

Somebodies

some thing

PHOTOGRAPHS MICHAEL WARREN

Everyone has stuff they care about.

Used Kleenex. A t-shirt bought for a dollar. A half-smoked cigarette. These objects mean nothing. These objects mean everything. The people on these pages were asked to bring something—living, dead, or somewhere in between—that has meaning to them, and to tell the story of their relationship with it. It's that simple. Or that complicated. We are our stuff. Our stuff is us.

“Okay! My name. Sandy. Here’s what I brought today. It’s a vintage Easy Rider motorcycle helmet. I love motorcycles, I race motorcycles, I grew up on motorcycles. I’ve been a gear-head all my life. I always loved Easy Rider. One of my greatest coming of age memories was seeing this movie. It was amazing. I found this magazine ad for a place called Justified Defiance. They found all the old styles—a whole warehouse full of them. They kept just the shells, restored them and then brought them back to life. I had to have it. When I’m not using it, it sits on the shelf in my house. You know, it’s a great piece. It’s Americana, man!”

Sandy

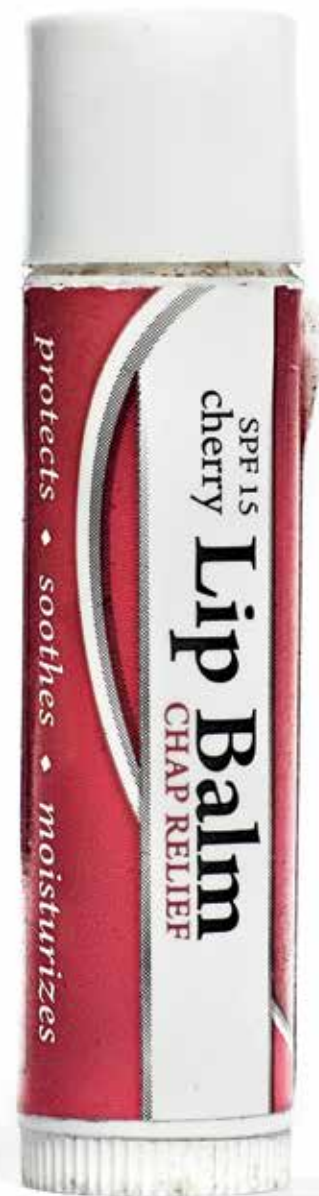
tidbit //

Coincidentally, right after this was photographed there was news of Dennis Hopper’s passing. Hopper had directed and starred in this cinematic symbol of the 1960s.



Coco

“ My name is Coco. My Daddy’s name is ‘Daddy!’ I like lipstick.”



“The name is Maximillian. My object is a Louisville Slugger—actually half of a Louisville Slugger. I was shooting reference images for a new painting and needed to have a bunch of boys destroy a chair with some bats. We went to IKEA to pick up the cheapest piece of shit that we could just decimate because after years of college we realized that all IKEA furniture is excellent at exploding—if you even BREATHE on it! I chose a plain white chair at the lowest price possible—I think I paid 14 dollars for three of them, and I picked the one invincible motherfucking thing at IKEA. This chair broke a Louisville in half when we were trying to destroy it.”

tidbit //

Max is an artist and painter by profession. Asked what will become of the bat: “Out of thanks to a good friend of mine for many years of showing up and doing whatever crazy shit I can come up with, we’re gonna put this half of a bat into a shadow box and make him some art!”

Maxmillian



Ron

tidbit //

The young girl in the picture is their daughter Kiki.
She was only three when she lost her mom.

“ My name is Ron and today I brought Kleenexes used by my late wife Lisa. The joke that we had (which really wasn't a joke) was that she was always blowing her nose and leaving the Kleenexes all over the place. I'd find them in the bed, on the bed, in the sofa, and on the sofa. She'd just blow her nose and leave the Kleenex and I would always complain, “Don't you know what a wastebasket looks like?” One time she said, “Well, one of these days I'm not going to be around and you're going to find one of these Kleenex and you are going to feel sorry for giving me such a hard time about them.”

Ironically, that was the case, because Lisa died suddenly of septic shock.

After she died, I was going through some of her bathrobes and found these Kleenexes. I just laughed because I remembered the conversation we had and I never thought that she would die. When something like this happens you just want to keep things. Anything. It's weird because since she was cremated I couldn't get a lock of her hair. I have some of her hairbrushes with a little of her hair. I actually cleaned the bathtub that was clogged, so I have a 'clog' of her hair.

But the Kleenexes are the only things I really know she touched on this planet so I keep them. It's strange, but what can you do? ”



Marilyn

“ My name is Marilyn, as in Marilyn Monroe. I have this wonderful round bag with spikes. Not many people would wear it, but I love everything odd. It will perk up any black outfit! ”

tidbit //

Marilyn is 82 years old and a staple in Boston society circles. The bag was given to her by a student she helped at Massachusetts College of Art and Design who went on to compete on the TV series Project Runway.



“Hi, my name is Mehdi.

It was February 1981 in Tehran, Iran when my father had purchased a brand new car. On the morning of the 2nd anniversary of the Revolution he decides that he and I will go do some driving tests in the outskirts of the city on some empty roads near a military base. We switched seats so I can drive. Seven or eight minutes later I hear loud noises and realize that my dad has been shot. He opened the door, raised his hands and then fell to the ground and died. I was 14 years old.

We would eventually learn that he was shot by the members of the Basij, a paramilitary volunteer militia who had wrongly assumed our car belonged to the opposition group, Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK Militia), just because of the color alone. Eight people fired on our car. All the bullets went through the vehicle without hitting us except for one that hit my dad in his heart.

What transpired in the following year and a half would be a process of negotiations by my mother that ultimately paved a way out of Iran and into Germany and then the United States for my mother and me. By Islamic law, the father of the victim gets to decide the fate of the convicted, i.e., it's an eye for an eye. My paternal grandfather chose to pardon the accused because “it was a mistake”. This led to an unspoken agreement, a deal with the government, that if he pardoned the soldiers it would help in allowing my mom and I to leave the country. My grandfather died about a year later and my mom continued to pressure the government to admit they had made a mistake and with the help of a lawyer was able to acquire a letter from the government that was an admission on their part. She wanted desperately to save what she had and this was our way out legally and with passports as tourists. Had I stayed, I would have been banned from leaving the country at the age of 16 and potentially eligible to become a soldier and fight in the Iraq/ Iran war.

I was thinking of making a stop-motion movie with a scale model car to illustrate what had happened on that day. I did a lot of searches on Ebay and finally found this exact replica of a Renault 5 and in the exact color. I have never shared this story with anyone and not even my wife knows the history of the car.”

Mehdi

tidbit //

Mehdi graduated from the University of Texas in 1991 and received his Doctoral from the University of Washington in 2000. He currently is employed at University of Washington/Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center as an Oncology pharmacist. His mom lives a mile and half down the street from his family and is the best grandma ever.



Bobby

“

My name is Bobby. A friend came over to my house for dinner one time, left his tie on my sofa. It was a 1940's palm tree tie. I tried to call him for the next two, three weeks trying to give it back, never got through to him and then I just kept collecting from there. By the time I was finished I had 70 different palm tree ties.

Grey suits, brown suits, navy blue suits – that's what was happening in the post-war years of the 1940's and '50's. Then these great flash ties appeared on the scene with bright colors and pictures and patterns. That is why I like them so much.

They're bold and they're bright in a world that was pretty drab!

”

tidbit //

Bobby said that his love for vintage clothing probably came from his mother and father. “She was an interior designer and a clothes horse and he was a dandy”. Bobby has been in the clothing business in Boston for more than 38 years and has an international following. His clientele range from the random kid off the street to buyers of vintage at Ralph Lauren.



Eric

tidbit //

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was founded in 1833 to serve impoverished people living in the slums of Paris, France.

“

I like to say I paid cash for a Papa Bear Chair. If you buy one new it can put you back twenty thousand. Buy one vintage, ten thousand. I was able to pay cash: \$34.50.

My wife and I are mid-century furniture enthusiasts and this was a 'coup de grace', greatest chair known to man. It was designed in the early fifties by Hans Wegner and it's an icon of that period in Danish design.

We found this in the most unlikely of places, St. Vincent De Paul, in the heart of blue collar Bremerton, WA. We've always been driven and moved by art, gardens and architecture, but have mostly had very little money to fuel these obsessions. We got the idea that we could own and enjoy the material essence of beauty without having to pay too much for it – coining the phrase “shoestring abundance” to describe our life philosophy.

Our daily excursions to St. Vinny's were brought about when my wife and I were providing care to her grandmother with dementia. It was only a few blocks from our house and was something we could easily do together. That's when we really got into shopping for furniture and it just became our daily thing and they came to know us at St. Vinny's. We had this mindset that we don't have to be limited. That we can find anything even though interior design is so stratified by income level.

Everything is on a cement floor. It stands on its own and it is what it is. You pay the price marked, no dickering and that money you give to them immediately goes into the second half of the store which is a food bank. In this time of “Green” and “helping others”, I think it's the best thing we got going.

The day I found the chair I was just going through the store and then decided I'd just kinda look in the secure area in the back and see if there's something I wanted. There's a woman there. A great lady but really prickly and kinda gruff and she would say, you know, “Get out'a here” But that day she just looked at me and said “What do you want?” And I just said, “That chair!” And she said, “Okay, \$34.50” And so I tried to act like it was no big deal and said “Okay, great!”. She said, “Don't say I said you could have it. We'll move it out and you just act cool.”

Our first furniture purchase at St Vinny's was a piece by the same designer, Hans Wegner. It was a ten foot long, teak, drop leaf table. We purchased it for \$24.50. I drive up in my '84 Volvo and it just slides right in like it's made for it. I said, “You know its amazing, those Scandinavians. They build the car to fit the furniture.” And the guy said- “It is amazing. IKEA right?” And I said, “Yup, it's IKEA”, and we drove off. That started our love affair with Danish furniture and we still got it going.”



Lisa

tidbit //

Lisa became passionate about the trash when she became involved with the Surfrider Foundation in Rhode Island. This is where she lives.

“ The trash that I’ve brought today is from the beaches of Newport, Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island. It shouldn’t be there so I pick it up.”



Julia

tidbit //

Julia's first photo session had to be postponed due to the fact that she lost her princess privileges on our scheduled shoot day.

“ Hi my name is Julia. I want be a princess when I grow up because princesses are pretty and I want to be pretty. They get to live in castles and wear princess shoes.”



“I grew up watching movies. With my parents off to work, I would just stick inside the house and watch everything I could. Then I got into collecting and now it's an obsession. One girlfriend was afraid the money I'd spend on collecting wouldn't leave us enough to feed the kids we might have. We don't date anymore.”

Christian

Jim

“

Hi, I'm Jim. I say, and this is the dead honest truth, I'm glad I had that accident. Because of that accident they started detoxing me. It put an end to a destructive path my life has been on since coming back from Vietnam a heroin addict. For the last 16 years, I'd been either living on the streets or in and out of halfway homes.

In June of 2005 I blacked out at the Ruggles Subway Station in Boston, MA and fell onto the tracks and the electrified third rail.

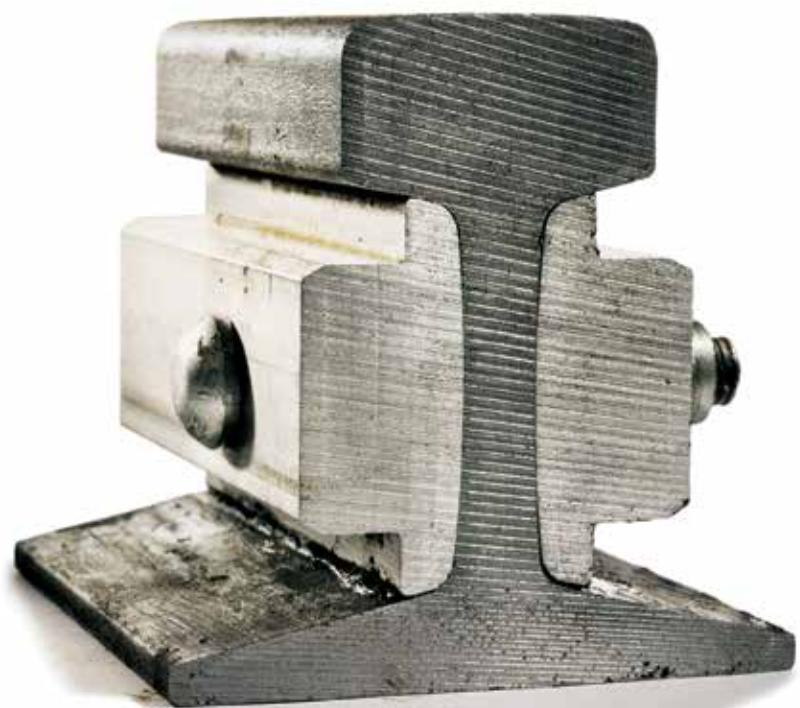
I can't recall anything about that day except that I just wanted to get really high. I had received my prescribed dose of methadone from the clinic at the V.A. that morning, which I got everyday for probably 30 years. I then got Klonopin on the street and took 60 of those. People who do heroin are always searching for that first high, that feeling you get from that first high by taking larger and larger doses of drugs, but it doesn't work. On the night of the accident, I was rushed to the ER at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. They weren't sure they could keep me alive, but they did. Almost a year and a half

tidbit //

Dr. Bohdan Pomahac was a junior plastic surgeon the night they brought Jim in and had never seen such severe facial injuries in his career. Ever since performing Jim's operation and with the support of Brigham and Women's Hospital, he has led a team of doctors into the forefront of advances in transplant surgery and is now Director of Plastic Surgery Transplantation.

had passed before I was brought out of a medically induced coma after going through many operations. When I woke someone told me "You don't have a nose." A bandage was covering me so I didn't believe them. The third degree burns caused by the high voltage third rail had resulted in the loss of my nose, cheeks, teeth and the roof of my mouth. Also I had damaged one of my eyes and severely burned my arms and hands. The injuries were so bad that even with all the operations, I was still extremely disfigured.

It was lucky for me that a doctor named Pomahac was on call the night I was brought in. He took over my case and performed all the surgeries. A couple of years after the accident there was new hope for me. Dr. Pomahac said I could be helped by a transplant. In 2009 he performed the surgery. I became the second person in the United States to have a partial face transplant. When I saw my face 4 days after the 17 hour operation, I told Pomahac, "I can't believe you made me look so close to what I used to look like." I'm 62 now. I'm looking good for 62!"



tidbit //

Dexter currently is in his second year at Amherst College in Western Massachusetts studying dance, theater and creative writing. Purple is the school's principle color.

Dexter

“My name is Dexter and I am from South Africa. I hate stereotypes and I hate fitting the norm, so I’m always looking for ways to kind of break that. One of those ways is through my sneakers. These are my favorite because they kind of speak to me and they’re really out there and that’s the type of person I think I am. Buying sneakers is kind of my indulgence. I paid \$90 for them, cash. It was a good purchase, I think.”



“My name’s Alanka.

I have a huge obsession with Taokaka. She’s a cat/human character in an Anime based Japanese video fighting game called Blaze Blue. She’s the only thing I know how to draw really well.”

Alanka

tidbit //

Alanka’s lifelong interest in Anime has led her to pursue a degree in illustration at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. She will be graduating high school in two years.



tidbit //

Ernie is getting on in life, he will be 32 years old this year. Scott would consider surgery on Ernie.

“

The item I brought today is a stuffed Ernie doll from my childhood. It was one of the first items that I possessed, given to me by my parents, of course, as an infant. I have had it with me since I left home, through college and I still have it next to my bed today. Have I ever washed Ernie? Oh, yeah! He goes in a pillow case. He's about to fall apart so he doesn't get washed anymore.

”

Scott



Erin

tidbit //

Fast forward to 2013. Erin and Andrew have been married now for eight years. Andrew earned not only his undergraduate degree but also a Master's. Erin's interior design business continues to thrive and her blog elementsofstyleblog.com has taken off with almost 200,000 hits per month.

"I know it seems obvious and lame but I brought my laptop. I met my husband on-line at Match.com and started a career that I never thought was possible for myself. At the time, I think it was 9 years ago, I was socially awkward and a coworker suggested I try on-line dating. I was like "Are you insane?" So she put up a profile for me. My mother said they'd find me chopped up in the trunk of a Camaro. I got 600 e-mails the first couple of days but they were all gross and then I noticed where you could specify your search parameters and Andrew's profile came up. I said to my girlfriend "why doesn't a guy like that write me?" I went to bed, didn't contact him. The next morning he had e-mailed me. It was really creepy.

I didn't actually have narrow search parameters. He had to be really tall, graduated college, never married. What's funny is that on our first date, the one and only date I had from Match.com, the first thing Andrew said when we sat down was, "Okay, I have to tell you something." I was, like, "Great. What?" He says, "I'm divorced." I'm thinking, great. What else? "...and I didn't graduate college." And he says, "If you want to leave, totally fine, but I just wanted to tell you and get that out of the way." He explained that he was married for only ninety days and had dropped out of college to run a business but was now back in college and finishing his degree."



Nathan

“ My name is Nathan. In his will, my grandfather made a bequest to me of this boarhead and two rifles, one of which was used to kill the animal. I cherish them because he specifically wanted me to have them. ”



tidbit //

Asked to clarify which fingers her boyfriend no longer has: "Oh no, no they're not his finger bones, they were purchased from a store." She went on to say that you never really know where human bones come from, but there are a few stores around the country that you can actually order a pretty interesting assortment of bones— human or otherwise.

Brigid

“ My name is Brigid. I brought along my magical charms, necklaces and jewels today. They're important to me because everyday my own philosophy involves reanalyzing my own pre-programming from childhood. So I wear an engagement ring even though I never plan to get married and a lot of crucifixes and pagan symbols even though I'm not religious. It's really just about switching up your ideology and mocking iconography. I have a cross made of human finger bones that actually belong to my boyfriend. So I guess technically they're the bones of my lover's fingers around my neck. I also have a crucifix made of yak bones from the Himalayas. These are my special things!”



“The cello is not an easy instrument. I’ll probably never be able to perform the andante in Brahms Opus 60, but I own the music and I’m practicing my scales. I’ll probably play the cello till the day I die.”

Leslie

tidbit //

Leslie's mother introduced her to the Gramercy Trio and they performed Brahms C-Minor-Opus 60. She had never heard anything like this in her life and became obsessed with the andante in Opus 60. It lives on the wall of her kitchen where she looks at it everyday and wakes up in the middle of the night thinking about it.



Song

“

Hi my name is Song and I brought Hank, my Frenchie.
He's the love of my life, my baby in a fur coat. His birthday
is actually tattooed on my arm along with his name.
Hank never judges. He just loves everyone.

”



I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY DEEP appreciation to everyone that has helped make this project come to fruition. I owe thanks to many but specifically: David Kurtis, Melanie Lowe, David Ekizan, Jonathan Plazonja, Carol Alda and especially everyone that was kind enough to share their stuff. It never would have happened without their combined efforts.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SEEING MORE stories, they can be found on my blog at www.warrenphotography.com/blog. If you have something you care about and would like to participate in this ongoing project, please contact me. I am always looking for interesting stories.

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