

BINGHAMTON
UNIVERSITY

Department of Anthropology

T R A C E S
O F T R A F F I C

AN EXHIBIT PLANNED AND REALIZED BY
ANTHROPOLOGY 476
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

Location: Fine Arts 179

(Permanent Collection, Nancy J. Powell Gallery)

Opening: Monday, November 18th, 2002, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

From November 18 through the end of the semester

Opening Hours are those of the Art Museum

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Introduction

Our goal with this exhibit is to show an array of contemporary objects that seems at first sight worthless, even garbage. By putting these various things in a museum context - in particular, in an art museum - we hope to highlight their continued value. A unifying theme to all our objects is their place of origin: they were picked up by us along traffic lines, such as roads, railroad tracks, parking lots, walking paths, or sidewalks.

Traditional exhibits usually display objects of great value, either social-monetary or sentimental-individual. Items in such traditional venues could be anything from priceless artwork to fragmented artifacts of old age. Most objects in a typical exhibit have a cultural or aesthetic quality to them. Cultural value often denotes educational qualities. Items that fall into this category may tell us how other contemporary societies perform such basic activities as fishing, house construction, or weaving. Most archaeological finds such as pottery, metal objects, adzes or grinding stones have similar functions in a museum context. Their instructive qualities supercede their aesthetic value. On the other end of this continuum are objects with almost purely aesthetic qualities. We expect to find these almost exclusively in museums, and particularly in art museums. The aesthetic quality of such items, whether paintings or sculpture, whether modern or medieval,

whether from the Western or non-Western world, turns these objects into financial assets - and the market value of such things increases their aesthetic appraisal. If our objects happen to fall into either one of these categories, it is pure coincidence.

The objects that we have chosen for our exhibit are simply things we picked up off the ground. We obviously used some standards in choosing items: we knew we would have to work with the objects. Therefore, simple paper trash would not be appropriate. The things collected struck our interest because we wondered why and under what circumstances they had been discarded, when and by whom. Can we ever know? Objects do not reveal their history to us, the various stages through which they have gone before landing in the Binghamton Art Museum.

Even the best photographic documentation, mapping of findspot and description of the item and the context where it was found does not reveal the human drama that is invariably at the origin of the deposition of the items where we found them. In our modern world, we are submerged in objects. We need huge landfills to get rid of them. But do we ever think of the human drama that lurks behind the simple trashed coke bottle, pen, or ripped up car tire? Objects, we contend, are "witnesses" of

a larger entangled web of relationships. This web includes not only ties between people, but also connections between people and objects.

How do we account for this hidden drama of life? We decided to write stories for our collected objects. These stories try to capture the kinds of events that may have led to the deposition of our items in certain places, and for their particular state of preservation. We do not pretend to reconstruct the true path any of our objects took. Rather, we want to pull objects out of their stale, dead and anonymous world. Things we encounter on a daily basis stand for the suffering as well as the joys, the daily as well as the exceptional in our own lives. To elucidate the multiplicity of such

possible object trajectories, we wrote two stories for each object. The two stories were authored by different people, and without knowledge of each other's tales. Examine them: for many items, the stories diverge widely in nature, but for some, there are also parallels.

We encourage you to think of other possible scenarios, to recognize how inadequate our understanding of the material world is: we understand objects as mute, dead commodities with a simple monetary value - or lack thereof - instead of recognizing the way they are embroiled in human affairs.

(Elizabeth Learn, Dorothy Granger)



Transportation as art at the "documenta 11", 2002, Kassel, Germany

Cultural Biographies of Things

In our western world, we think of objects as things to be used, and once broken or worn, to be discarded. In our materialist thinking, they have no life. We make an absolute, unbridgeable distinction between people and objects. People are alive, things are not. People have emotions, aspirations and intuitions, objects do not. People cannot be sold, but a lot of the handling of objects is aimed at selling them. At face value, people have no "price tags" - although this may be disputed when it comes to the value of their work. Things can always be sold and resold.

Especially the mass-produced items of our consumption-driven world have a relatively low value and need perpetual replacement. We call those "commodities." Their exchange value diminishes with age and use, whether they be cars, books, or quotidian objects such as staplers. On the other hand, we select a specific category of things, mostly art, and consider them as items outside the circles of production - exchange - consumption. Paintings by Picasso, but also a robe of Queen Victoria II, or a mummy from ancient Egypt do not belong to the commodity sphere.

Igor Kopytoff argues that these categorizations are inappropriate and centered on a western point of view. First, just as much as we may say that people have exchange value in the marketplace of labor, objects are considered in many

non-western societies as having their own lives. According to Kopytoff, even the most banal object is not at a similar status of "commoditization" in all situations. There are phases of life when things are more or less commodities. Take the case of a musical instrument: a violin may have been bought initially by someone to learn to play it. Over time, that person becomes attached to it, and would never sell it. From being a commodity, a thing exchanged against money, it is removed into a sphere of inalienability. This process we call "singularization." The violin then may be passed on to an heir in the family who keeps it out of respect for the original owner. Finally, if in dire straits, that person may be forced to sell the violin, and it is recommoditized; the process can begin anew.

Singularization, the shift from commodity to inalienable object, can even occur in the category of mundane things such as radios, hats, motorbikes or plastic bags. Many people collect specific items. Take the case of plastic bags. They do not have a great value. But there are people who collect aesthetically pleasing ones, or shopping bags from colleges, etc. Any new bag that fulfills the criteria chosen by the collector for the collection makes it an extremely desirable item. The object, a plastic bag among hundreds, if not thousands, of identical ones, enters a private collection and is thereby "singularized," taken out of the

commodity sphere. Again, a sale of the whole collection will recommodify this and all other plastic bags in the collection.

Singularization is not only the outcome of collecting, but also of use. For example, a white dress that is mass distributed by a manufacturer to all areas of the world may have no significance. However, once worn by the famous Marilyn Monroe, one specific dress gains a new cultural value and becomes singularized. All of these phases in the "cultural biography" of an object occur at different times along the normal lifecycle of an object. All of these phases through which an object cycles may be called the "cultural biography" of that thing. Such cultural biographies are directly connected to our anticipations about the trajectory an object takes. We can distinguish between the "normal" course of an item and highly unlikely directions it takes in its life. Appadurai uses the term "path" for the normal movement of an object from expected contexts of production to its discard, and "diversion" for any unusual turns the item takes during its life.

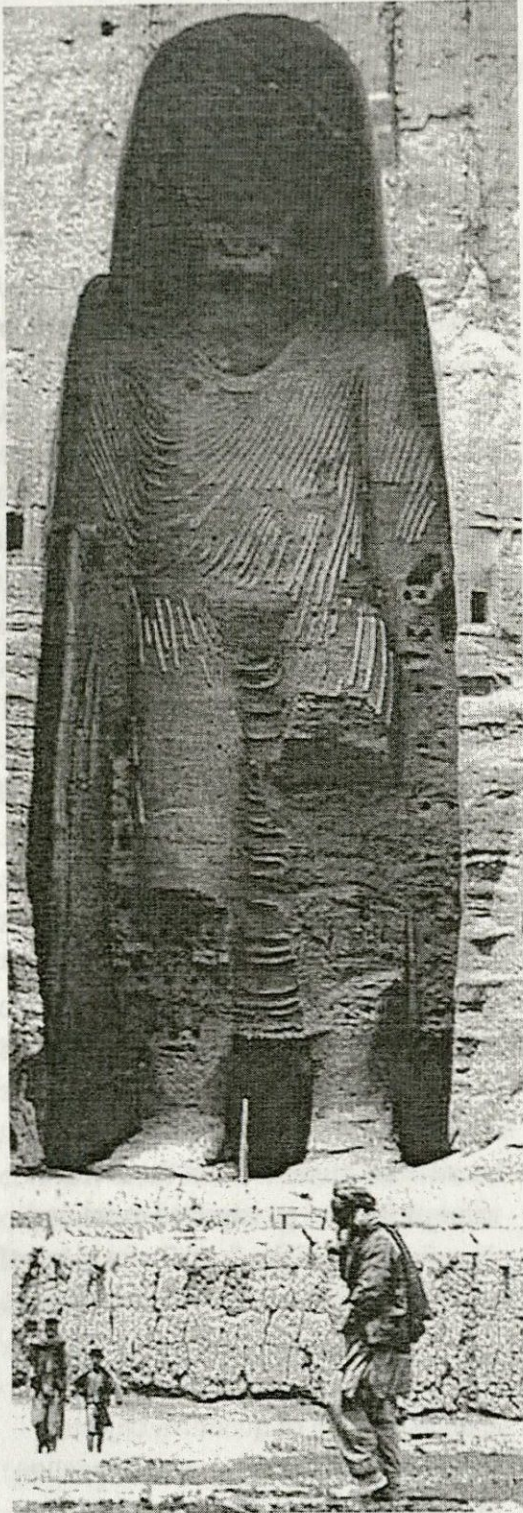
We live in a world that increases people's lives, but tries to shorten objects' lives. There is a short and direct path from production to one-time use to discard for all the one-way items we have gotten got so used to: plastic tableware, coke cans and some cameras are supposed to be immediately discarded after their first use. Even in the realm of nature, genetic manipulation has produced plants that are

"one-way," for instance wheat that cannot bear productive seed.

At the other extreme, particularly in art, history and archaeology, we find the idea that an object's path must be as long as possible. Our culturally determined expectations are that such objects must be protected and preserved, if possible, "forever." Museums are the prototypical places that take care of these items in need of protection. However, bank vaults and protected homes of rich collectors can take on the same function.

Diversion of the long-living objects sets in with their unexpected destruction or alteration. Recently, a painting of Picasso disappeared in a Swiss Air flight when the plane came down near Boston. A year ago, the Afghan Taliban government destroyed two ancient and famous statues of Buddha, ending their almost 2000 year long "path" through history. But diversion can also consist in the fact that an uneducated but very rich buyer acquires a painting of Van Gogh, not because the buyer relishes the aesthetic value of the art - an expected event and therefore part of the "path" of a piece of art - but simply as a financial investment.

Correspondingly, diversion can also change the path of quotidian objects. Most often, this involves a prolongation of an object's life. Collecting, a passion that becomes a more and more important private activity in the western world, is the stubborn, often obsessive fight



Buddha in Afghanistan before destruction

against the lowering of object lives. By accumulating things such as telephone cards, matchboxes, airsickness bags or hotel soaps, people divert these items from their expected path. The insertion into a collection at home equals the museum storage of art objects, and leads to their prolonged life.

"Traces of Traffic" is a conscious effort at diversion of objects from their path: these things had been lost, abandoned or intentionally thrown away. By picking them up, and exhibiting showing them in the Binghamton University Art Museum, we redirect them into the museum world. However, we do not want them to stay there - it is our conviction that too much is accumulated in museal institutions as well as homes. Rather, our exhibit is a project of "double-diversion": after bringing the items into the Art Museum context, to which they do not "belong" according to traditional understanding, we will retrieve them at the end of the exhibit and prevent their storage in a university basement. They will be destroyed in a happening that leads them back into a new trash context.

(Dawn Corso, Marie Mounteer, Alicia McCaskie, Lannie Keeler)

Life-Cycle: Production to Discard

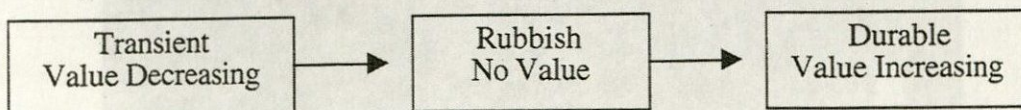
As stated, we assume that each object of our material world has a "normal" path from its production through distribution, exchange, and its use to discard, and finally recycling or terminal deposition and decay. The vast majority of our objects in a material world are mass produced items, already designed at the point of production to be discarded after use. For a car, this may be 10 to 20 years. For a styrofoam cup from McDonald's, it is just a few minutes. If these items of our mass-consuming society were not to disappear, we would be in danger of drowning in material culture remains - at least if we kept on buying as usual.

A selected number of such mass products even enters our museums. Binghamton's Roberson Museum contains a historical exhibit that is made up largely of daily items. If we consider such institutions as the Cooperstown "National Baseball Hall of Fame" as a kind of museum, then again, the items it displays are quotidian in character. Even in those cases, however, the chosen objects end up in a museum context because they were used by famous people, in the process taking on a particular aura, or because they had by

chance a longer use life than other, identical objects, and thus became valuable.

It is an act of "framing" that gives objects the aura necessary for a museum object. The British newspaper *The Times* once had an advertisement that depicted the same vase twice, one time labeled in crude block letters "secondhand", the other in an elegant font in black border as "antique". M. Thompson argues that our valuing of objects is largely a social act that is substantially independent of the attributes of an object.

"Framing" can be used to increase the value of an object. A used-car dealer who decorates all of his cars with an American flag tries to increase the value of his items incrementally. He keeps his cars spotlessly clean to achieve the same effect. The use of glossy paper for a magazine positively frames the information it contains. The opposite can also happen. An excellent restaurant in the greater Binghamton area is located in a shopping plaza, not where one would expect such a facility to be.



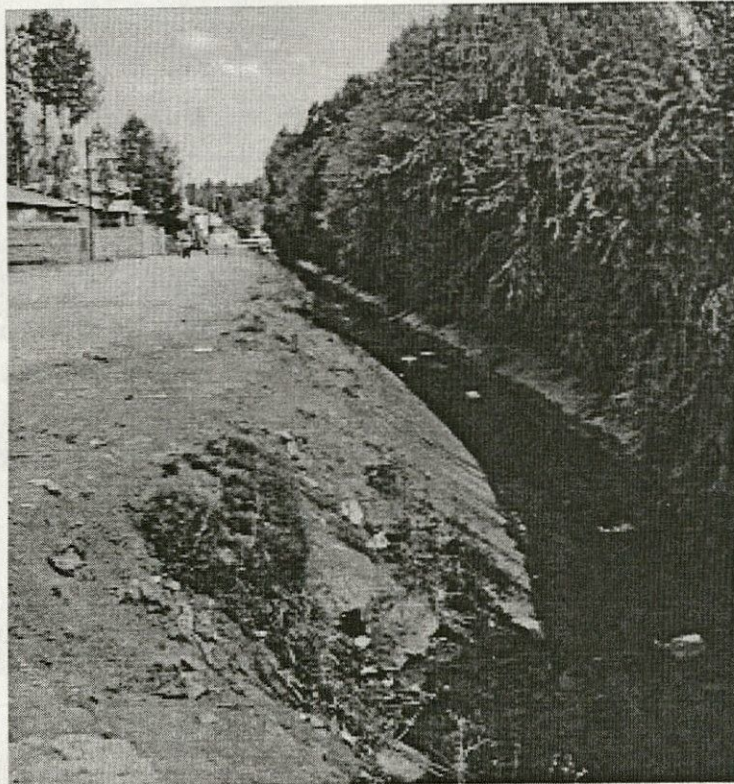
In our exhibit, we give objects new meaning by re-framing them: they had once been of mundane, transient value. Then they were discarded as rubbish. Our exhibit turns them into durable things whose value has sharply increased. It is mainly your, the visitors', attention to them that gives them their value, not any change in their materiality. The way one acts toward an object often directly relates to ideas a society has about it. For example, we may consider heavily worn car tires to be trash. In other cultures, they are used to produce shoes, bags and other containers.

In our exhibit, there is, for example, a broken knife. Many would refer to this as a piece of garbage. However, we explain

its significance by turning it into a witness, by placing new meaning on it through a story. Thus, we transform it from the category "rubbish", accepted without further reflection, into a class of items whose function is that of "messaging."

As a final thought, we do not mind if this catalog ends up in a sphere for which it was not necessarily intended - whether in your fireplace or your library. But if you trash it on your way home, leave a note for the future collector about why you threw it away.

(Regina Maieli, Jessica Margolis)



Roadside trash in Van, southeastern Turkey

Object Classifications

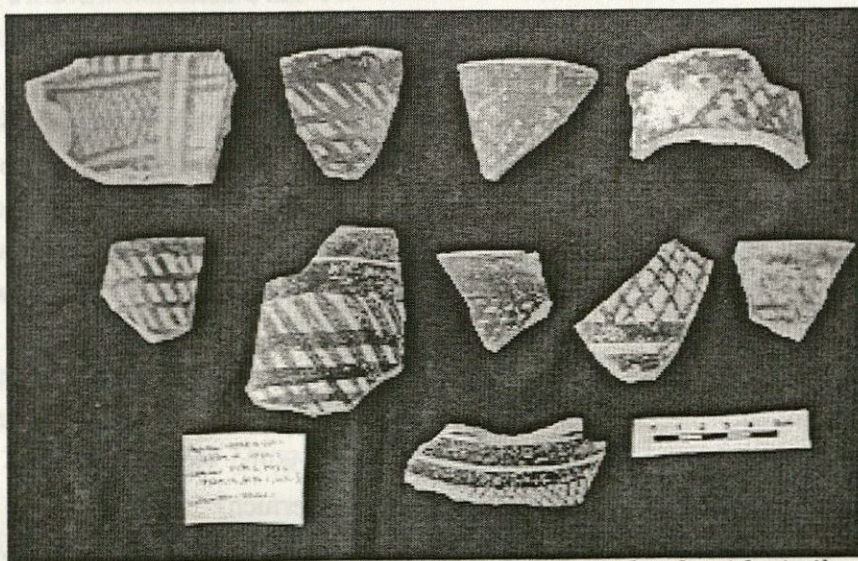
"The way we act towards an object relates directly to its category membership."

M. Thompson

An item may be perceived as valuable in one individual's perspective, while another may deem it worthless. What has highest value to a collector of bottle caps may just be useless garbage for the average person. In most cases, we value items for two types of characteristics which we call "intrinsic" and "extrinsic."

Intrinsic features are those inherent in the object, independent of any further circumstances such as time and space of use. The attributes of style, craft, technique, material and function are all intrinsic to objects. An elaborate, hand-made oak shelf has in our eyes a higher value than the cheap, pre-fabricated and

unassembled "Ikea"-shelf. A hardbound textbook always sells at a higher price than the corresponding paperback, even though the information both contain is identical. Binding rather than gluing involves more working steps and increases an object's value. Likewise, porcelain plates are worth more than paper plates, which we readily discard after only one use. Thus, we constantly put objects in relation to each other by instinctively comparing their mutual intrinsic characteristics. Such categorizations lump objects across other, more use-related categories. One-way items, whether beer cans, trash bags, and pencils contrast with beer bottles, garbage containers, and refillable pencils.



Objects grouped by intrinsic attributes: archaeological sherds with similar patterns

The objects in this exhibit were collected with no regard to such intrinsic characteristics. The fact that the material involved in the creation of the toothbrush is plastic had no relevance in its placement in this collection: "plastic" is nothing that unites the collection. Likewise, the function of a sock, clothing, is of no importance to its placement here: although there are a few other textiles, we also included an envelope and a softball, for instance.

Common to all of our objects is an extrinsic attribute. Such attributes always refer to the *context* of objects and produce a different categorization than the taxonomic, intrinsic ones. We could have collected objects dating to the years 1970 - 1990, using time as the main extrinsic attribute. Or we could have collected items that belong exclusively to professors, in which case the unifying criterion for a collection would be a social group of users.

Such extrinsic criteria mostly unify large numbers of items. But there are also extrinsic singular criteria that immensely increase an object's value. The pen of Albert Einstein has more value than an identical pen used by, let's say, the director of a school. A crass example is the Berlin Wall, which was literally smashed into small pieces of shapeless concrete and sold for large sums of money to foreign tourists. It is the Wall's symbolic value that turns a piece of

concrete into a high-value item. In a parallel fashion, it is conceivable that the material remains of the World Trade Center will gain an immense symbolic and therefore monetary value.

All objects in our exhibit have one such extrinsic quality in common: they are from traffic lanes, whether roads, railways, or pedestrian areas. The function of these spaces is transitory. We want to get from place A to B, and this is mostly why we use such spaces; to pause there, to take a break for two hours next to the train tracks may not occur to us. But such transitory spaces are nevertheless littered with objects, as we found out - and as is announced by programs such as "Adopt a Highway." What is the origin of all those objects found in traffic spaces? And is there a category of unifying events that leads to the placement of things in these areas?

We have assembled stories that account for more or less likely events that led to the deposition of objects in the places where we found them. We leave it up to your judgment whether there are unifying strands of human fate behind our stories, and maybe behind the objects that you may encounter in your own transition spaces.

(Vicky Szenes, Michael Mandel, Julie Cantor, Shira Topiol, Alexander Metternich)

Further Readings

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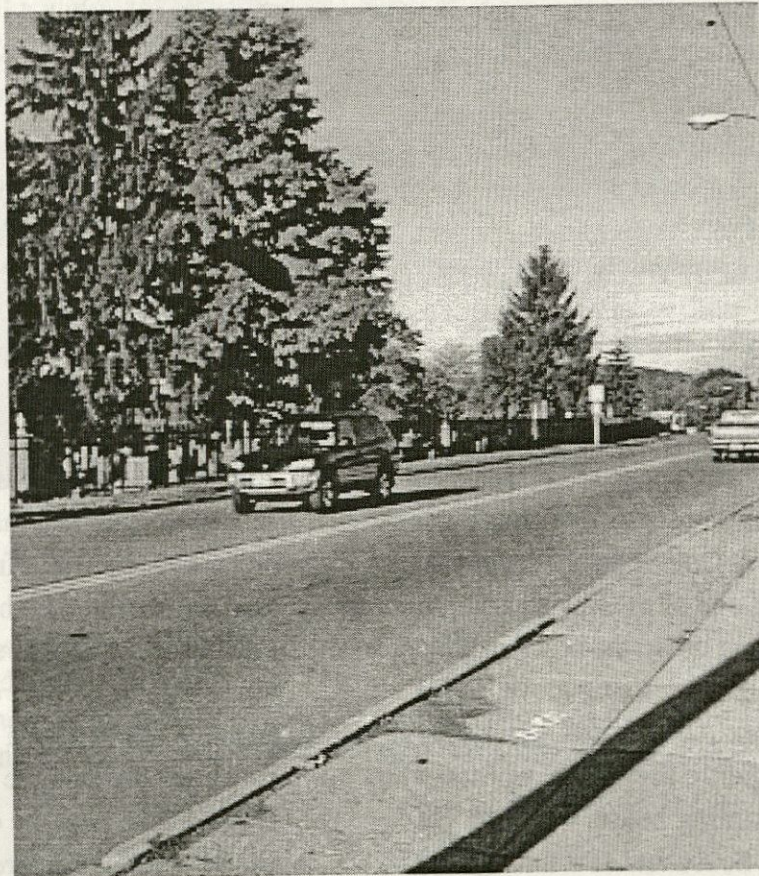
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THE GLOVE

Story 1

It was a brisk and sunny fall morning when Mitch pulled out in his truck and headed across town. The shift in seasons changed the nature of his work from mowing lawns, which he despised, to raking leaves, which he found relaxing. Mitch had been working as a gardener for 17 years, and although the work was boring he enjoyed being outside and forming relationships with people in the neighborhood. That day promised to be pretty much the same as all the others so Mitch put on his gloves, pulled out his tools, and began to collect the brown and orange leaves that were scattered over the ground in front of the big blue house on the corner of Chapin Street. His concentration was broken by the sound of screams coming from across the street. As Mitch turned his head to see what all the commotion was about he saw smoke and fire bursting through the windows of the wooden house. Almost instinctively, he dropped his rake and began to run to the house he knew well, a house where he had worked for the past 5 years. Just as he dropped the rake, he stepped on the bottom of it, which flipped it upside down. One of the teeth caught his glove, tearing one of the fingers and sending it flying down the block. Mitch did not even notice his missing glove, or his bleeding finger. All he cared about was making sure Edith, the elderly woman who lived in the burning house, was safe. He arrived at the house and saw through an open window that Edith had fallen down

and could not make it out of the house. Mitch ran in, found Edith through the smoke, and brought her outside. They made it out just as the fire trucks pulled to halt in front of the house. Mitch's picture was in the paper the next day for performing an act of heroism, and needless to say, in all the excitement, he forgot about his torn glove.

(Talia Andron)

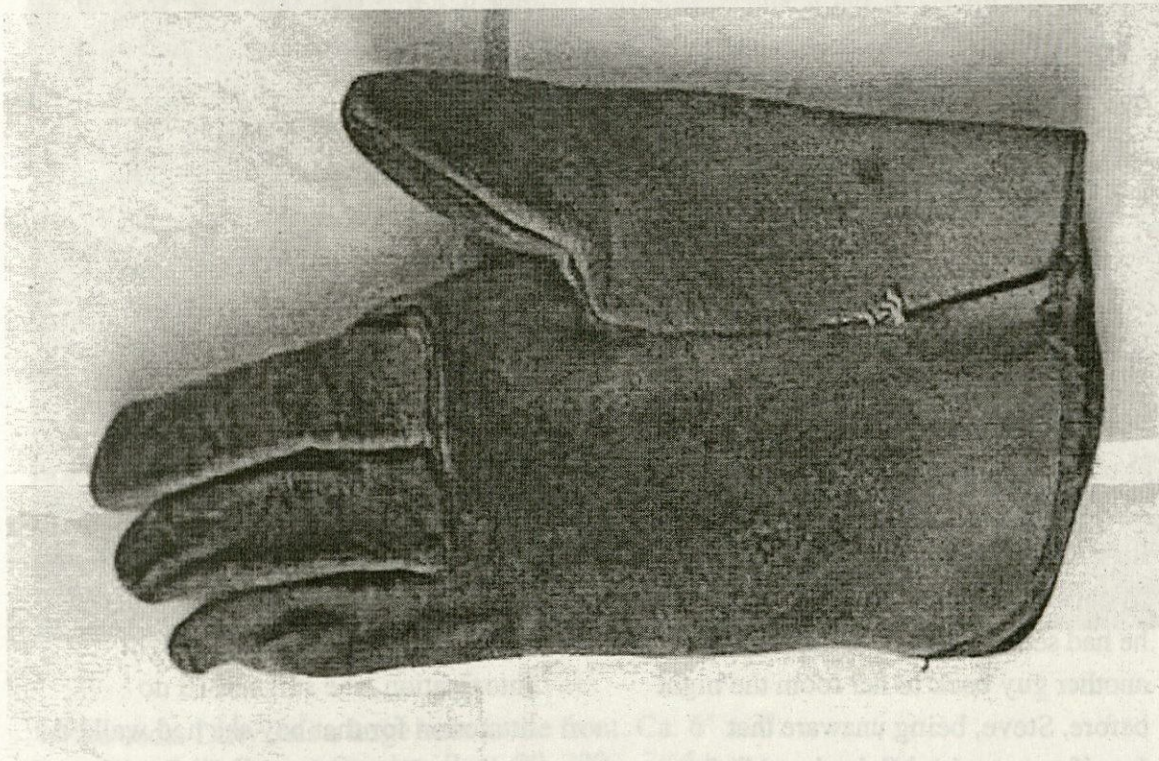
Story 2

Amanda is a cheerleader at Binghamton high school. She is a very attractive girl who draws a lot of attention from the opposite sex. Only a few blocks away from the school is a small shop that sells newspapers, drinks and other daily needs. Bob, the owner of the shop, is infatuated with Amanda. He sees her each time that she comes to buy candy, a cola or a chocolate bar and any time he sees her, she takes his breath away. Everyday Amanda walks home to Chapin Street, which is very close to the school. The shop owner, Bob, one day closed very early to follow Amanda and figure out her route after school. He guessed that she lived in the area since she was a frequent customer. Two days later, on a hot Wednesday afternoon in September, Bob posted himself on the corner of Chapin and Leroy and attacked Amanda on her way home. He pulled her into the dense bushes at the empty house near the corner and raped her. His act was clearly premeditated, since he was wearing garden gloves for fear of leaving fingerprints. Amanda, who was

completely horrified, utterly panicked and in so much pain that she couldn't scream loud enough for someone to hear her, bit one of Bob's gloves and tore off a piece of its leather during her struggle to get away. She actually bit off a piece of skin from Bob's finger as well. When Bob saw blood running, he backed off, and Amanda was able to escape. Bob left in a hurry, trying to cover his bleeding finger under his shirt so that no one would see traces of his assault,

forgetting about the glove that was left in the bushes.

(Alicia McCaskie)



Gardening glove, leather.

Black from dirt and torn at fingertips. Ca. 9" by 5".

Found by Talia Andron, Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2002, 9:55 a.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, on the corner of Chapin and Leroy Street.

THE SOCK

Story 1

Michael and Jennifer are sophomores attending Binghamton University. They had been together since their first semester freshman year. Mostly everyone from their school knew them as the best couple on campus. Michael was extremely good looking. He had the most gorgeous, shiny black hair and ocean blue eyes. Jennifer was equally beautiful with long, straight, blonde hair and stunning brown eyes. On the whole, they were very close and would frequently leave clothing, toothbrushes, and books in each other's rooms for the times when they would sleep over in the other one's room. Michael and Jennifer shared many common hobbies. They were both on the track team, loved to swim, and play tennis. One Thursday morning, after a long strenuous practice with the track team, they walked back sweating and exhausted to his dorm. While in the room, Michael's cell phone rang. Jennifer noticed that Michael was making strange faces as if in shock. Michael's friend Steve had told him that he had seen Jennifer walking with another guy back to her room the night before. Steve, being unaware that Jennifer was with Michael at the very moment he was telling him what he had seen, continued giving all the gruesome details. When Michael hung up the phone, he confronted Jennifer right away. She immediately screamed aloud, "Nonsense Michael, that's nonsense!"

She continued on insisting that Steve was wrong, and that he had obviously been trying to stir up trouble between Michael and her. "Who do trust, Michael? Your friend or your girlfriend?" Jennifer exclaimed. Without a word, Michael grabbed a sock from the floor which he had bought for her as a good luck charm for one of their major track events. He grabbed a pair of scissors and began cutting a hole in the sock. He told her that she didn't love him and that she didn't deserve to have the sock. It was something that he had bought out of love for her and that he felt deeply betrayed. Michael took the sock and threw it out the window. Jennifer was speechless and stormed out of Michael's room without bothering to retrieve the sock.

(Julie Cantor)

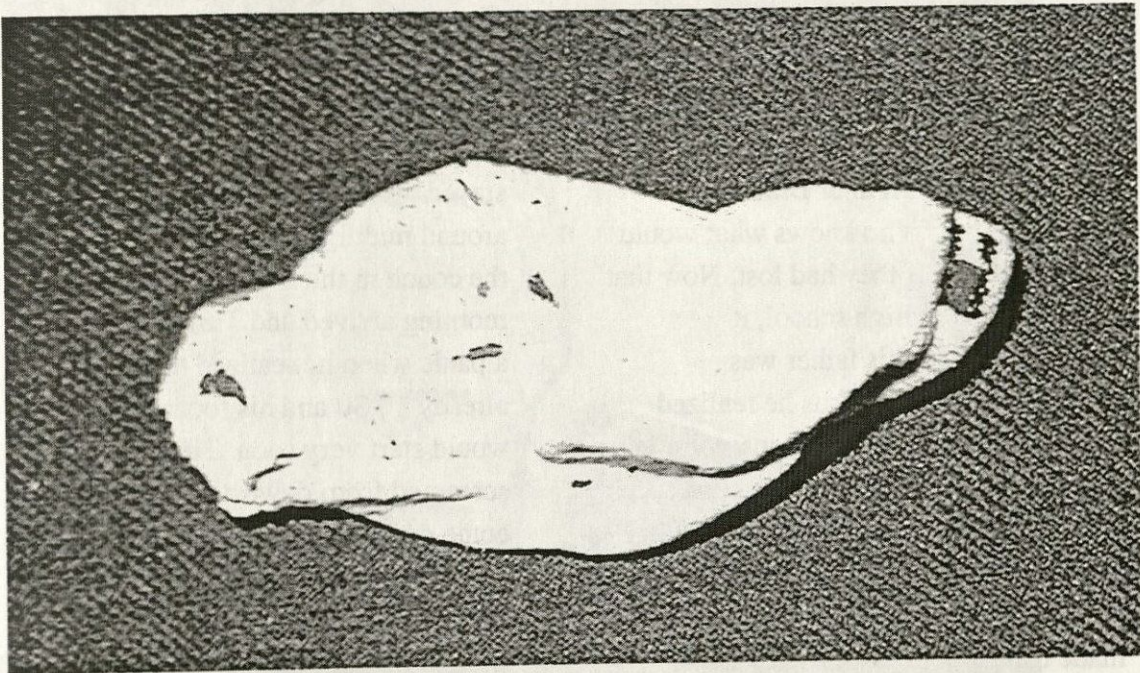
Story 2

The flask of perfumed liquor was only half full when the moon came out, and despite the numbing cold Miranda was no less warm than she had felt in her dorm room. Even with her slight intoxication, she still sensed no attraction for that boy she had walked out into the woods with. In fact, she barely knew him. He pulled at the branches of the trees and snapped them off, and he looked to her like a page out of Archie Comics updated with ear rings covering his left ear, leaving the right one looking quite bald and odd. He

moved close behind her as she gazed at the darkening sky and quickly began to suck at her neck. She moved away, pushing him, and as she stared at him in the darkness she could see his dark silhouette, hear heavy breathing and smell his sour sweat. He suddenly seemed quite ominous, even menacing to her. Miranda jumped up and ran down the path towards the dorms, hearing him chasing her. As she rounded a corner near the buildings, she fell in a ditch that was covered with dry leaves and lost her right shoe. She quickly pulled her right

sock off and threw it as far away as possible from her. She tried to lie still in the dry leaves to avoid making any noise. She heard him stalk down the path seemingly sniffing out her scent. He didn't see her but stooped down to pick up her sock, which was lying in a shaft of moonlight. She saw him sniff at it, throw it down and continue walking, muttering, "Cock tease", to himself. She lay there for nearly an hour before starting cautiously home.

(Chris Jimmink)



White sock. Dirty, has a large hole in the front. Ca. 6" x 3".

Found by Julie Cantor, Sunday, Sept. 29, 2002, 3:45 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, Binghamton University campus; on a trail leading to the Oneida Hall Residence.

THE FOOTBALL PAD

Story 1

Brandon had had his fill. Each thrust at the tackling dummy seared in his joints as he lay aching in bed, contemplating the flush of lactic acid his muscles were now inflated with. He had kept up the charade for four weeks, yet his father had already torn into him, pretzel crumbs spraying a wet chalky powder over his T-shirt as the words escaped, "Junior Varsity? Don't forget your diapers when you suit up, boy." He was reminded of his father, years earlier when he had put his dog in the shed, only returning him after Brandon's baseball game. Who knows what would have happened if they had lost. Now that he had gotten to high school, it was football that his father was manipulative about. Thus he realized that football and pain were inseparable in his life. He snuck away from practice that day while the coach's brutal neck was turned, fiddling with a tape of *The Fine Young Cannibals* that he normally made them run laps to. He left Seton School and went down Laurel Ave., pulling at his left hip pad with a defeated twitch. To avoid his father's wrath and that of the coach he would have to learn discipline. At Gary St., he began to whip his forearm until he felt the sting of the plastic up to his shoulder. The absurdity of his logic and situation suddenly struck him. As he dropped the pad at

Catherine Street his cheeks burned with shame and anguish.

(Chris Jimmink)

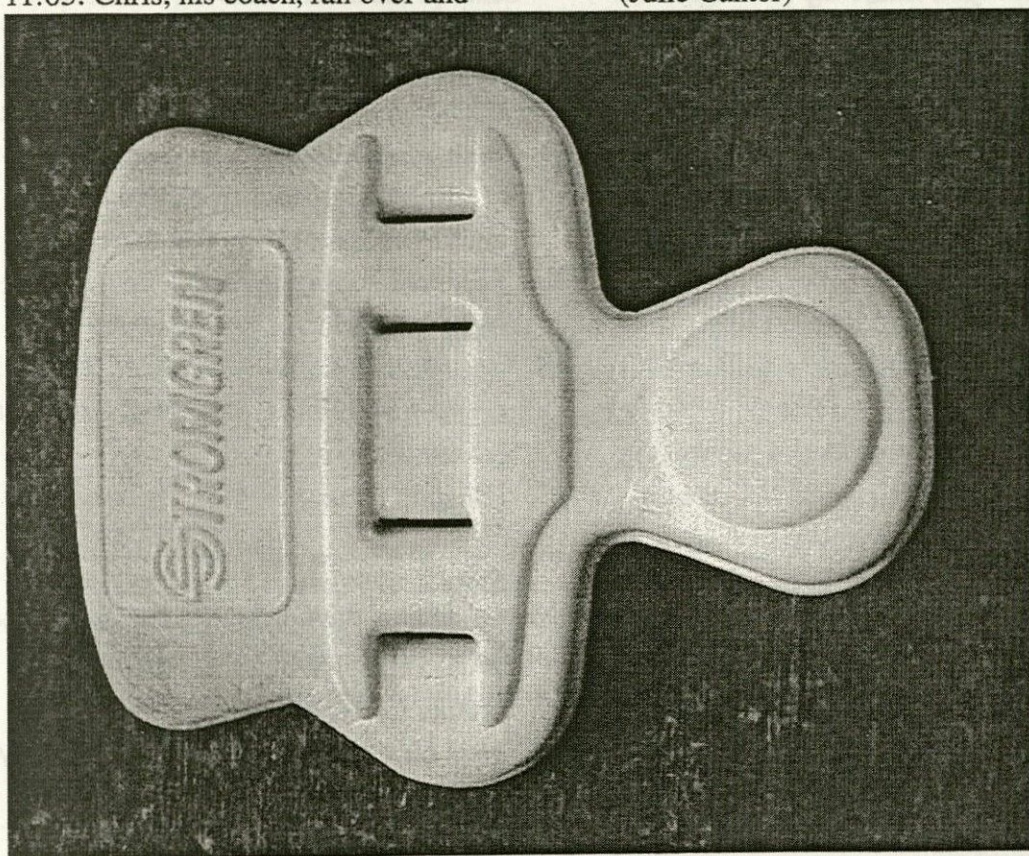
Story 2

Timmy was eleven years old and was the most popular boy in his class and neighborhood. Football was his huge passion and being on his community football team meant the world to him. It was Friday night, and Timmy had an extremely important football game the next day. Too anxious to go to sleep early and get a good night's rest, he stayed up and watched a movie. It was around midnight when he fell asleep on the couch in the living room. Saturday morning arrived and Timmy woke up in a panic when he realized that it was already 10:30 and his football game would start very soon. Timmy's mother screamed from downstairs for him to come down and eat breakfast or else he was going to be late. Timmy quickly packed up his bag with all of his equipment and ran downstairs. He asked his mother why she didn't wake him up knowing that he had the biggest football game of the season. Timmy's mother replied to him, "Oh my god, I completely forgot, Timmy, I thought you just had practice this morning." Extremely upset, Timmy dashed out the door. As he ran down the street all he could think was that if his mother loved

him she could not have forgotten about the most important game of the year. He missed the bus by a minute. It dawned on him that he would have to run to the stadium. As Timmy to ran down the street, one of his football pads fell out of his partly open bag. Oblivious to the fact that he had just lost one of his football pads, Timmy continued running all the way to the football field for the big game. When he finally arrived it was 11:05. Chris, his coach, ran over and

asked Timmy why he was late today of all days! Timmy began telling the story to his coach but was quickly interrupted by Chris who yelled, "Stop blabbering and put on your equipment!" Timmy opened his bag and began getting ready when he realized that he had lost one of his football pads. He started to cry because he knew that without the pad, he would not be allowed to play in this game.

(Julie Cantor)



Pee-wee football pad, white molded plastic foam with slits. Logo "Stromgren". Slightly dirty. 8" by 9.5" by 2".

Found by Chris Jimmink, Monday Sept. 23, 2002, 5:35 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, Westside, in the bushes of 132 Laurel Ave, corner of Catherine St., Binghamton.

THE TOOTHBRUSH

Story 1

The clock on the wall read 2:52. As Mike sat watching the second hand move slowly across its stark white face, he pondered momentarily whether or not the details of the American Civil War spewing out of Mr. Crawley's mouth might be worth absorbing, but just as quickly as the thought entered his mind, it was gone. After all, less than 1 minute remained before FREEDOM. As if on cue, all eyes turned to the clock. The countdown had begun; 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 - the bell; the mad dash for the door; the anticipated bottleneck; the stampede to the locker area to dump your books. Mike swung open his locker and dropped his books into the abyss, making a semi-successful attempt to keep the flood of books and papers from spilling out onto the floor. Just as he thought he had everything contained, he noticed the red D.A.R.E. toothbrush that had been handed out the week before by the Johnson City Police Department. A short distance down the hall he heard Julie call out, "meet you at the tracks." Without another moment's delay Mike grabbed the toothbrush, stuck it clumsily into his pants' pocket, kicked the last remaining book back into its dark tomb, slammed the locker and ran after Julie, leaving Dave still struggling with his combination..... As Dave slipped under the vines that concealed the opening in the fence and climbed up the small embankment, he spotted Mike and Julie

sitting side by side on the tracks having their traditional after school cigarette. The two were laughing as Mike slowly and methodically sat cleaning his shoes with the toothbrush he had rediscovered only moments before. Dave added with a wink, "I sure could use a cold one, if you know what I mean." Mike put on that secretive, smug little smile of his and said, "Your wish is my command." Tossing the toothbrush aside, he jumped down the embankment, reached under a bush, and pulled out a six-pack. "Definitely not cold." The two broad smiling faces told him that there would be no complaints. Hopping up the hill, Mike sat down and cracked open the first can just as his eyes fell, once again, on the toothbrush lying on the ground at his feet.

(Heather Evans)

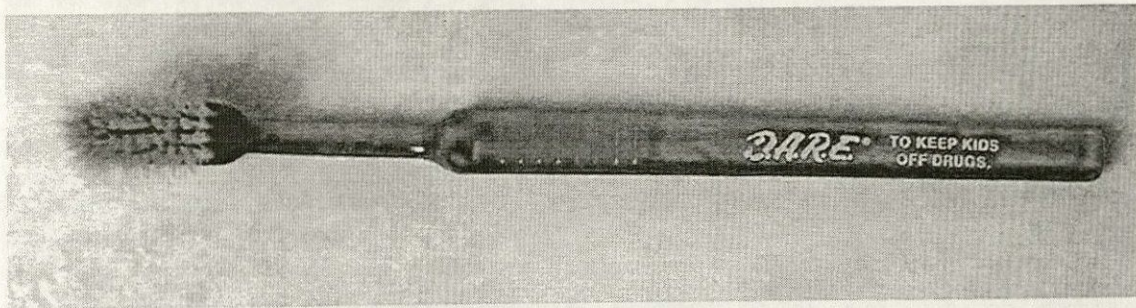
Story 2

It was a warm summer day in early June 2003. Billy J. Whitekid, 9, his little brother Cody, 4, and his mother Betsey were on sitting on the train on their way to Broome County jail. Billy's dad was waiting for them to bail him out on assault charges. Billy was jumping around in his seat - he couldn't sit still any longer, he'd been on the train for over two hours now! Betsey Whitekid pulled Billy into his seat by his too small red Spongebob T-shirt. "Sit down and don't move! We only have 15 minutes left!" With that she went back to reading

her Soap Opera Digest. Cody was happily staring out the open window. Billy reached under his seat and pulled out his backpack. He took out a crumpled brown paper bag and started rummaging through it. He pulled out some floss, a rusty razor, Old Spice aftershave, a browning banana, a nail clipper, a D.A.R.E. sticker and a red D.A.R.E. toothbrush. "What is all that for?" His mother asked as she noticed the items. "This stuff's for Dad. I packed it before we left. I thought he would need some of it when we got him out." She rolled her eyes. He picked up both the sticker and toothbrush proudly showing his mother what he had

received for completing the D.A.R.E. program at school. Suddenly Cody turned from the window and grabbed the toothbrush and started swinging it around while Billy was trying to reach for it. "GIVE IT BACK!" Billy wailed. "The two of you, enough! Billy, just let him play with it. If I hear one more word from you..." She again returned to reading the digest. Billy folded his arms across his chest and sat back in his seat fuming. Cody gave him a sly look, waved the toothbrush at him, threw it out the open window and began to laugh hysterically.

(Dorothy Granger)



Red plastic toothbrush with white brush synthetics. Dirty and scratched. Length 7". Found by Heather Evans, Wednesday Sept. 25, 2002, 5:25 p.m. Location: Johnson City, NY, South side of the Erie and Lackawanna railroad tracks, 120 yards west of Hudson St..

THE CHILD SLIPPER

Story 1

Sandy was so tired of always having to baby-sit for her little sister Natalie. She despised her nervous and fussy baby sister. Natalie was never content unless someone was cooing over her or taking care of her. She wasn't the type of baby that parents would call a "good" baby. She was cute to look at, though. The siblings' parents worked long hours and so it was up to Sandy to walk, feed, play, and care for the one-year old. In her heart, Sandy felt that her mother owed her something for all the time she spent with this spoiled brat instead of playing with her own friends who invited her less and less often to join them. What made Sandy even angrier was that Natalie always got the new clothes and attention. One day, Mom brought her "sweetie" new pink baby slippers. This was too much for Sandy who had to be even more watchful of Natalie, as her exhausted and breathless mom had taken on a second job. Sandy just wanted to run away. That day, when the two went for their usual walk, Sandy was pushing Natalie's stroller. The baby was squirming around in her seat to get a better view and from all the movement, one of her brand-new slippers fell half off. In an instantaneous whim, Sandy took it off completely and threw it with an evil smile on the nearby sewer. The sewer had a layer of dirt and dead leaves from the storm two days earlier. Sandy kicked the slipper into the muddiest

place and stomped on it. The baby looked on, and Sandy thought she saw a glimmer of revenge in Natalie's blue eyes.

(Miriam Gross)

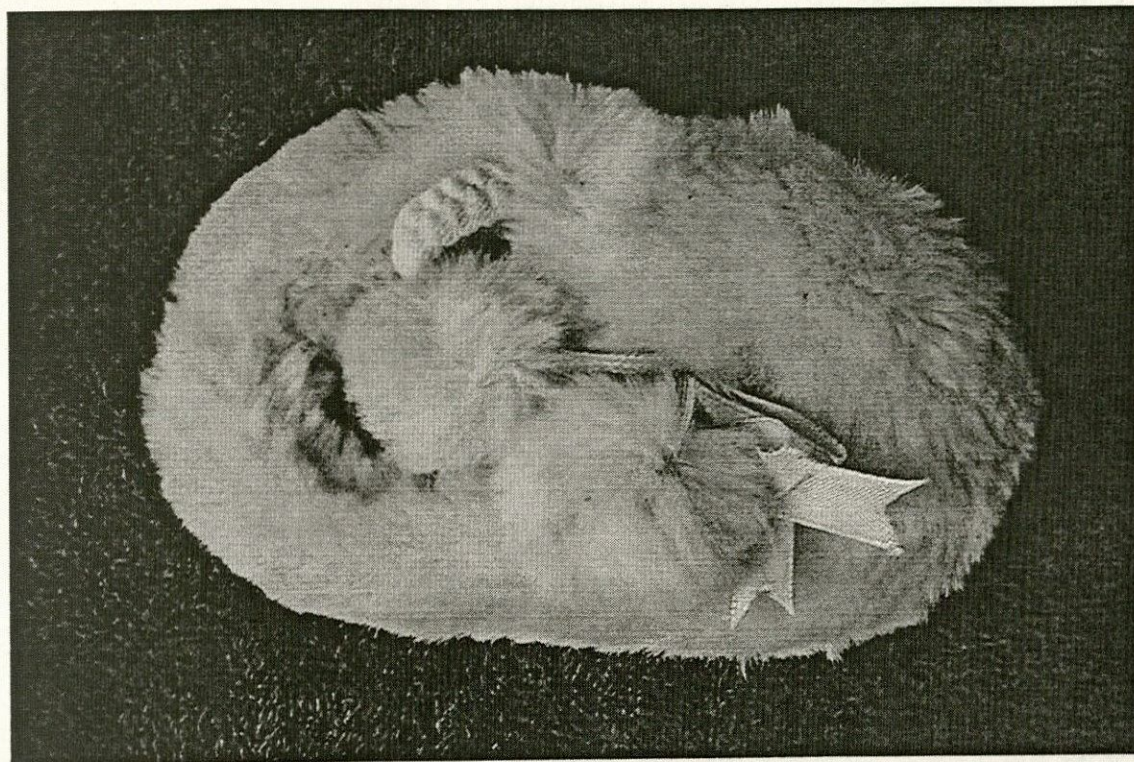
Story 2

Lindsey stood motionless in front of the smoldering pile of ashes, one hand over her heart, and the other nervously pulling at a string on her thin jacket. She watched as the firemen packed up their gear and began to reload the trucks. Everything was silent. The house that she had grown up in was gone. Slowly, the sound of her mother's sobs reached her ears. This was the first time Lindsey had come home since she moved away three months earlier, and she could still hear the franticness of her father's voice when he called her earlier that morning to inform her of the disaster that had occurred. Old, faulty wiring in the boiler room had caused the fire, the police chief had told her, but his words seemed to pass her by as she stared blankly at the space where her childhood home had once stood. As Lindsey looked over the remains she noticed something pink amongst the black sooty ashes that surrounded her. She bent down to pick it up, gasped, and could no longer keep herself from crying. In her hand Lindsey held one of her baby slippers, and she could remember the day her mother had bought them for her as a birthday present. Lindsey realized that she was

holding the only remaining object from her childhood. She was about to put the slipper in her bag when one of the policemen waved and called for her. While rushing towards him, she tripped over a sewer grate and the slipper fell out of her bag. It was not until the next day when she reached for her dark red lipstick in the bag that she remembered

the slipper. Full of expectations to touch this beloved object from better days, Lindsey searched the bag. She could not find the slipper! With horror, she realized that she had lost her childhood as well as her home to the fire.

(Talia Andron)



Polyester and cotton, soft to touch. Dirt covered and matted color from exposure to elements. 6" by 4" by 3"

Found by Miriam Gross, Thursday Sept. 26, 2002, 3:00 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, Country Club Road, near Building 1 of Hayes Community, on drainage sewer half covered by leaves.

THE PINK STAR

Story 1

Alicia was taking the bus home after her first day of school. As she stepped on to the bus with her new sneakers, new backpack, in her new life, she burst into tears. At thirteen she felt like her world was falling apart. She didn't know which way was up, having just moved to this new city, without her mother and sister, all alone. The thought of going to her house, knowing no one was going to be there; knowing that her father wouldn't be "home" until it was too late to eat was too much. It had been three months since her parents' divorce. She had no idea what had happened. All she could think was that it was all her fault. The question, "What did I do wrong?" plagued her constantly. Leaving her mother and her sister was more than she could handle. Even though her little sister bugged her sometimes, she was always there when she needed her to play with or just to be there. Her dad tried, but he wasn't her mom, the new backpack he bought was all wrong. She wanted to tell him, but she knew they couldn't afford another one. All day she had suffered through shouts of, "How old are you new girl?" „Little Baby", "With stars on your backpack!" She had pretended she couldn't hear it, suffering, knowing she would have no friends. Through her tears, as she stepped off the bus, she ripped the tiny pink star off her backpack and threw it to the ground in despair. When she looked up, one of the

girls from her school was standing in front of her, in her hand she had the same small pink star; about to heave it to the ground. They looked at each other and smiled.

(Marie Mounteer)

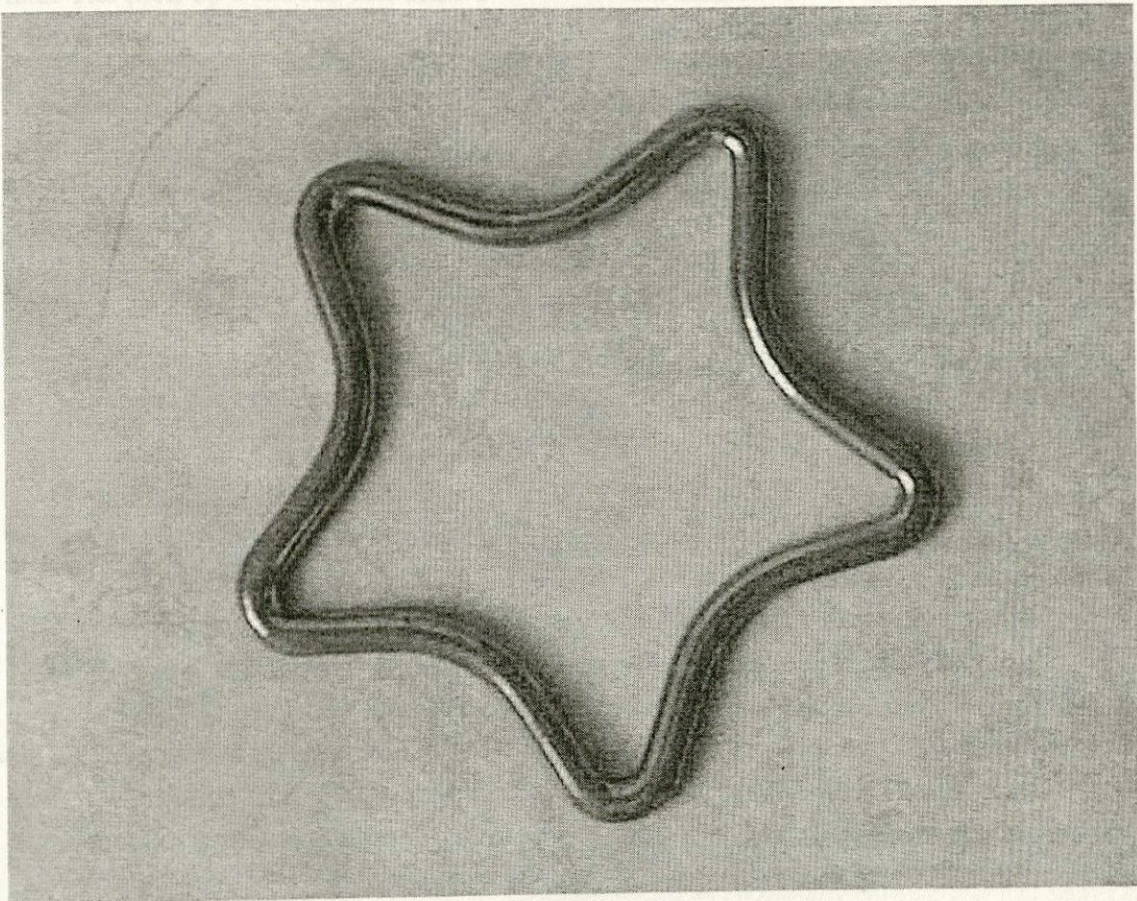
Story 2

Like other girls who went to preschool with her, Clarissa loved arts and crafts time. The youngsters' teacher was Mrs. Atkins, a thin blond woman with thick glasses that gave her the face of a wasp. One sunny morning, Mrs. Atkins decided that the children were ready to practice their stenciling. Each child chose a favorite stencil that they wanted to trace. There were cardboard cut-outs of trains, little plastic stars, alphabet letters, a teddy bear silhouette, a pipe, cars, etc. Clarissa laid her eyes on a delightful sparkly pink star to trace. Stars were her favorite things in the world. To be able to trace one, color it and add sparks made her giggle with excitement. The whole class worked diligently, and for once there was silence for 10 minutes. Even the boys were quiet. When the activity was over, Clarissa started to cry. Mrs. Atkins went over to the sad girl to comfort her. When she found out that the little girl was crying at the thought of having to give back her object, Mrs. Atkins let her keep it. Clarissa wore it proudly on her shirt button all day, making sure that all her friends admired it. When preschool was

over, and Clarissa's mom came to pick her up, she was waiting at the curb. Her mom had just bought a brandnew bright red Cherokee Chief, and Clarissa started to jump up and down at the sight of the enormous vehicle approaching. Full of excitement about the new car and seeing her mom, Clarissa climbed into the car. Only then did she perceive that in the course of the difficult ascent, she had

lost her star. She begged her Mom to let her out again, but they were already on their way, in a great hurry to get home and ready for the afternoon job. Clarissa was shocked: How could her mom be so cruel to her? Why did she not have a moment's time to recover her beloved bright pink star?

(Miriam Gross)



Pink plastic star, slightly scratched up. 1.5" by 1.5".

Found by Marie Munteer, Tuesday Sept. 17, 2002, 6:50 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, on side walk in front of Court House, at B.C. Bus Junction.

THE BANNER

Story 1

Kate just couldn't take it anymore. "That's the last time he forgets our anniversary! I'm done with that stupid loser; if he doesn't appreciate me he doesn't deserve me!". (The phone rings). "Hello," Chris's voice on the other end of the line made her shiver. She tried to muscle up enough guts to just hang up. Instead, she heard herself faintly whisper, "What, what the hell do you want?" "Just come outside," Chris answered. "Why?" she asked. "Just do it, please," Chris begged. Then there was a brief silence, until he exclaimed, "Its 11:50 - please come out now!" So she did. He walked up to her cautiously and placed a black cloth over her eyes, and escorted her to his mom's mini van. Kate asked what this was all about. Chris wouldn't tell her; all he said was, "Wait one more minute," as they drove down what she guessed was Clinton Street. There was silence between them, and the car slowed to a stop. He reached for the blindfold and said, "Did you think I would forget that it's one year today?" Her eyes opened. The only light was from the car's headlights shining in front of her. She looked up at the overpass and replied, "So, it's an overpass" she said with a disgusted voice. "You cheer me up by taking me to one of the most decrepit places in Binghamton?" Chris was apparently shocked. "But...but the banner...!" he stammered. He got out of the car and ran towards a white piece of

cloth on the side of the road. Just as he reached it, he stumbled and fell. As it draped over him, Kate's eyes lit up. She exclaimed, "Oh my god, you're so cute, I love you too!" Chris got up, cleaned his sweatshirt and said, "Let's leave the banner here. I'll put it back up tomorrow afternoon."

(Jessica Rottenstein)

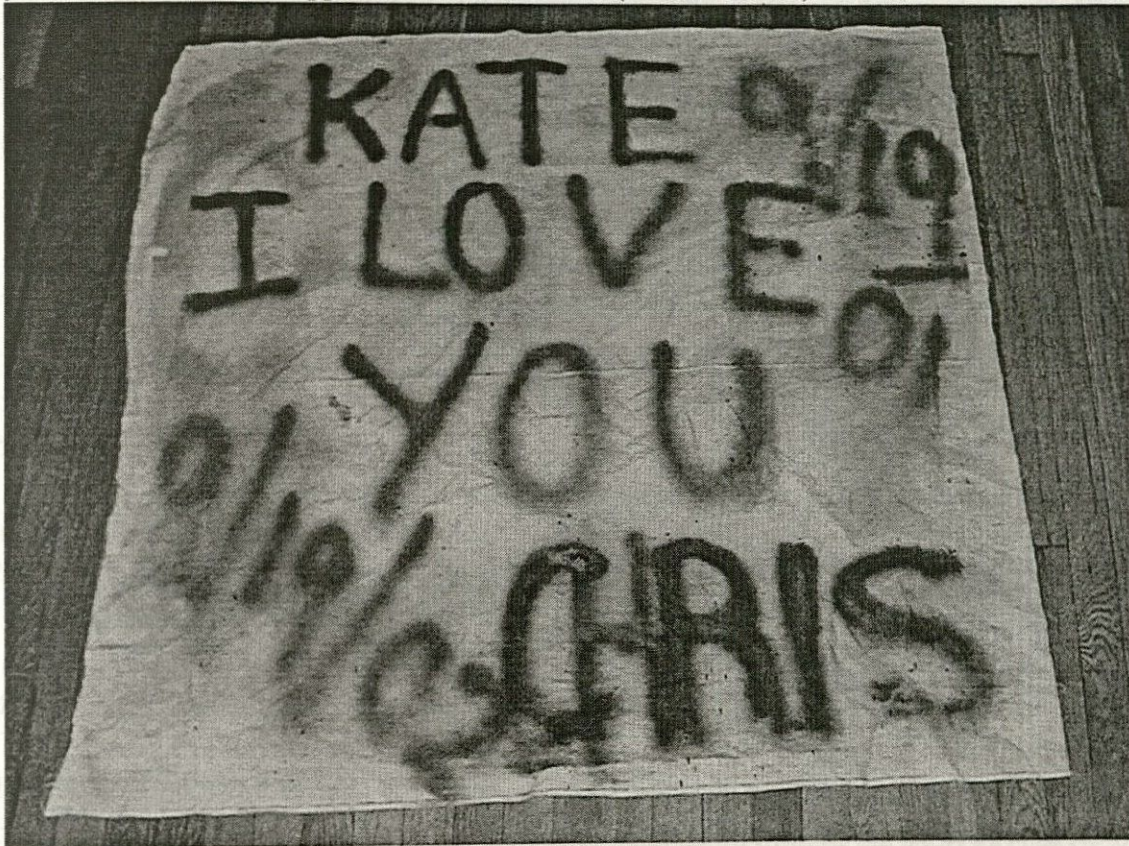
Story 2

Chris and Kate were high school sweethearts who grew up on Clinton Street. They both attended Binghamton University in the fall of 2002 to stay near each other and their families. They had only been together a short time but everyone knew that they would be together forever. On Labor Day, Chris planned to surprise Kate. Since he was very close with Kate's family he knew that there would be a birthday party at her family's house for her youngest sibling Dana. Chris told Kate's parents to ask her to stay and help keep track of the 25 other 8- and 9-year olds at the party while he set up a surprise for Kate. He made reservations for dinner at her favorite restaurant. Chris had created a huge banner that he was going to hold over the side of the overpass; she would see it as she was driving to his house. Finally, the time had come; the kids were leaving the party, and Chris had called and asked Kate to pick him up at 8 o'clock. Chris left his house and went down the street and up on the bridge.

Soon, he could see headlights in the distance. It was Kate! Chris began to wave the banner. Then, he suddenly heard a strange noise like squealing tires. Within an instant a rusty pick-up appeared from under the bridge, driving slightly over on Kate's side. Apparently, Kate's eyes were fixated on the banner. Chris gasped, and in a split second, he waved the banner as if saying, "Don't look here - be careful!" But it was too late. The pick-up truck ran into Kate's yellow beetle. Chris dropped the banner,

ran to the end of the bridge and jumped down the embankment. As he rushed to the scene, he could see that the car had pinned the driver's side door of Kate's car shut. Before Chris could call for help, police and an ambulance surrounded them. They rushed her and the other driver away to the nearest hospital. Within hours Kate was pronounced dead, killed by a drunk driver. Chris never forgave himself for that banner.

(Lannie Keeler)



White cloth with black spray paint writing, blue spray paint decor. Wet and dirty. 45" by 45"

Found by Jessica Rottenstein, Friday Sept. 20, 2002, 2:10 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, next to train overpass on Clinton Street.

THE BRACELET

Story 1

What you're looking at now is all the evidence that remains of the existence of one Binghamton University student, Molly Brown. Molly disappeared one afternoon after climbing up the hill to parking lot M. There are quite a few stories about what may have happened to Molly, but my story is the honest-to-goodness truth. You've heard of the Wicked Witch of the West? You know that if she gets wet, she melts. Well, Molly was also a witch of sorts. She had been causing trouble all over campus before a few curious students, Janie and Dave, got wind of her story and decided to do something about it. Janie and Dave followed her all day, watching her very odd activities: they caught her barking at squirrels, and she seemed offended by people wearing the color blue, not to mention that she could disappear into thin air. Jane and Dave finally realized that Molly was also able to turn into anything she found convenient. Janie figured out that Molly was pushing back clock hands during boring lectures, and Dave saw her calling campus police to tell on people whose parking permits had expired. And the last straw was when Janie and Dave both realized that Molly had been putting dog poop into the paths of unsuspecting flip-flop wearers. They followed Molly up to Lot M and sprayed her with water bottles. Aghast they stared at her while she began to steam - she evaporated! Her little bracelet fell to

the ground. I know it sounds incredible, but I swear it's true.

(Elizabeth Learn)

Story 2

Gina and Josh grew up next door to one another on a cul-de-sac in the small town of Buffalo, Wyoming. On weekends, they would fly fish on Snake River, and any free moment they had was spent hiking in the Big Horn Mountains. The two neighbors grew older, but never apart, and this was not to change with the coming of college. Gina always had a desire to see what existed beyond the high walls of the Big Horns. She sent applications all over the United States and eventually decided on SUNY Binghamton in New York. Saying goodbye to one another was the hardest thing the two best friends ever had to do. It was hard to imagine the next four years without each other's company. The fateful day eventually arrived that Gina's plane would depart, and Josh drove her to the airport. While waiting at the terminal, Josh reached for Gina's hand to calm her, and gently slid a bracelet on her wrist. Then in low tone Josh said, "I made it out of wood I found while hiking with you in the Big Horns this summer. This way, wherever you are, you will always have a part of Wyoming with you, as well as a part of me." - The semester began. One dark night while taking a short-cut back to her dorm by Lot M on the SUNY campus, Gina was

chased by a strange man. When he caught up to her there was a struggle, but Gina got away after punching the man in the face. She arrived safely back to her room, but the bracelet had fallen off. When she punched the stranger, the bracelet hit his face and fell from her wrist onto the ground. Later that week a

rapist was caught who had been stalking girls on campus. Gina was able to identify the criminal by marks that had been left on his nose from the unique beads of the wood bracelet Josh had made.

(Dawn Corso)



Wooden and stone beads on black thread, very well preserved. Beads ca. .5" diameter. Found by Elizabeth Learn on Monday, Sept. 23, 2002, 5 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, Binghamton University campus, in front of the short cut path into back of parking lot M.

THE T-SHIRT

Story 1

Susan found herself sitting on her college bed reminiscing about the day when her brother, Tom, had stormed out of their home exactly ten years prior. It had been a long time since his disappearance but she could remember it all as if it were yesterday. She played back that day a million times over in her head. If she had only known that he was not going to come back she would have told him earlier that day how much she truly cared about him, but it was too late now. Her brother had been such an important part of her life when they were growing up that she regularly broke into tears when remembering that they hadn't seen each other in years. Susan had received a phone call from her parents earlier that week about her brother's body being recovered in a park near their home. She knew the difficult time had come for her to go home for her brother's memorial service. She was heading to her car for the long trip home when she realized that she had forgotten to pack Tom's favorite T-shirt. The light blue cotton T-shirt had been her last memory of her brother and she had managed to hold onto it for years, with the hope that she would someday find her brother and give it back to him. That day had never come. Susan grabbed the shirt from her closet and ran to her car in Lot S. She threw her bags into the back seat and started the car. She arrived home late that evening and began

unpacking her car. Suddenly she realized that there was no T-shirt! She frantically searched, but couldn't find it. What had happened? She had not stopped on the way, so nobody could have stolen it. Had she lost it on her way to the car? Not only had she lost her brother forever, but now the last object to remind her of him was gone as well. (Regina Maieli)

Story 2

Rob could not wait to go out that Friday night. Whether it would be to the bars in downtown Binghamton, or to a party with his girlfriend, Jenn, he just wanted to party. His life had been very stressed out recently. In the past week he had two midterms and a 10-page paper due. Other than the fact that he desperately needed to blow off steam from all the work he had been doing, he would be turning 21 years old that night. Rob, his fraternity brothers and his girlfriend made plans to go out to a bar downtown. Rob got dressed, put on his jeans and decided to wear his favorite ribbed T-shirt from Old Navy that was so comfortable. It looked worn, and the blue was faded. Rob and Jenn arrived at the Sports Bar at about midnight and all of his friends were there. Many of his frat brothers bought him drinks, and Rob was very drunk by 1:00 in the morning. He wasn't able to stand up very well, so Jenn decided that they should probably go home. She got two of his frat brothers

to help him into her car. Jenn lived in Bingham dormitory. She parked as close as possible to the building. They got out of the car and started walking on the path that led up to the dorm. Jenn asked Rob if he had had a good birthday. He turned to her and smiled - he now remembered that it was his birthday. All of a sudden, he ripped off his shirt, threw it on the ground and started beating his chest, hollering, "I am kind of the world, I am 21!" Jenn started laughing

hysterically but she was somewhat embarrassed by the scene Rob was making. She urged him to put his T-shirt back on, but he kept refusing saying that he was too hot, "Jenn, I am too hot! Why can't I just be naked?" Rob suddenly hunched over as if he was going to fall, and Jenn used all her strength to help him to the dorm. Concentrating on helping Rob, Jenn had forgotten about the T-shirt that lay on the ground.
(Jessica Margolis)



Cotton T-shirt, manufactured by Old Navy. Light Blue and washed out in appearance. 12" by 24".

Found by Regina Maieli, Sunday, Sept. 29, 2002, 5:45 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, Binghamton University campus, behind a Honda on Campus Parking Lot S2, near path to Newman house.

THE RELIGIOUS PAMPHLET

Story 1

Cho-Ping Shin (Amy) Hong is a sophomore at the University and a recently converted catholic. She had converted with several friends, the closest being Dong Juan (Robert) Xie, the semester before. After a youth group meeting a few weeks prior, Robert had been doubled over with pain and had been rushed away in an ambulance. Since then Amy had spent a lot of time at Lourdes hospital where Robert was dealing with a severe case of diverticulitis. On one particular visit she wandered into the hospital's chapel where she came upon the St. Jude Novena prayer pamphlet. Amy decided that it would be a great prayer to lead the congregation in. She chose the Novena "Prayer in Great Affliction" contained in the pamphlet. Since it was December and finals were rapidly approaching, Amy had no time to memorize the prayer between studying, church and visiting Robert, but reconciled herself to just reading it. The morning of the service, she awoke to find that she had overslept! She looked at her watch, it was 10 to 10. She only had a few minutes to get dressed and to the church! It was one of the typical, bitterly cold, windy, December days in Binghamton. In her rush out the door and into her car, the pamphlet, which she had stuffed into the already overflowing bag, blew out

and onto the frozen ground. Amy was in such a hurry that she didn't notice. She arrived at the church, where the service had already begun. Father Forgarty caught her eye and beckoned her forward to the altar to read. She reached in her bag for the prayer - only to realize it wasn't there! She frantically searched, but with no luck. Amy turned and ran out of the church, crying miserably. She drove straight to the hospital, where she found Robert's room empty. Perhaps she had the wrong room? She went to the nurse's station and inquired about Robert in Rm. 666. "I'm sorry, sweetie," the nurse replied, "He said he suddenly felt better and took off home with one of our employees!"

(Dorothy Granger)

Story 2

Marie was your typical college student. She constantly found herself feeling stressed and overwhelmed by life's daily routines. She was perpetually worrying about her grades, family, and perhaps most stressful, her future. Marie recognized the fact that she needed a peaceful break in her daily routine. So, on the second Sunday of September she decided that she was going to church. It had been a while since she had gone the last time, but she felt that she needed to have faith enter her life once again. The whole sermon seemed to Marie utterly alien and unhelpful. At the exit, without

thinking, she picked up a religious pamphlet on St. Jude. On her way back to her apartment, at Hillside, Marie began reading it. She found herself reading one passage over and over again. "Time and Time again I find myself discouraged and depressed by the troubles I must face. I know that others around me have burdens as heavy or heavier than mine but I sometimes come close to despairing that I will be able to continue carrying mine. Overwhelmed by these thoughts, I ask your help." Marie immediately fell in love with the passage. This had been exactly how she was feeling! She read further and found

an explanation of how to conduct a Novena, a nine days' private or public devotion in the Catholic Church to obtain special graces. That was it, Marie had found a solution to solving her stress-related difficulties! She was going to conduct a novena. She was so convinced that this was going to cure all of her problems that she sat down at the edge of the parking lot and began to sob. A gust of wind blew away the pamphlet with the prayer. Marie did not mind. She would leave it wherever the wind took it so that other students could be guided and directed by the prayers of St. Jude. (Regina Maieli)



Religious pamphlet with faded cover showing Jesus holding a medaillon or plate. Prayer text and other religious text inside. 7.5" by 3".

Found by Dorothy Granger on Tuesday, September 24, 2002, 4:45 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, Binghamton University campus, Parking lot ZZ South (Hillside Community).

THE YELLOW ENVELOPE

Story 1

Dina drove in her car feeling giggly and nervously excited. Things had been going so well with her and Devon. She couldn't wait to see him and give him the letter that she had been conjuring up for weeks now. That letter recapped the past 4 months they had spent with each other. She retold the tingly feeling she got when she first met him and how much she liked him when they first started dating and how much she loved him now. She was somewhat afraid to give the letter to Devon because she wrote in it things that she had never before told him. However, she didn't want to keep her feelings inside any longer. Dina pulled into the parking lot at Saratoga Dormitory in Hillside Community. It was shortly before midnight. She got out of the car and started walking across the grassy hill. She hadn't told Devon she was coming over, but it was the time he would usually go to bed. As she walked towards the dorm she saw the door swing open, and it was Devon! She wanted to scream his name but before she could, she noticed that he was leading a girl out of the dormitory. Dina was confused; she didn't understand what Devon was doing and who this girl was. She gasped for air as she saw the scene unravel before her eyes. She took a few steps back so they couldn't see her. Devon reached out and touched the girl's face, caressed it smoothly, and leaned in

and kissed her. Dina had never felt so enraged. She felt like she couldn't breathe, like the wind had been knocked out of her and she might faint. She took a few steps back and sat down behind a bush where a lamp from the parking lot spread a milky orange light. She ripped open the envelope that said "Devey" in a heart, to read the words that were now completely meaningless. How could all of it be such a lie, such a mistake? She felt like everything she knew to be real was shattered. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she crumpled up the letter and put it in her pocket. She picked herself up and ran towards her car. Only the yellow envelope stayed behind as a sign of a deeply deceived affection. (Jessica Margolis)

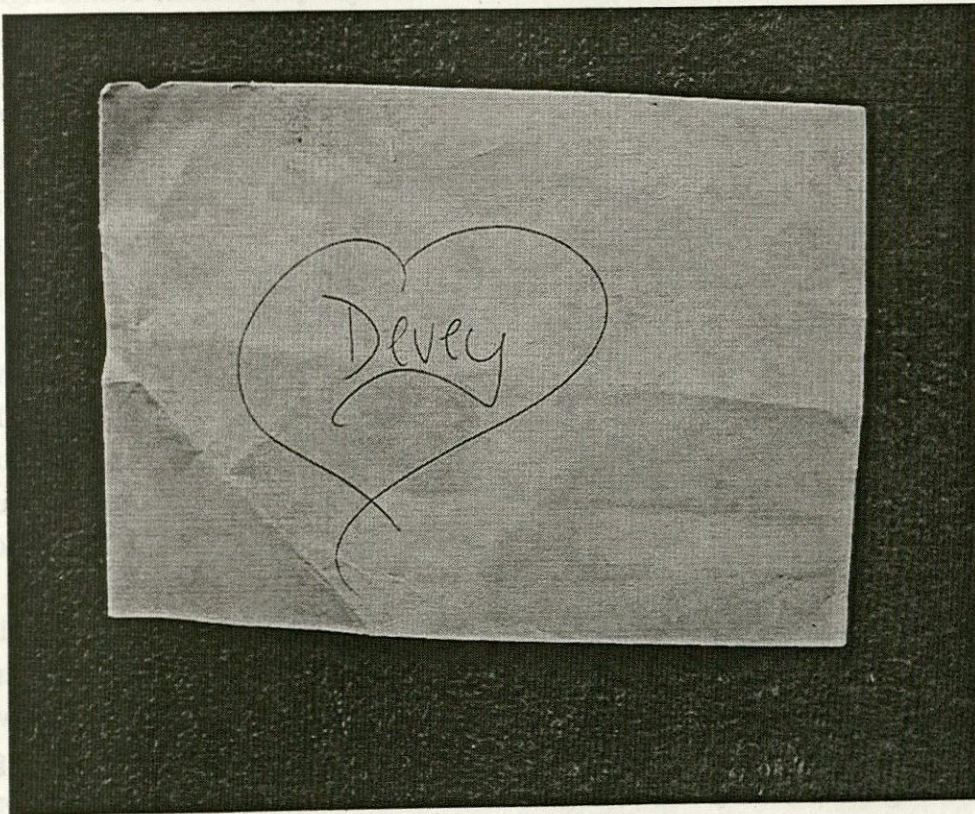
Story 2

I can't stop thinking about her. When I wake up in the morning, during class, she follows me into my dreams. I'll never forget the first time I saw her. As she walked into the room, even though there were two hundred other people in there, all I saw was her. She sat right next to me, and she smiled. It was then that I knew I loved her. Every day I would try to sit next to her, but she was always surrounded by all her friends. Sometimes she would smile at me; those were the moments I treasured the most. One day I found myself following her home from class. I didn't know why I

was doing it - I couldn't help it. It was as if a force greater than myself was pulling me to her. That night I went back to her dorm and just sat in front of her window. It didn't matter if I saw her as long as I knew I was close to her. As the semester wore on, I stopped being able to eat or sleep, all I could do was think about her. I memorized her schedule, I found myself skipping my classes and going to hers just to be near her. Finally I couldn't hold it in any longer and I decided to tell her how I felt. I decided the best way would be to write a note. I picked a yellow envelope because I knew it was her favorite color. I wrote and re-wrote

the letter hundreds of times. I left the letter outside her door and waited for her to find it. After an eternity, she came out to smoke a cigarette. She looked curiously at the envelope and picked it up. My heart was pounding. I gazed as her fingers carefully opened it. I stared as her eyes scanned the pages. I watched as she looked up, looking for me. I wanted to stand up and say, "I am over here!". But she let the paper drop and ran into the dorm. I saw people stepping all over the letter and the bright yellow envelope. She scorned me, but I still can't stop thinking about her.

(Marie Mounteer)



Yellow envelope of a love letter, thick paper, creased and dirty. 5" by 7".
Found by Jessica Margolis, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2002, 4:30 p.m.
Location: Binghamton, Binghamton University campus, outside of Saratoga Dorm in Hillside Community.

THE SOFTBALL

Story 1

In his youth his reputation extended over four towns. He was the first boy in decades with talent like this, and all the kids would come watch him play. When he hit a ball, the crack was heard for miles. Sammy Cosa was one of the best players who ever lived. However, his home life was not quite as magical. Though they could barely afford it, his father bought him a brand new softball for his tenth birthday. It was bright white, with perfect red stitching. Sammy wasted no time. He ran over to the field, and he and his friends enjoyed their first game with the new ball. That ball went through hell. The boys played rain or shine, day after day. The more beat up the ball got, the more Sammy loved it. Sammy went on to break records. Even in his professional career there was no question in his mind which ball he would use when the time came to teach his son to play. He could afford the most expensive balls, but Sammy loved his old softball. One day, Sammy took Sammy Jr. out for his first training. They tossed the beloved ball around. Sammy Sr. took out the shiny, new metal bat he had bought. Sammy Jr. stood in the tall grass awaiting his first pitch. Just as the ball left Sammy's hands, the first crack of lightening lit up the sky. Sammy Jr. hit the ball with such force that it could only be compared to his father's at that age. Sammy was ecstatic, but had no time to celebrate. All of a sudden, the

rain came pouring down, mixed with thunder and lightning, leaving him with only enough time to grab Sammy Jr. and run off with him to find shelter. The ball had landed in a nearby forest. Sammy, desperate, went back the second the storm ended to find the ball, but the brush did not give its secret back to him. He went out there day after day until the next season began and he was forced to be on the road again for months. In vain. Never again was Sammy Sr. that perfect player he had once been.

(Shira Topiol)

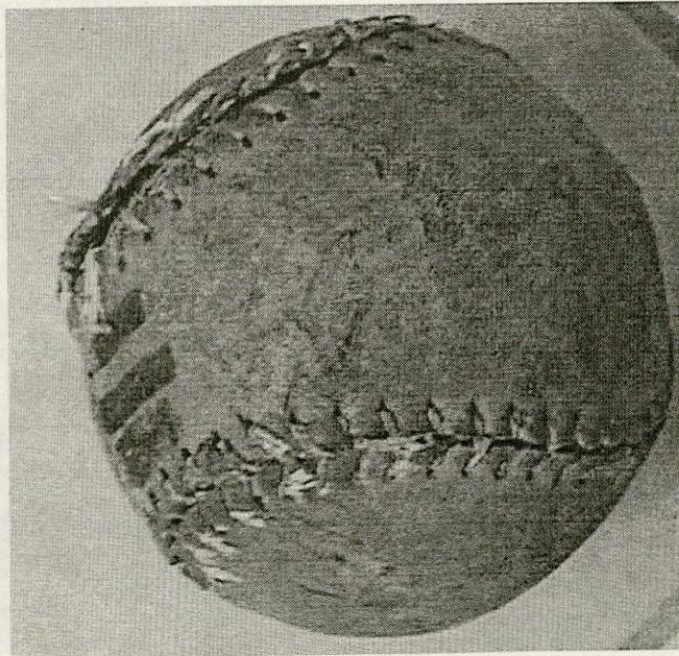
Story 2

Alison's birthday was her most dreaded day of the entire year. It brought back memories of when her father left her the day she turned five. Every year from then on she received a card without a return address signed, your father, and a small useless present. Today she woke up to the sounds of thunder outside her window. Scared she ran to her mother's bed, where the soft-spoken woman greeted her with a warm smile and a "Happy twelfth birthday, sweetie." Displeased that she was reminded of the gloomy day she knew had befallen her, Alison's eyes began to swell up with tears. In effort to appease her daughter's sadness, the mother handed Alison a pink card and a worn-out cardboard box that her father had sent her this year. Alison discarded the envelope, and proceeded to slowly and

unenthusiastically open the box, if out of nothing but curiosity. A washed-out, filthy, and raggedy baseball was planted in the box. Allison furiously grabbed the baseball and ran outside. How could her father give her a baseball, let alone a tattered one; sports are for boys! She wanted Barbie dolls and stuffed animals. She reached back with her right arm and threw it with all her strength, anger, and frustration, as far as she possibly could. Feeling relieved, she returned to her house, empty-handed, to prepare for her birthday party. -- Missy, the resident advisor of CIW at Binghamton University would walk her dog around the neighborhood streets every day. As they were walking down one of the blocks a ball came bouncing down the

street. Her extremely active dog, Pal, got loose from her hold and went chasing after the baseball. Missy tried pulling the ball out from in between the dog's sharp teeth, but all she managed to do was rip the seams even further. Aggravated, she returned to the dormitories with Pal drooling all over his new toy. When they entered the apartment, Pal ran to the water forgetting about the ball he was so excited about previously. Missy picked it up immediately with gloves on, so as not to touch the filth and dog saliva. She opened her window on the first floor and threw it as far as she possibly could. The baseball rolled down the hill, and landed in the brush by a tree.

(Vicki Szenes)



Greenish softball out of cloth, with ripped up seams. Dirty and worn out. 4.5' diameter. Found by Shira Topiol on Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002, 5:10 p.m. Location: Binghamton, NY, Binghamton University campus, in a small forest, near a road leading up to a college dorm.

THE BROKEN PLATE

Story 1

Jim was quite a nervous seventeen year old boy on his first day of classes at Binghamton University. To his dismay his day began when he woke up from the phone ringing a half hour after his class had already begun. He jumped out of bed reminding himself that this was not high school and actually going to class would be an intelligent idea. Remaining in his flannel pajama pants and raggedy white Hanes T-shirt, he threw on a pair of sneakers, popped a stick of gum into his mouth, grabbed his skateboard, and was off to class. At the end of class he made sure to tell the old, white-bearded teacher he was there, since he had missed attendance, and he went to the dining hall to grab some food to fill his now famished stomach. Jim timidly scanned the food court, finally finding his favorite meal, pasta and sauce. Realizing he had no friends who were eating, in fact he had no friends at all, he decided to take his food back to the room. He hopped on his skateboard with his plate of food in one hand and a giant cup of coke in the other. On his way back, however, he spotted a guy who used to pick on him in high school. Panicking he began to lose his balance and was heading straight for a tree. Looking even more pathetic then he had all day with his messy hair and tattered clothing, he was now waving his hands and screaming. Left with one option he jumped off the skateboard, landing in the

brush, and fell face first into his pasta, cracking the plate that he had stupidly stolen from the dining hall. An audience had formed around him, laughing at the embarrassing performance that they had just seen. Feeling awkward, he left the mess he created, and his skateboard, and ran away with tears in his eyes, sauce on his face, and sticky hair from his soda. (Vicki Szenes)

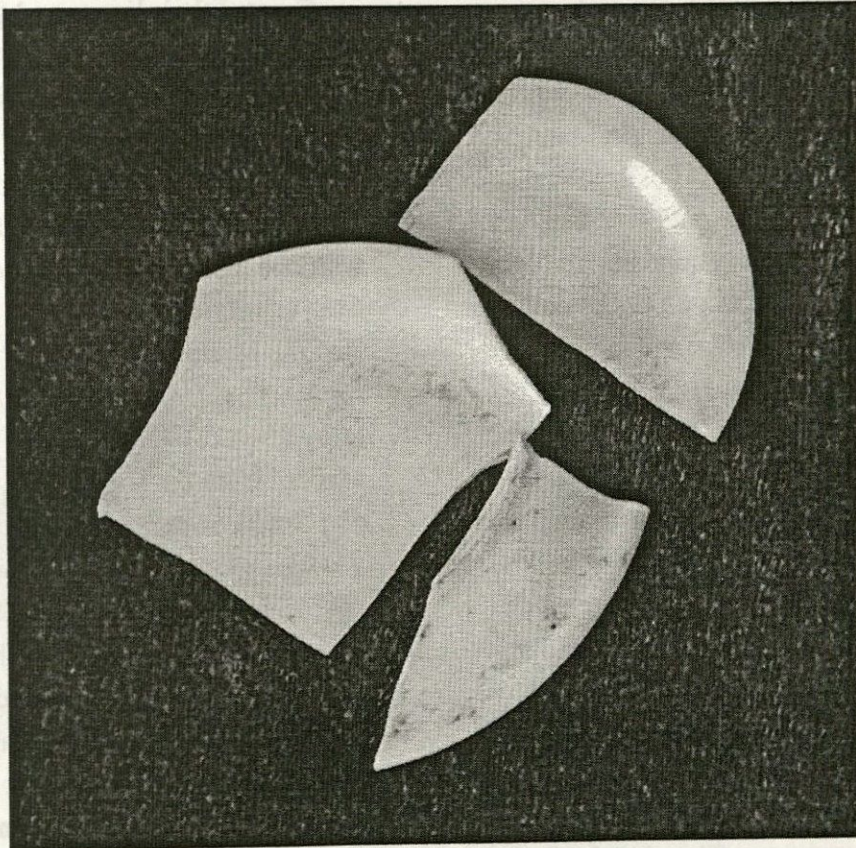
Story 2

It wasn't all that uncommon for Laura and Mike to find themselves picnicking in the "wilderness" - as they called the woods on the campus - on a Sunday afternoon. They had been dating for four months, a lifetime in Junior High. She had a set of dishes she had bought at Walmart with her birthday money. He would carry the basket, as she stopped to smell every flower in sight. On this sunny day Laura knew something that Mike didn't. She knew that this would be the last of their picnics together. Noah, the cute boy from her Spanish class, told Rachel, her best friend, that he thought she was cute. She could no longer be tied down! She had to live while she was young. Mike, too, knew that today would be different. He was going to tell her that he loved her. He was so anxious that he didn't even notice how distant she was. He was blind to the heartache that awaited him. They

how distant she was. He was blind to the heartache that awaited him. They unfolded the sheet and laid out the sandwiches. He poured the drinks, while she took out her precious dishes. Neither of them noticed the bee that had been flying around the vegetables and found its way up Laura's sleeve. Laura had been allergic to bees from birth, but had never been stung. She didn't know how to react, she just panicked. Screaming appeared to be the only solution she could come up with. Mike did not even know what had happened. Laura ran in

circles, breaking the plates, crying and yelling. Mike chased her, trying to figure out what was going on. This continued for several minutes, until Laura came to a stop. She could no longer yell, for her tongue had swollen so much it filled her mouth. Right then she fell to the ground, unable to breath. Mike could not understand what had happened, but after realizing that she was dead he became filled with fear and pain. He fell to the ground crying. Only after a long time did he run to get help.

(Shira Topiol)



White glazed ceramics. Broken, dirt covered and pieces missing. Fragments of various sizes, all 1" thick.

Found by Vicki Szenes on Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002, 5:15 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, Binghamton University campus, next to hill by College in the Woods.

THE CAMP FIRE LIGHTER

Story 1

The day had finally come. Greg, Dave, Chris, Ron and the rest of the class of 2002 walked down the gymnasium floor and received that slip of paper from the Superintendent of schools. It was official - they were high school graduates. Their mothers were crying and their dads had to take what seemed to be a million pictures, and for Greg, Dave, Chris and Ron this day would never be forgotten. Greg was very smart; he had accepted a scholarship from Princeton and was planning on pursuing a major in Physics. Dave on the other hand didn't even apply to any colleges, because, as he said, "I have the IQ of a potato." Chris was moving to Delaware, and Ron had received a football scholarship to Notre Dame. The only thing on their minds that day was to have as much fun as possible, because it might be the last time any of them would see each other again. That night they made plans to meet at the railroad tracks; after all, they had grown up together building tree forts, playing football, and stealing candy from Mr. Wheeler's corner store. They all met at the abandoned lot across from Dave's house on Hudson Street. They had carved a path out of the foliage when they were kids which now had become overgrown. They climbed through, laughing at how small it now seemed. Chris set up some fireworks and opened the bottle of tequila. As they drank they each had a story to tell. This

was the last and the greatest, and to celebrate Chris began to set off an enormous amount of fireworks. Their celebration soon ended when they heard yelling and saw flashlights through the trees. It was the police, and they scattered in all directions. Each found an old hideout and waited. The police officers gave up after a train roared by, and the guys met back up at the same spot. They were aghast when they realized that the police hadn't confiscated their liquor and fireworks. The only problem was that the lighter they had used had been heavily damaged by the train, and all that was left were the yellow plastic insides. Greg, Dave, Chris and Ron went home that night with one last adventure to file away in their memories.

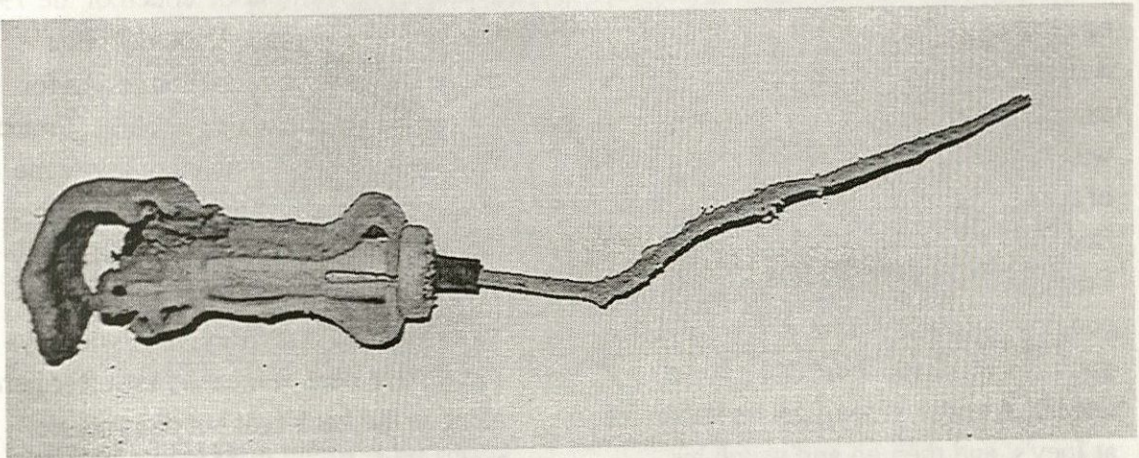
(Lannie Keeler)

Story 2

Marisol went for a long walk with her dog Bowser one Saturday afternoon. Bowser, a Golden retriever, was an unbelievably rambunctious dog that could never leave things on the ground. He chewed on everything and was too inquisitive by nature. That day, Marisol was thinking about a conflict she just gotten into with her best friend, Janice, about Bowser. Janice just doesn't understand why she pays so much attention to her mangy pup. All Janice wants is to go out, display her newest acquisitions of perfume, cloths,

extravagant make-up. But Marisol won't leave her dog at home for the entire night. Marisol thinks to herself, "Since I decided to get a dog, I have responsibilities. She just doesn't understand what it's like to have responsibilities." Preoccupied and upset, Marisol was not paying any attention to her nosy pup. Before they even got to the train tracks -- where she usually walked him -- Bowser had already begun to be his normal self, sniffing everything on the ground. Marisol, not in the mood for her dog's playful disposition, tugged the leash and motioned for Bowser to keep on walking. Bowser stepped in front of her. As Marisol almost tripped she began to reprimand her dog.

Looking at him, she saw the tip of something yellow and plastic in his mouth. Disgusted at what her dog had picked up, she released his grip on this object and made him spit it out. She held the thing in her hand; Bowser would not stop barking at her. Fed up and annoyed she saw a train coming. Knowing that Bowser hated the sound trains made, she threw the object across the tracks in the nick of time. Secretly laughing at her dog's defeat and still appalled at what Bowser had just chewed on, she took her whimpering dog, who had to leave his new toy at the side of the train tracks, back home, wishing she could be more like Janice and have no responsibilities. (Jessica Rottenstein)



Camp fire lighter, yellow plastic pieces, with flattened hose at one end. Very dirty, fragment only. Approximately 9" by 1".

Found by Lannie Keeler, Wednesday Sept. 25, 2002, 5:17 p.m.

Location: Johnson City, NY, along the railroad tracks near Hudson Street.

THE PLAYING CARD

Story 1

It had been a few months since Price had moved to the north side of Endicott from New Jersey, and fitting in as the new kid was a harder battle than he thought. He would sit by himself on the corner of a crowded lunchroom at George W. Johnson Elementary School every day, and practice his card tricks alone at recess. Before he left New Jersey, his neighbor had given him a deck of cards as something to keep him occupied during the car ride. Price had become quite good at guessing what suit and number was in the hand of his mother at home, as well as mastering a few other inventive tricks. After school, they used to hang out by the carousel on Oakhill Avenue. There were swings and a baseball field for them all to play and congregate at, as well as the free carousel rides. Price would go and play with his cards, usually alone, until some of the kids inquired what he was doing. Suddenly everybody seemed to like Price, and the talk of the school was how cool his card tricks were. Even the sixth graders would ride their bikes down Oakhill Avenue, stop to get an Italian ice at Joey's, and then go and watch his magic. Everything was going well, and Price was quickly making friends. Then one day in late October Anthony showed up. He was Julie's older brother. He came to the park to pick up his sister, and noticed that Julie was sitting next to Price on a bench outside the carousel

talking. Anthony marched up to Price, told everyone the secrets of his card tricks, and threw his deck of cards up in the air. Price tried to pick them all up before the wind carried them into the busy traffic, but it was too late. All the kids became quiet as Price began to walk home, looking up only to see his scattered cards being run over by cars and trucks. One woman's dog even ripped a hole through a queen of clubs that had fallen into an abandoned ice cream cone.

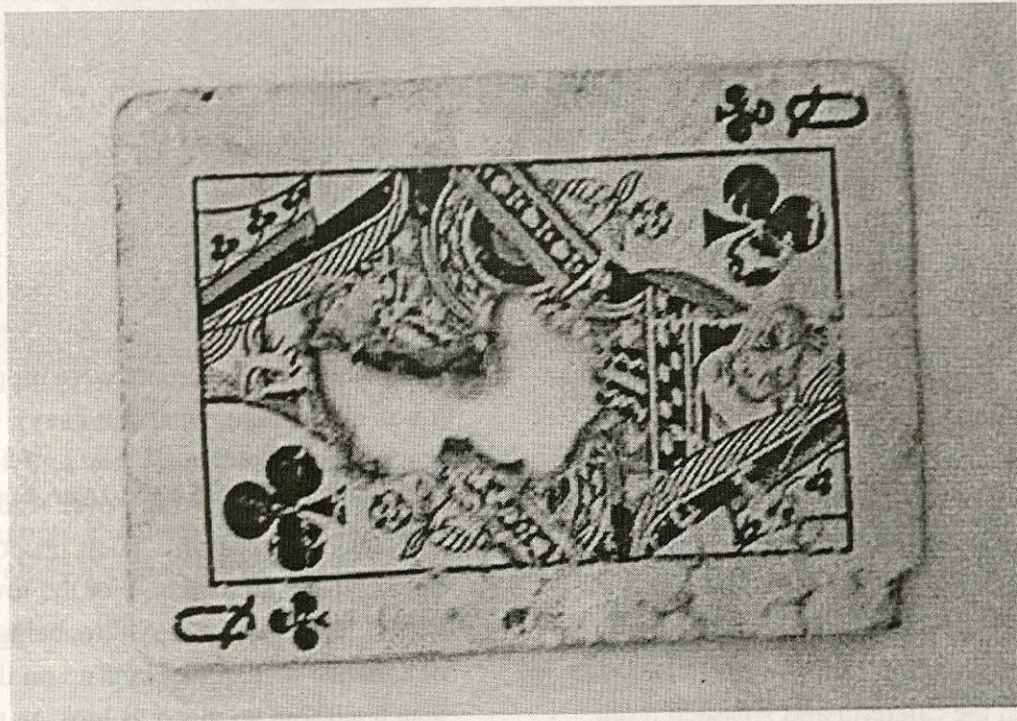
(Dawn Corso)

Story 2

"Will you take that stupid card off your nose Nikki?!" Jamie complains. Nikki, lolling in the red plastic couch of the 79 Chevy Nova, replies, "No way. You really DO need to relax, Jamie. As for the card, I am the queen of clubs. I must find my king and he may not know me without my mark. You're just jealous that I am the queen and you are but my lowly chauffeur." Another voice from the back rings out: "Hey, hey, you guys - I may have been sentenced to suffer here alone in the back seat but did you see that?" Both Jamie and Nikki exclaim in stereo, "What? Where?" Matter of factly from the backseat, "Back there! On the corner. Men, three of them." Nikki replies in her usual loudness, "Go back. - Turn here." The 'chauffeur' comments, "Ok, ok. It's like you have never seen a

man before!" "My king, my king. I must find my king!" Nikki is beyond herself. "At least take that card off your nose, they're gonna think we're all insane," the backseat admonishes. "Let them think what they want," comes from Nikki. A smile. A wink. Then, loudly out the window, "I am the queen of clubs, which one of you will be my king? . . . Oh, shit, my card! Jamie, go back. I lost my card!" Nikki begs. Jamie stays cool: "No

way, you just abdicated your throne. Your kingdom has crumbled and all your suitors think you should be shut up in the tower." "But..." "No buts, Nikki and that is my final word on the subject. I may be a lowly chauffeur but remember it is a long way home." "Ya, ya. See, you lose the power and the money and the men, and then you find out who your real friends are."
(Heather Evans)



Queen of Clubs card, made of thin sheets of laminated paper. Colored ink. With holes and rippings. 3.5" by 2.5"

Found by Dawn Corso, Wednesday Sept. 25, 2002, 12:10 p.m.

Location: Endicott, NY, Oakhill Ave.

THE BROKEN KNIFE

Story 1

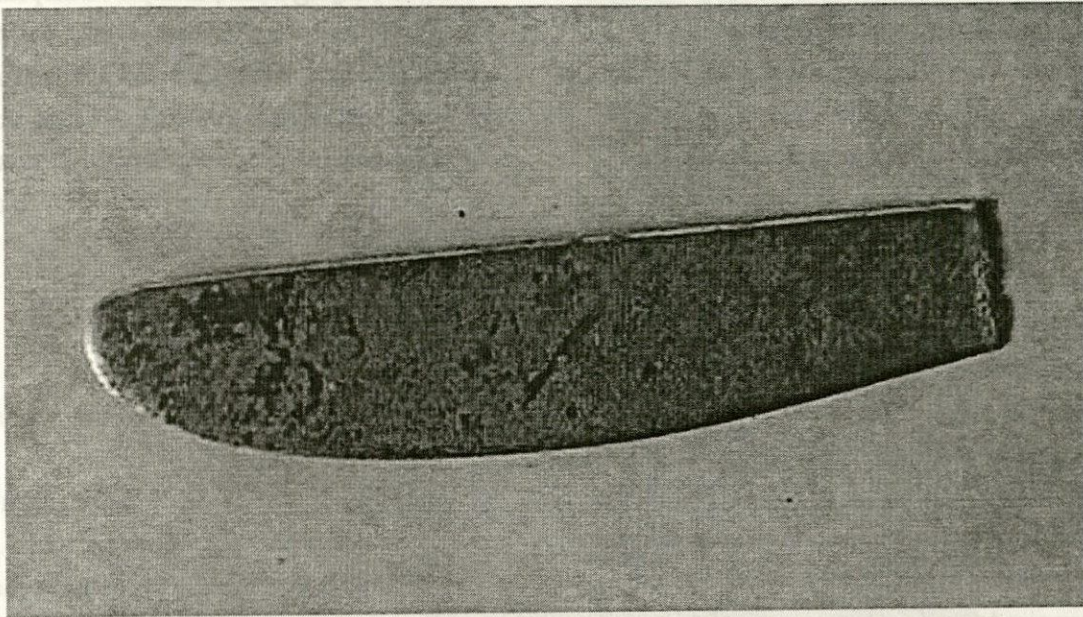
On a cold October day in 1999, Carl, Harold, Arnold and Hamid went together to have their traditional, half-burnt pizza at the cafeteria in College in the Woods. Arnold had an overdue paper, and the others were making fun of him. "You loser, you want to brown-nose that prof?" Carl grumbled. "You nerd, good grades are for girls," Harold shouted, ripping huge pieces from his pizza. Arnold, torn between his friends and the aspirations of his parents, couldn't stand it anymore and left without another word. Once outside the cafeteria, he stopped and devoured his food on the field between the pay parking lot and the dorm. He was mad at all those incommensurable demands placed on him. He despised his parents for pushing him into an academic career, and he hated his friends for teasing him. Anger and frustration over his situation befell him. Slowly, Arnold's mood switched from a feeling of failure and defeat to aggressiveness. His old irascibility broke through, when he took the kitchenware from the cafeteria and smashed it one piece after another. Arnold, methodical in his unstopable ill temper, instinctively felt an acute sense for symmetry of destruction. He broke the knife, and threw a fragment, along with the rest of the proof of the lunch tragedy, into the woods. Suddenly, a sense of relief and task fulfillment overcame him. (Michael Mandel)

Story 2

In the earlier years of Binghamton University, there was an up and coming trend for students to partake in illegal activities in the nature preserve. Now, these illegal activities are not what you may be thinking. I'm talking about knife flinging! You bet, this was not only a dangerous sport, but it entailed stealing silverware from various dining halls around campus. One student, Andre Perez, was famed for his precision and strength. His arch-rival, Hans Brodoteaux, was also skilled but didn't have the following Andre did. Hans was constantly trying to outdo Andre and even getting him in trouble. You must have guessed by now that this wasn't just about knife flinging, but about a girl, one Lady Godiva (her parents were hippies, it was all the rage, what can I say). Well, one particular evening, when Lady Godiva had been fawning over Andre, and Hans got tired of it, Hans proposed a once-and-for-all match. "For the love of Lady," Hans declared. Andre, being a bit of a macho man, took Hans up on the match without so much as looking to Lady for an approving glance. The match was long and very close. Hans had hit the bulls eye with his last knife, and to win, Andre had to break Hans' knife in two. It was an extremely tense moment; no one had ever been able to win a match so close by splitting a knife. But in the end Andre triumphed. Hans' splintered knife lay in the grass, as Hans

screamed with anguish over losing the girl of his dreams. Andre went to Lady to claim his prize. However, Lady had decided that with the women's liberation movement being so popular, and Andre

being such a schmuck, she'd rather be a lesbian, and ran off with her new girlfriend, Buttercup.
(Elizabeth Learn)



Broken Knife, stainless steel, shiny but weathered. 3" by 1/2".

Found by Michael Mandel, Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002, 5:30 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, Binghamton University campus, alongside winding backroad towards Oneida dormitory.

THE TRAIN DOOR FRAGMENT

Story 1

In the early 1970s Dana went from Virginia by train to visit her boyfriend Eric. Eric lived in Syracuse. Since Dana did not want to travel alone, she brought along her sister and three friends. The train ride departing from Virginia was going to take eight hours so the girls brought along with them some games to play with. There were not too many seats on the train so some of the girls had to sit on the floor; luckily, it was not overly filthy. Dana sat close to the door. Each time the train made its stop, Dana would have to get up because the door would open and close. There was a group of guys who rode on the same section of the train as Dana and the others. One of the games that Dana wanted to play required twelve players so Dana invited the guys to participate. They did, of course, because they would have been fools to say no to such attractive young women. The game was called 'death trap'. It was a very controversial game that allowed each player to express their perception on certain issues without anyone becoming offended by anything others would say. But it did not turn out so well. One of the guys named Jack became very upset. In outrage, he started fighting Jerry, one of the other guys. Jack and Jerry were tumbling all over this section of the train. Jack hit Jerry with his fist so that Jerry fell against the door near where Dana was sitting. In the heat of the battle, nobody heard the

crackling noise in the door. The fight finally ended, the guys made up, and the game continued. Dana went back to her place and leaned against the door, which suddenly flung open, as a piece of plastic from the lock mechanism splintered off. Dana fell out of the train and landed three feet away from the tracks near Binghamton station. She was rushed to the hospital and has been confined to a wheelchair ever since.

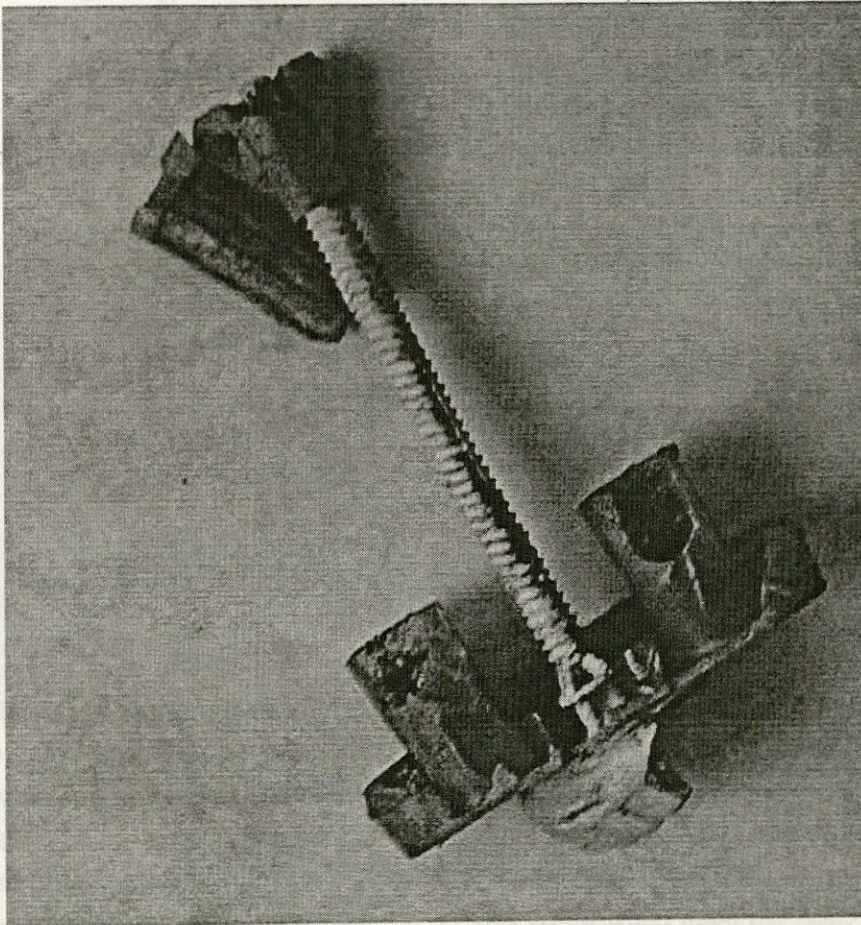
(Alicia McCaskie)

Story 2

James yawned as he watched the scenery fly by. This was the fifth train he'd hopped in two days. This freight might not get him all the way to New York City, but it would give him a good place to sleep for the night. He shivered as he adjusted his position on the cold, hard floor of the rusty train car. Slowly he drifted off to sleep, lulled by the rhythmic hammering of the train's wheels. Meanwhile, Alessandro, the conductor of the locomotive, was waiting at a train crossing. It was the last one before he pulled the train into a major station for the evening. After the light turned green, he put the train on automatic and got up to fix the door of the first car. It kept getting stuck. With a hammer and a wrench in his hands, Alessandro stepped over the connecting rod to the cars. James awoke with a start. Someone was trying to get into his car! He scrambled up, stuffing his belongings

into his tattered sack, and he lunged at the sliding door on the long side of the car. It wouldn't budge! All of a sudden he heard the screeching sound of the front car door being opened by Alessandro. The conductor was inside the car. Armed with a huge hand lamp, he searched the corners and yelled for James to stop when he discovered him. James threw his shoulder and all of his strength against the huge sliding door, breaking it open. Fragments of

weathered parts of the frame went flying out with James. He hit the ground running, not looking back at the slow-moving train. He spent the rest of the night in the shed of a house behind the tracks on Hudson Street. When he awoke, he explored his new surroundings. After a good look, he decided that even though Binghamton wasn't the big city, it was a good enough place to hang around for a while.
(Felicia Hudson)



Three-part object, probably from a train door. Made from two different kinds of plastic and metal. All plastic parts broken. 5" by 2" by .5".
Found by Alicia McCaskie, Wednesday Sept. 25, 2002, 5:20 p.m.
Location: Johnson City, NY, near the train tracks at Hudson Street.

THE BROOM

Story 1

It was a cold Friday night in late November, midterms had just been completed a few hours earlier, and Keller was doing great. "The Man," as most of the students called him, was flying. Exams had been a breeze, and the Dean's List star seemed to have done it again. Dinner and dessert had just been served to rave reviews emanating from Carmen. Keller began the cleanup of Carmen's kitchen with some sweeping, and began thinking...He felt as though life was really coming together for him. Finally, the pains were ending. In the first month of school Keller had met Carmen, the girl of his dreams. He had come from a broken home and was very apprehensive about getting involved seriously with anyone. However, within half an hour of talking to Carmen, Keller was shocking everybody by his interests in a potential relationship. To make a long story short: what "the man" wants, "the man" gets. Socially, he was always well liked by his peers: a private poll amongst the students in his dorm determined that he was by far the most friendly, mellow, and easiest to get along with. Through parental figures, of which he had a variety, or authority figures in general, Keller had been constrained and frustrated all his life, but you would never have realized judging by his temperament. Keller was proud that he had achieved everything he had desired to that point. He understood that Carmen

filled the void he had felt at the end of Freshman year. Over the course of this epiphany, Keller had completely forgotten that he was sweeping. He had been using Carmen's great grandmother's broom, a family heirloom. Its wood was aged, had splinters, and was almost broken. Unfortunately, in his reflections, Keller had thoughtlessly banged the broom against the heater and it split into two pieces. Frantically, Keller sought to cover up his mistake. Cleverly he fixed Carmen a drink, and popped in a movie to create a diversion. When she inquired why he didn't want her to wait he explained that he had seen the opening scene earlier that week on cable. In this small window of time, Keller managed to throw the broom and handle out of a large window into the woods in the back of the dorms. Carmen never realized what had happened.
(Yehuda Bar-David)

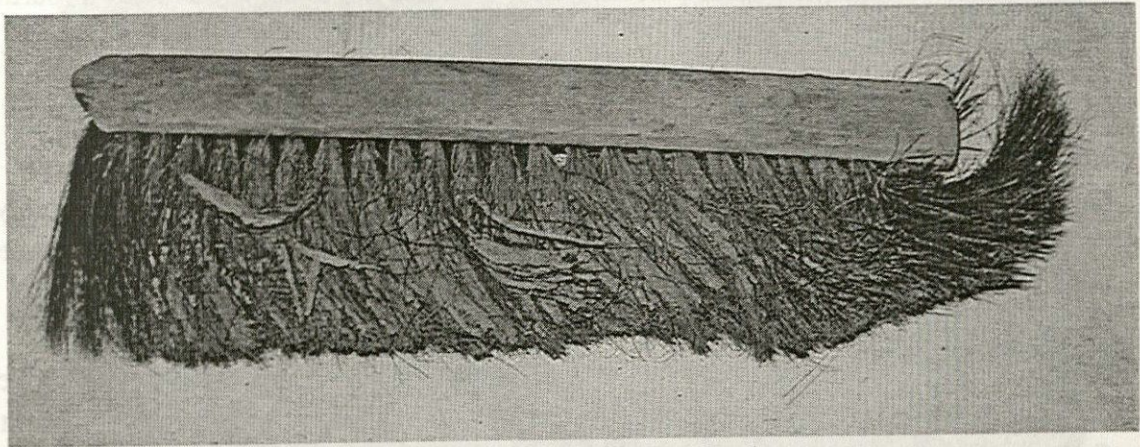
Story 2

Around two months ago, Andrew, a tall, middle-aged janitor at College in the Woods was cleaning the hallways when he suddenly had to go to the bathroom. When Andrew stepped into the bathroom he noticed a dirty spot on the floor. It did not need close inspection to see that these were the remnants of a cigarette stomped out with muddy boots. Andrew decided to go grab his old, fragile broom to take care of the task at

hand. This was typical for the students, he thought, and especially the men, to make a mess everywhere. He had 18 years of experience with these guys! When he began to try to sweep away the mess he found that it was almost affixed to the floor. Rather than go outside and pick up the mop he decided to apply heavy pressure to the broom to scrape that filth off. This was a bad idea: the frail broom almost immediately snapped like a twig. Andrew decided to use the mop to take care of the rest of this cleaning job. He placed the broom fragments in the cleaning cart and finished the job. Once Andrew got

outside to his rusty Binghamton Service pick up, he loaded up all of the equipment and began to drive down the windy road behind the dorm. On the way, he got to thinking that it would be better to dispose of the broom's remains and tell his boss that it must have fallen off the truck, rather than to admit to breaking it. That greedy cleaning staff administrator had forced him in the past already to pay for a new car headlight, after he had accidentally broken one. Andrew stopped the car and threw the remnants of the broom into the nearby forest just off of the road.

(Michael Mandel)



Broom, wooden with metal nails to hold the broom's bristles. Has remains of white color on it. 4" by 6".

Found by Yehuda Bar-David, Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002. 4:47 p.m.

Location: Binghamton, NY, Binghamton University campus. On the hill next to College in the Woods. Next to the construction site directly above the paid parking lot.

THE TILE FRAGMENT

Story 1

Tyronne Jacobson, University of Maryland graduate, class of 1975, lost his life two years after graduation. He lived in a Johnson City house occupied by a group of Black Panther Party members that was attacked. All inside were murdered by Federal agents on an anti-communist mission. One of the individuals whose life was taken in the attack was Tyronne Jacobson. Jacobson had very recently met the rest of the people in the house, and had only joined the Party a week prior to the attack. One of the most unfortunate and humiliating aspects of Mr. Jacobson's untimely death was that he happened to be in the bathroom at the time. Moments after the FBI burst into the house, bullets and shots not only destroyed the Black Panther core in the house, but a number of walls, including the sturdily-tiled bathroom wall. The newspapers and other media news agencies reported that the attack had been drug-related. Five days later, a friend of Mr. Jacobson, Suzanne Winters, went back to the scene of the incident to retrieve this piece of blood-stained porcelain and buried it near the Johnson City train tracks, a favorite place of respite of the deceased. After years of erosion and constant vibrations caused by passing freight trains, Andrea, the curious child of a white supremacist, discovered the shiny piece, dug it up and placed it on the train tracks. A few hours later, it was overrun

by a lonely locomotive moving to the Binghamton railway station.

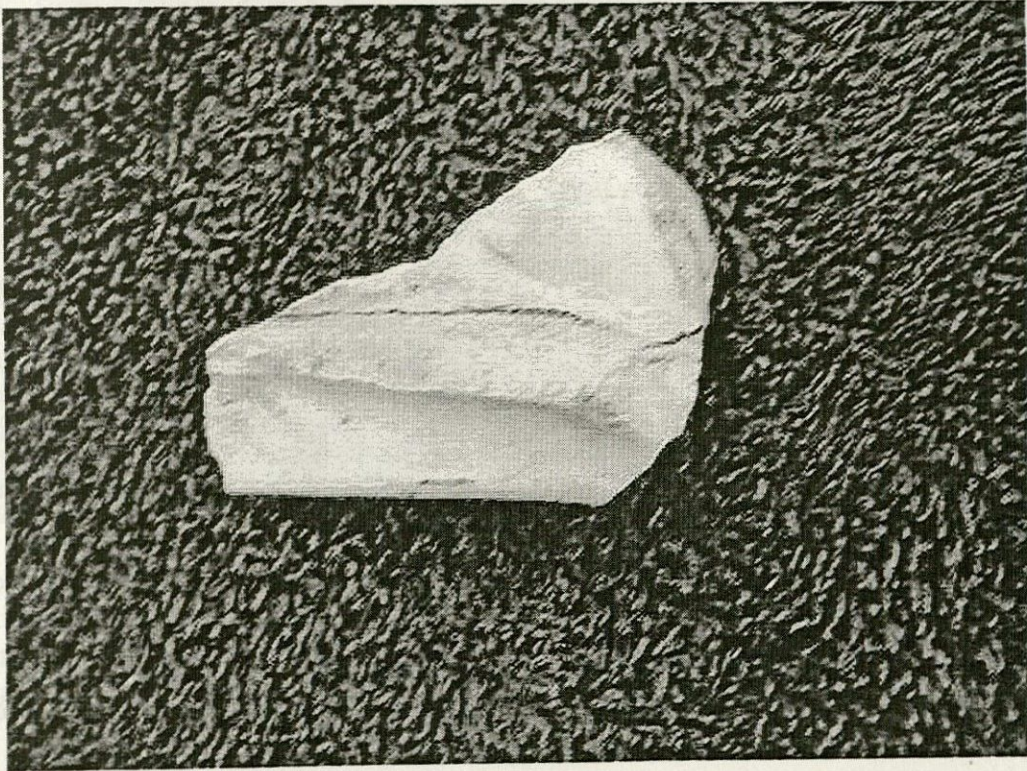
(Alexander Metternich)

Story 2

Prior to Sally Sullivan's arrival at Binghamton, art had never really entered her mind as a legitimate direction to take. A solid student, Sally continued to build confidence as she progressed, and always assumed that she would be happiest following the paths which successful students traditionally follow. For a while that's the way Sally conducted herself, the way her parents expected her to be. It was Sally's fourth semester at the college when her life would change forever. She had continued her academic excellence at university, but nonetheless had not yet found her niche. A deadline was rapidly approaching: Sally would soon be forced to make the decision which she had dreaded for so long- a focus, the selection of a major. Nothing had spoken to her, nothing fascinated her. In order to fulfill a requirement of the curriculum, Sally elected Art, assuming that the class would be an easy A. But the decision changed her totally. She didn't even care anymore about her grade. Instead, she began to live for herself, rather than for conventional generic models. From then on Sally Sullivan would be nothing but great vibes, a pleasure to be around, never stressing over school the way she had in the past. School, work, life, and

art had fused for Sally into a great reality. Her senior pottery project, white tile painted exquisitely in water colors, was finally complete. The day was winding down and a drizzle began to fall. Unfortunately Sally had already embarked on her journey back to her apartment prior to the rain. Her project was getting ruined! The physical representation of her emotional growth was being destroyed. Initially, she responded quite normally and was rather pissed off. Then, in a sudden revelation,

Sally learned the greatest lesson of all. For the first time, she understood that art was not an end; it merely represents creativity, but is not creative in and of itself. Creativity resided in her, not in the object. Upon her fantastic realization she went up to the railroad tracks, held the tile up in the rain until it was washed completely white again, and shattered it. Sally Sullivan left her art lesson to be understood by all those willing to explore.
(Yehuda Bar-David)



White tile fragment, approximately 3.5 cm x 4.5 cm.

Found by Alex Metternich, Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002, 8:30 a.m.

Location: Johnson City, NY, at the railroad tracks near St. Charles Street underpass.

THE MARKER

Story 1

Peter's mother knocked on his door to wake him up for school. He was late, as usual. She yelled at him for staying up too long watching television. He groggily got ready for school and went out to catch the bus. When he was gone, his little sister, Elise, went about her daily ritual of finding his toys to play with. On this particular day she was bored with his action figures so she ventured into his drawers. To her delight, she found his magic markers! When her mother saw her with them, she warned the girl that Peter would be furious if anything happened to his markers. Elise swore to her mother that nothing would happen to the markers and went to her room. She took out her favorite color, orange, and proceeded to color in almost every page of her Disney coloring book in a wonderful bright orange. Soon, no more color would come out. Peter was going to kill her! Scared, she ran to the bathroom and soaked the marker in water to see if the color would come back, but it became worse. Even the faint orange had now completely gone. She used her shirt to dry the water off - to no avail. By then it was almost time for Peter to come home! In a panic, Elise ran outside with the useless marker in hand and threw it over the fence onto the train-tracks. She then hid the rest of the markers under Peter's bed but forgot the top of the orange marker on his floor. When Peter came

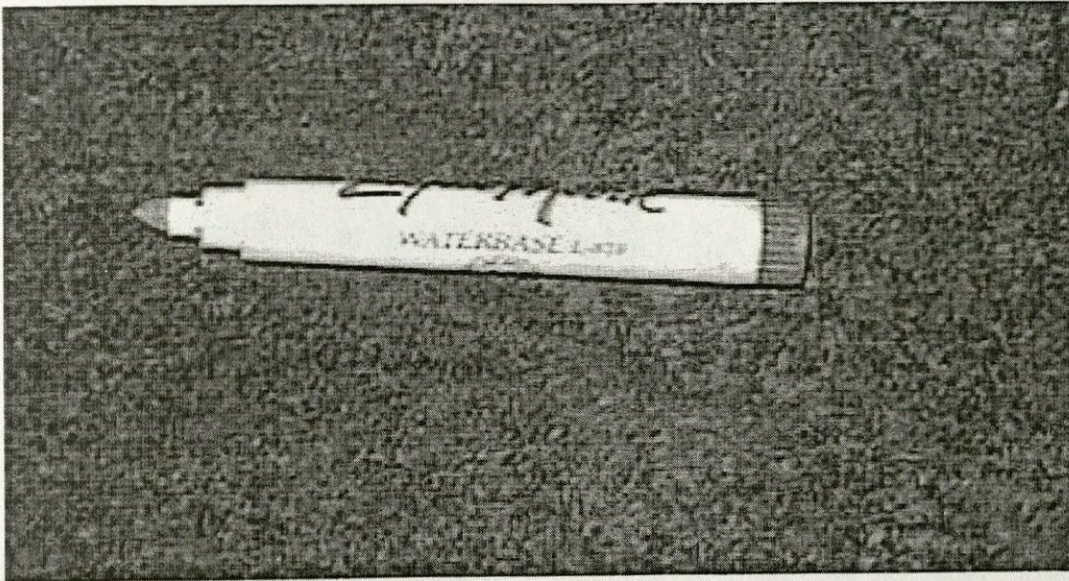
home, the first thing he saw was the marker top, but no marker. Their mother had to break the fighting siblings apart, and she scolded Peter for hitting his little sister. Elise, still in tears, told him what she did with the marker. With a furious boy and a disconsolate girl, their mother took the easy way out: Peter got a new set of markers and Elise his old ones - all except the beloved orange.
(Felicia Hudson)

Story 2

This marker used to belong to a star. Belgian actor/ director Paul LaFlute was visiting Binghamton on a tour of the continental United States. He fell in love with the beautiful architecture to be found in the tri-city area. In collecting items for a care package for his son, Jonas, he bought this marker as part of a set. He was so inspired by the buildings of the city, however, that he decided to buy his son a freebee, and opened the set of markers. Being a bit of an artist, Mr. LaFlute bought himself an easel and a pad of large paper and set to work roaming the streets of Binghamton and Johnson City for inspiration. One of Mr. LaFlute's primary passions was the American railroad. The mystique of the straight, geometric patterns cut into the terrain called to him on a deep level. He wanted to capture the true essence of it in marker and paper. The works of art which were produced during this time are acclaimed the world over, and can be

viewed at the Belgian Museum for the Art of Movie Stars. Although all of his renditions portray the architecture of Binghamton beautifully, none is so well recognized as his "Train Tracks." The perfectly straight line of the railroad tracks against a tumultuous sky of perfect Binghamton grey has inspired many other artists to flock to the spot where the work was created. After

producing this masterpiece, Mr. LaFlute left his marker in the exact place where his easel had stood as a reminder that, although he had to return to his native Belgium, there would always be a piece of Mr. Paul LaFlute left behind in Binghamton, New York.
(Alexander Metternich)



Marker, plastic, cylindrical, missing cap. 5" by .5".

Found by Felicia J. Hudson, Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002, 5:25 p.m.

Location: Johnson City, NY, near the train tracks behind Hudson St. dead end.