

Love

Memorial Day, 2011

I am not "religious," but I have a small Bible that is inscribed to Walter Stett from "a friend in the Lord," Margaret Foster, New York, September, 1863. A dried flower from that time is pressed into the pages of I Corinthians 13, the Love Chapter ("Love is patient, love is kind ...") I don't know for sure, but I believe Walter was given this Bible by a young lady who would have never presumed to offer a gift to a man in those times, except that he was on his way off to War. Whether he returned is unknown, but his Bible somehow made it back.

I found the testament in an antique store down on the river in the Rondout section of Kingston, NY thirty years ago. I didn't need another Bible; a few are more than enough for me. It cost ten dollars that I would have rather spent on

something else, but I couldn't just leave it there. A woman's love, whether romantic or simply sisterly caring, deserves to be honored. So I brought it home. It sits here on my desk along with other small books that have a hold on me.

Memorial Day reminds me that so many who meant so much to me are gone, and more will leave before me. Someday I will go, dropping my thoughts, cares and conceits behind me. It is frightening to consider being me without what I always thought was me. Maybe the only thing to survive will be the love I allowed myself to feel for others.

So I'm heartened when I open the little Bible to the pages holding the dried flower, now almost turned to dust. I'm reminded that "these three will remain: faith, hope and love. The greatest of these is love. And love never fails."

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