

The Write Stuff Writing Contest

Digging Up the Truth

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Tick, tock, tick, tock. Today math, ELA, and science took forever. Finally, at the end of the day it was social studies. Right then, we were learning about lumberjacks.

"Since we're learning about lumberjacks," Mr. Block, my teacher, said, "I have a story to tell you. My great-grandfather, my great-grandmother, and my grandfather lived together near a forest. My great-grandfather, John, could have become a lumberjack. But instead, he was in his own world and was mean and selfish. He took money and ran away from my great-grandmother, Laura, and her son, Matthew. Well, I shouldn't get deep into detail. Now open your books to page 24."

Anyway, I absolutely love social studies. When I grow up I want to become a paleontologist--a person who digs and studies dinosaur bones. I have a really nice backyard. It's like a mini forest. Sometimes I practice digging there. If I'm lucky I'll find a fossil. Then I'll try to study it to see what it was before it hardened.

Brrriinnngg. That's the bell. I just can't wait to..."Route 29 looks like it's here. Nathan, Brayden, and Jenna go to your bus. Goodbye." Mr. Block said I should get to my bus. By the way my name is Jenna. I'm eleven and in the fifth grade. I love social studies. Mostly I love studying dinosaurs and I recently discovered I like studying lumberjacks, too.

Finally, when I got home, I finished my homework and chores fast. Time to dig! Today when I was digging I felt something very hard. I was excited that it might be one of those days when I find a fossil. But as I continued digging around it, the thing got bigger and bigger. Pretty soon I was able to pull it out, and trust me, it was not a fossil. It read on the front "1886". It looked like a chest or trunk.

I found a latch and pulled it open. Inside, I saw feathers with ink, an old camera, a black and white photo of a person next to a fallen tree and a small, rusty ax.

I left the chest thingy under a tree and didn't say a word about it in my house, but kept on asking myself the same question: "Who filled this chest thingy and why?"

The next day at school during social studies, my teacher, Mr. Block, was reading about lumberjacks and saying that the lumberjacks loved filling time capsules, and that they did it a lot. He also said that our city was very special because this was the city where some lumberjacks lived and worked. So, because of that, there were a lot of time capsules buried in the area. Soon I realized that the chest thingy might be a time capsule and that the person who filled it might be a lumberjack! Another thing that caught my attention was that Mr. Block said that no human ever in existence had found any time capsules yet. So, I thought, tell him you found one. Then I thought, "Honestly, I wouldn't believe a person who said, 'I found a time capsule,'" so I just kept that thought to myself.

When I got home, I looked inside the time capsule again just to make sure I didn't miss anything. And there was something in there that I had missed! It was a note. I got it and opened it up. Guess what? The note was like a treasure map! It was a map of our city but without most of the streets in place. Instead, it looked like what our city would have looked like a long time ago. And better yet, it had an X down one of the old roads that is still a street today, Holly Road! Then I found a key on the map. "X" meant time capsule! And get this, it was in my neighbor's front yard next to their huge, old oak tree. This week they were out of town. I had a good plan. I thought, since they were out of town on vacation, I could sneak to their front yard, dig up the time capsule, and take it into our yard.

I was ready and determined. I waited until the sun was setting, and snuck off to my neighbor's yard. I went up to the tree, looked on the map, and decided that the time capsule was on the north side of the tree. I started digging. Soon I found the time capsule and was so excited! I dug around, but this time capsule seemed a little smaller than the other one I found. I was soon able to pull it out. I pushed the dirt, with my shovel, back into the hole. I looked at the cover, and it read "1886", which if I could remember correctly, was the same date on the other time capsule I found.

Then I picked it up. It was heavy, but I still managed to get it to the spot where the other time capsule was in my own backyard. Both read 1886. I opened it and inside there was an old newspaper, a black and white photo, a red and black handkerchief, and another note. Also, I noticed the photo looked like a picture of people getting married! It didn't say who they were. So now I really wondered who they were, and I also wondered why this photo would be in there.

I opened the note and it was the same as the other note: A treasure map! Well, not everything was the same. This time, it had an "X" by George Stream. I knew where that place was! I thought, "I could just take my backpack with a trowel in it and ride my bike down there.

The next morning, I asked my parents and they were all for it, as long as I was back by lunch! They love it when I exercise. I got my bike and started riding. It was a long trip. When I got there, I looked at the "X" to find the perfect spot to start digging. About an hour later, I finally found it! Or at least I thought I found it. This one was much smaller. I pulled it out and it read "1886" just like the other ones. I was excited that I found another time capsule! First, I put the dirt back into the hole. Then I opened the new time capsule. Inside, there was the same

black and white photo I found in the other time capsule, but it had writing on it. It was kind of tricky to read, but I still managed to read it. It said, "Laura Block and John Block at their wedding, 1883." Another thing the time capsule had in it was a letter. I got it and opened it up. It had the same handwriting that was on the photo. It said,

"Dear Laura,

"I miss you so much. I was afraid that maybe you would think I didn't care about you because I moved away. That's not true at all. I moved away to become a lumberjack, to be able to support our family. I love you and little Matthew deeply. I miss you both so much. I love you both.

Love,

John"

I thought, "Aww, that's so sad." But somewhere in my brain, I knew I recognized that last name from somewhere. "Block...Mr. Block...," I thought. Soon, I realized, "Mr. Block--my teacher's name!!"

I just had the most amazing thought! Didn't Mr. Block say something about his great-grandfather leaving his great-grandmother and their son? Wait, could Mr. Block somehow be connected to all this? The only way to find out was to ask him. On Monday I will bring the stuff inside the time capsules and I'll bring the small time capsule in my backpack. After school, I'll show him.

Then I looked inside the time capsule again because I remembered seeing another letter. I got the other letter and opened it up. It had different handwriting than the first letter and photo. It read,

"Dear Laura,

"I'm very sorry. If you're reading this, to my regret, your husband, John Block, was working on cutting down a tree and accidentally hit himself with the ax and has passed away. I'm very sorry.

Sincerely,

Louis Secanar"

Aww! That was even worse. Now I had to tell him. I had to. I quickly, but carefully, put the note back in the time capsule and put the capsule in my bag and biked home. On Sunday, I couldn't stop thinking about telling Mr. Block.

On Monday I woke up feeling great. I quickly got changed, made my bed, brushed my teeth, and ate breakfast. I also made sure that I packed the time capsule, the letters, and the other stuff from inside the other time capsules. Then I rushed to school. I couldn't wait for the day to end so I could talk to Mr. Block.

After school, I got my backpack and walked up to Mr. Block's desk. I was a little scared. Soon he saw me and asked what I was there for. I said, "You may not believe this at first, but I've found three time capsules, and in one of them, I found a letter that may have been written by your great-grandfather!"

I opened my backpack and pulled out the love letter. I handed it to him. He opened and started reading it in his head. As he was reading, his eyes started to water. Then after he finished, he looked up and said, "Wow! He really did care. He really loved my family. And that was his handwriting. I'm just super shocked. Thank you so much, Jenna. Where did you find this?"

I said, "The time capsule that this was in was by George Stream."

"Oh yeah! I know where that place is. And you said you found three time capsules?" Mr. Block asked.

"Yes, I did, but I just couldn't bring them because they were too heavy. I brought the stuff inside them though." I pulled out the stuff and showed him. He looked fascinated. Then he found the pictures of his great-grandparents getting married. Mr. Block said, "He really loved them all this time!"

I didn't want to ruin his happy time, but I had to be truthful and show him the other note about his great-grandfather passing away. I found it and handed it to him. He read it. "Oh, my goodness that's a horrible way to die. Poor guy. That explains why he never came back to my great-grandmother! Anyway, Jenna, thank you so, so much. I just can't believe that all this time we've been believing all this horrible stuff about him. May I please show my family these notes? I promise I'll return them in perfect shape next week."

I said, "Oh, well, you can keep all the items. After all, it was your great-grandfather's stuff."

"Jenna, you don't have to do that. Here, keep this photo."

He handed me the photo of Laura and John getting married. It was the one without words. "Thank you!" I said.

Mr. Block said, "No, thank you. You've helped by finding out the truth about my family mystery. I can never thank you enough!"

Now off to dig up another mystery!