

LIFE

ADVENTURE » ODE TO A THRIFT-SHOP FIND

'E.W.B.' sheds baggage, becomes a globetrotter

COMMENT »

DAVID CAPRARA

IT IS LATE and I should be asleep, but it is one of those nights when thoughts and emotions burn brighter than the need for rest.

A single candle on my desk envelops my study with a warm orange glow, and I am feeling nostalgic. E.W.B. is in the corner, resting like an old dog, waiting for his next adventure.

These days I live in Japan, tucked away in a little mountain village in Nara. I'm a Fredericksburgian, though, and always will be.

About six years ago (hard to believe it's been that long), just graduating from high school, confused with where I was going but earnestly seeking a sincere life for myself, I decided to move to France for a while.

I needed a suitcase, and it was in the small, since-closed Hospice Support Care Thrift Shop on Lafayette Boulevard that I found E.W.B. Probably over half a century old and not in the best condition, E.W.B. called out to me. With worn down edges and cracking leather, E.W.B. had what I was looking for: character. Rawness and authenticity; a presence that tells a story just by existing. I gave the store owner the requested \$3 and went on my way.

Since that day, E.W.B. has been

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This humble bag, stamped 'E.W.B.,' was plucked from Spotsylvania and has traveled the world.

CAPRARA: To the real E.W.B., if you are still out there, here's my thank-you

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all around the world. He has lived in a flat in the 18 arrondissement of Paris. He's waited dutifully at the feet of Mount Fuji, Kilimanjaro and Everest. He's been strapped to camels in Egypt and horses in Mongolia. He's ridden tuk-tuks in Cambodia and smelled the fragrant streets of Fez in Morocco.

He served as a wonderful seat during a 23-hour standing train ride across China, and was even forgiving after taking an accidental plunge into India's Ganges River.

He's been to more than 17 countries since his residency in Fredericksburg, and has been with me through the process of my personal discovery and exploration of the world's life and beauty.

I sometimes wonder what

sort of existence he lived with the actual E.W.B. (these are the initials printed in gold beside the handle).

E.W.B. has worn considerably since we met, and I suppose I have, too, in many ways. Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree" comes to mind. We have seen and discovered what it means to live. The road can be tiring at times, but for now, there is still more life to live.

To the real E.W.B., if you are still out there, I would like to say "thank you." Your suitcase was given new life after its retirement, and I was able to experience life with a companion that I will never forget.

David Caprara is a Fredericksburg native who currently lives in Japan. To read about his current travels, visit his blog at totorobaga.wordpress.com.

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