasures from the destructiveness of war and theft by the Nazis. Throughout the war and its aftermath, they worked to locate and recover looted objects and return them to their rightful owners. By the time the last Monuments Man left Europe in 1951, the group had overseen the return of five million cultural objects, four million of which had been stolen.

This cast eagle was found by a Monuments Man in Neuschwanstein Castle in southern Germany. The Nazis had fled the castle with much of the stolen artwork, with The Monuments Men in hot pursuit; the eagle had likely been broken off of a larger sculpture or fountain during their hasty departure.



Video of spinning fob

13 Watch Fob

This watch fob from the 1920s belonged to KKK Grand Dragon William Creighton "Creight" Leathers. The fob is decorated with three vertical lines on one side, and three chevrons on the other. When spun on its horizontal axis, the decorations visually merge to form the letters KKK.

14 Carved Luger Pistol

Sergeant Maurice Glanthier was eighteen years old and on leave when this photo was taken in March 1943. One year later, on the night of March 20, 1944, he was forced to parachute from his downed aircraft and captured by German soldiers.

Maurice was transferred along with a number of other Allied prisoners to a POW camp in Germany. Long-time prisoners of the camp were already planning an escape attempt through a tunnel they had secretly been building when Maurice and the other new

POWs arrived. Suspicious of the newcomers, the prisoners were careful not to share plans of their upcoming escape. But neither they nor the guards were concerned with “Mad Maurice.”

Traumatized by the ordeal of his capture, Maurice spent his days talking and laughing to himself while gathering scraps of wood and sticks which he used to build meticulous aircraft models. (Many of these models are now found in German museums.) Guards allowed Maurice to carry a sack which he stuffed with his findings. On the night of the escape attempt, prisoners were dismayed to see Maurice approaching with his sack. They were concerned that Maurice, in his addled state, would divulge the tunnel’s existence to the German guards.

But the Maurice that approached them was no longer mad. Speaking rationally, Maurice argued that escapees would require weapons to “get the drop” on the guard whose outpost was near the tunnel’s exit. Opening his sack, Maurice revealed a number of carved German Lugers which he had secretly been making. The wooden guns were instrumental in the prisoners’ successful escape.

15

Handcuffs

These handcuffs belonged to Robert Evans, of Celina, Ohio. For five years Evans was a guard at Spandau Prison in Berlin, Germany. During his tenure Evans guarded only four prisoners: Rudolf Hess, deputy fuhrer to Adolf Hitler; Walter Funk, Hitler’s economic minister; Albert Speer, armament minister; and Baldur von Schirach, head of the Hitlerjugend Nazi youth army. All four men were convicted of war crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg trials following World War II.

Rudolph Hess was the last of these prisoners to die, living for more than forty years in solitary confinement including the last fourteen as the sole inmate at Spandau. Hess took his own life by hanging in 1987.

After serving in Germany, Robert Evans went on to work as a guard at the Ohio Penitentiary and at a federal prison in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where he watched over Jimmy Hoffa among other less famous inmates.

16

Paper Fan

This damaged paper fan was salvaged from the wreckage of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, following

the 1963 bombing which killed four young African-American girls. Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley, all fourteen years old, and, Carol Denise McNair, eleven, were killed in the blast. More than twenty others were injured. Four Ku Klux Klan members, Thomas Edwin Blanton Jr., Herman Frank Cash, Robert Edward Chambliss, and Bobby Frank Cherry were suspected of the crime, but the investigation was formally closed by the FBI in 1968. The case was reopened in 1971, and in 1977 Robert Chambliss was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. The case was again reopened in 1995, with murder convictions following for Blanton in 2001 and Cherry in 2002; Herman Frank Cash had died in the interim.

17

Bent Crucifix

In July, 1948, Robert Daniels and John West went on a killing spree which resulted in what was then the largest manhunt in Ohio history. After the robbery and murder of Earl Ambrose in Columbus, Ohio, the pair sought out the home of “Red” Phillips, a guard at the Ohio Reformatory when Daniels and West were jailed there on robbery and grand larceny charges. By mistake, the murderous pair instead arrived at the home of John Niebel, head of the reformatory prison farm. They executed Niebel, his wife Nolanda and daughter Phyllis in a nearby cornfield. Tiffin farmer James Smith was the next victim, followed by truck driver Orville Taylor. Fleeing the last murder in the victim’s car hauler, Daniels and West were stopped at a police roadblock. West opened fire and was killed in the gunfight after wounding a policeman and a bystander. Daniels was taken prisoner.

Robert Daniels confessed to the murders of the Niebels but attributed the other killings to West. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. On January 3, 1949, Daniels was led to the electric chair. Before he was executed, the attending Catholic chaplain pressed this crucifix into Daniels’ palm. It’s believed the muscle spasms at the time of Daniels’ execution bent the crucifix into the contorted shape.

18

“James Earl” Cup

When Jim Bowsher read in 1978 that the childhood home of James Earl Ray was ravaged by fire and scheduled to be demolished, he drove to Alton, Illinois to scour the wreckage. He pried open the door of a kitchen cabinet and found this child’s cup with “James

Earl” engraved on the side. In his talks with schoolchildren, Jim reflects on the circumstances that led to the innocent child who once held this cup growing into the infamous murderer of Martin Luther King Jr.

19

Wooden Rail and Daguerreotype

This piece of wood from a walnut rail was split by Abraham Lincoln at his family farm in 1822, when Lincoln was thirteen years old. The soldier in the daguerreotype, Sergeant Jacob Molar, sawed this section from Lincoln’s rail and carried it into battle in 1861 as a good-luck charm. Jim was given the rail section and photo from descendants of the Molar family.

20

Werewolf Amulet

At the turn of the century, a German-born woman living in Georgia began to see the snarling face of a werewolf in every mirror that she passed. Believing the creature intended to possess her, she asked a medium for protection from the beast. The medium made this paper talisman depicting the face of a werewolf, which the woman was required to wear on a string around her neck. When she then looked into a mirror, the werewolf there saw the face on the talisman and believed the woman to already be in the possession of another werewolf, protecting her from its advances.

21

Broken Doll

“I thought he was the most handsome man I’d ever seen. Like a movie star.” That’s how the owner of this doll described her first impression of Josef Mengele upon her arrival by rail car at Auschwitz concentration camp. As one of a pair of identical twin children, she had better living conditions and was better fed than many other prisoners. This preferential treatment came at a ghastly price. Mengele conducted horrid experiments on twins, injecting them with deadly diseases and performing amputations or organ removal with no anesthesia. When his experimentation caused the death of her twin sister, Mengele gave the woman this doll. The doll’s legs were broken when it was dropped and stepped on during the liberation of Auschwitz survivors in 1945.



Mengele’s experimental subjects—twin children—leaving Auschwitz, January 1945. Bespectacled Ludovik Feld is in the foreground. (Courtesy of the Auschwitz State Museum)

PHOTO OF HER LIVING AT AUSCHWITZ FROM BOOK "IN OUR HEARTS WE WERE GIANTS"



22

Carved Coffin

When Jim Bowsher acquired this carved coffin, the bottom was covered in green felt. He knew nothing of the object's provenance but was curious about the unfinished row of brass tacks on the coffin's side. When the felt accidentally was damaged and had to be removed, Jim saw an inscription carved on the coffin bottom: "A. Probst 1866" along with the words "Even In Death The Eye Sees."

Antoine Probst worked as a hired hand for Christopher Deering, a wealthy farmer in the Philadelphia area. After losing his job due to several bouts of drunkenness, Probst murdered with an ax the six members of the Deering family, along with a female house guest and a hired boy. He was quickly apprehended and confessed to the killings. In 1866 Probst was hanged and, as was common for the day, his body was sent to the medical college. Probst's eyes were removed in the belief that the retina would retain the last image he had seen before death. The coffin was carved while Probst awaited the carrying out of his sentence; he was hanged before he could finish the project.



23

Family Photo

The girl in this photo from the late 1800s suffers from hypertrichosis, the excessive growth of hair. Her arm and facial hair have been trimmed for this formal family portrait. When Jim Bowsher interviewed her in Florida, she was nearly 100 years old; the hair on her legs was so long that Jim was careful not to step on it when walking behind her.

In her youth the girl willingly performed as a circus freak. She would sit on stage, and when the curtain was raised and customers were over their initial shock, she would engage them in conversation until "they don't see the hair anymore, because my mind is a lot more interesting than this." She felt that she was gifted with this malady in order to teach people to see beyond the surface to the person inside.

The woman's older sister, standing behind her in the photo, grew into a great beauty but developed mental problems and was institutionalized. The younger sister had made enough money through her circus career to relocate her sister to a private sanitarium where she was eventually cured. In her words, "Beast saved the Beauty."

24

Box Talisman

This talisman was made by an Irish witch who lived near Troy, Ohio in the 1860s. A woman had gone to the witch for help. The hair of every female in her family had turned white prematurely and she wished to remain blond. She was required to visit the grave of her most recently-deceased relative at midnight. Holding the box with her thumb touching the hair, she was to look into the mirror and imagine her face getting older but her hair remaining blond. If she did this two nights in a row, and then kept the box in her house, her hair would remain blond as she aged. Jim acquired this talisman from a descendant of the original owner.



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