

Mysterious ornaments picked up off roadside

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Author: SHEILA MULLANE ESTRADA
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Once upon a time, there were a sailor and a girl.

They were in love.

And they married, had a child and, in time, grew happily older, as happens in all such tales as this.

A fairy tale? A true tale? Yes and no to both. For once, long ago, there was indeed a sailor and a girl. But what really happened in their lives, only they or their children or grandchildren can say for sure.

All we know is what 10 small oval photographs framed in gold and carefully hung on a miniature Christmas tree can tell us. The photos represent a carefully collected set of family memories, dating possibly to the 1940s. But of whose family, we cannot say.

That the pictures tell us anything is thanks to the curiosity and concern of Eloise Leng, who was driving down the Park Street extension one day last week when she noticed green Christmas garlands and red bows spilling out of a storage box tipped over on the side of the road.

"I thought it had fallen off a moving truck," said Mrs. Leng, who decided to turn back and rescue the box. She put the box in the back of her family van and went on to her business, Sunrise Yachts. When she examined the box's contents, she found the tree and photographs.

There were fading black and white photos of that sailor and his girl, arm in arm; a photo of a proud father, holding his baby; and photos of the couple in their later years, one as they vacationed, possibly in England; and photos of the sailor, now an older businessman, smiling in full color into the camera.

The photos detailed the passage of time, the history of two people, and the loving care of someone who trimmed them to fit in the miniature golden Christmas frames. It must have been a family tradition to hang the tree on a wall at holiday time, Leng speculated.

Will the Christmas tree and its photos be missed in December? "It's obviously someone's possession and it breaks my heart to see them like that," said Leng as she gently arranged the photos on her desk.

There was one more thing in that lost Christmas box - a hand-painted glass ornament that reads "Christopher & Matthew 1996." Are they the sailor's grandchildren? Leng wonders and worries that no one will even know the family ornaments are missing until the family unpacks its Christmas boxes in December and finds one very important box is missing.

When asked what she would do with the tree and its pictures if no one claims them, Mrs. Leng shook her head, and said simply, "I guess I'll hang them up myself."

Illustration

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, V. JANE WINDSOR; BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO; Caption: These framed photo

ornaments that possibly date to the 1940s were found by Eloise Leng; Eloise Leng

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