

The Recycled Bear



When I was in kindergarten there was a lady who lived across the street from us who used to take old stuffed toy animals, clean them up & mend them, & then give them to other children. I don't ever remember seeing the lady, but she must have had a lot of love in her heart, because the ones that she gave my brother & I became our favorites out of all our toys, & we took them with us everywhere, including to the other side of the globe! They were very similar to the ones in the above picture, except the cat & the bear were the same size.

When I had my tonsils out a couple years later, that bear became my comfort as I lay in my hospital bed. I was pretty sick for a while. It was around the time when President Kennedy was assassinated, because I remember watching his funeral on TV after I got out of hospital. I named the bear 'Sniffy' because I had the sniffles! After I became well, as I played with my bear, I would tell 'her' all my secrets!

At that time my Dad was a fireman in the LA City Fire Department, & on his days off he dove for abalone. One summer he traded all his shifts around so that we were able to spend a couple weeks with him on the boat while he was diving. My bear went with me, & my brother took his toy cat. Our critters rested on our cabin beds while we played with our walkie-talkies. One of us would be down in the anchor room, while the other one was up on the back deck. One night while I was snuggled up with my bear, I woke up to hear my Dad on the radio calling out "May-day, May-day, May-day!" to the coast guard. The battery that was used to start the boat engine had gone dead.

The next morning a US Coast Guard helicopter hovered over the top of our boat & hoisted down a huge battery, setting it in the center of the back deck!

Now my Dad had been thinking about moving to Australia, & when the Watts Riots broke out, that was what convinced him, so when I was 10 years old, I boarded an airplane with my bear, & my brother had his cat, & we flew to Australia with my Mom. (My Dad was already there.)

I loved everything about Australia! (But I don't have time to tell that story here.) When we first move there, we didn't have a TV, so our parents would read to us every night.



Most of the time, the books didn't have very many pictures, so we had to use our imaginations. Then I'd snuggle down with my bear & go to sleep. At that time, I could barely read. Then our first Christmas there, my Mum put 2 comic books in each of our stockings, & that was the thing that motivated us to learn how to read. From then on, the rest of the summer, every couple of weeks she would buy us some more comic books. It wasn't too long before we graduated into reading kid's novels.

Two years later, my Dad became a teacher up in Papua New Guinea. While we were packing up our belongs to move up there, I came across our family Bible. It was one of those big coffee-table Bibles with the Renaissance Art Work Pictures in the middle. It had been kept in my Mum's cedar chest, & previously, I had never been allowed to look at it. As I examined it, I wanted to know the stories connected with those pictures, but at that time, there was no way I could have read that old English language style Bible. But the LORD was working! Three weeks after moving to New Guinea, a girl, whose parents were missionaries, invited me to Sunday School. I wanted to go, & my parents gave me permission. During the church service, I heard the whole Gospel for the very first time when the congregation recited the Apostles Creed, (which they did every week before the kids went out to Sunday School). I believed it was true, & that very second, the LORD completely changed me! My personality was completely different from that time onwards. (I was a new creation!) I began befriending the kids I would have previously bullied.

Soon afterwards I bought a 'Good News For Modern Man' New Testament, & began reading it, & as I did so, the LORD continually changed me. Eventually, instead of telling my bear all my secrets, I began telling them to God.

Later I had to go back down to Australia to boarding school. There, my bear & my Bible went to bed with me every night. As I grew in the LORD, one day I read the verses where Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions & give to the poor, & follow Jesus. I decided to do that. At that time I didn't know how to sell my possessions, so I gave what I had away. There was a little native child whose parents were employed by mine. I gave my bear to her. (God's love was beginning to bloom in my heart!)

(The little girl looked similar to this one & was from the same tribe.)

That was many years ago. Now, when I'm collecting items for Operation Christmas Child Shoe Boxes (see www.samaritanspurse.org), I look for toy stuffed animals & dolls at garage sales & thrift stores that are either new or in excellent condition, that I can 'recycle' into our Shoe Boxes!

(My brother still has his cat!)

