

Grandpa's Sword

by **Robert M. Wolfarth**

When I was kid, my dad handed down a few heirlooms to my brother and me. One was a pair of real Nazi daggers, complete with swastikas. Just the kind of cool gems my brother and I wanted-no matter how I might cringe today. We didn't know how they wound up in our family or what their chronicle of action was, but our imaginations ran wild over the battlefield, and that was good enough for us.

The other heirloom was a sword. Carved bone handle. Dirty with age, but in fine shape. Unsheathed, it was inscribed 'C.B. BushnellV' and had engravings of guys in weird outfits fighting battles. Most of the warriors carried shields, some bearing crosses. Near the handle was inscribed the odd Latin phrase *memento mon*. All in all, not quite as cool as those Nazi daggers) but it was the only real sword on the block, so it scored a few points with our friends.

The sword was obviously old, but like the daggers, we didn't know its history, so our imaginations filled in the gaps. "It's probably from the Spanish-American War," I stated with faux authority, as if I knew why or when that war was fought. And who was this C.B. Bushnell, anyhow? We don't have any Bushnells in our lineage. Years went by. My brother and I managed to get through childhood without goading each other or our dog. Like most kids, we learned in high school who the Nazis really were, and we suddenly eyed those creepy daggers with a new chill. God help us if American blood was ever shed on those weapons. But the sword remained a mystery-and generally remained in the closet.

Heading off to college, we negotiated our way down the brotherly divorce list of who gets what. I got the daggers, and he got the sword. Away we went with our lives. I shelved the daggers, thinking they might be worth something someday to my progeny. No doubt my brother did the same with the sword.

Fast-forward 25 years to 2006. I had been raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, and around that time discovered to my surprise that my own grandfather, Carl Adam Wolfarth, was not only a Mason but a Thrice Illustrious Master-a busy man at the York Rite in Mansfield, Ohio. In due time, I petitioned the York Rite, and received the degrees of the Chapter, Council, and Commandry. Suddenly, at a pivotal point in the Commandry degrees, I found myself staring right at the answer to a lifelong question. That sword! Forgotten and unused! So carefully crafted by the M.C. Lilley team, and now left to corrode slowly into obscurity! It belongs in the York Rite!

I rushed home that night and worked up a tactful proposal to my brother back in Dallas: I'll send you the Nazi daggers if you'll send me the sword. Here's why: at long last, I understand it. I finally know what that sword is for, what it means in American history, and what it meant to Grandpa. My brother is not a Mason, but he understood the importance of the situation to me, and he bundled it amply for the trip to Salt Lake City.

Carefully cutting away the bubble wrap, I gazed at it at last through new eyes. A shining cross with a crown. A beautiful triangle. A Crusader battle scene complete with Jerusalem. I knelt with the sword, first thanking God for its safe deliverance, and then thanking Carl Adam Wolfarth for preserving it for me. Finally, Grandpa, I grasp its meaning!

And what of C.B. Bushnell? More than likely, as with countless other implements of Masonic office, I will never know who this original owner was. But I now know that he was my Brother. if I could hear whispers from beyond the grave, I have no doubt that Brother Bushnell would tell me his stories of the York Rite from a hundred years or better in the past. I'll never hear his voice, nor that of my grandfather, but each time I take this fine sword with me to serve the Rite at the majestic Salt Lake Masonic Temple, I will memento mori.

Robert M. Wolfarth, 320, a native Texan, now calls Salt Lake City home. After six years working in defense and foreign policy for the US Congress in Washington, Robert moved into the medical device industry. He is fascinated with systems of ethics as influenced by different societies and religions, and is a writer by passion. He is a Knight Templar and a Noble of the Mystic Shrine. Robert is active in his community, the United Methodist Church, and serves Wasatch Lodge #1 as editor of 'The Trestle-board' and Argenta Lodge #3 as Junior Deacon. You can reach him at: CornWineOil@gmail.com

Update: July 14, 2014

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