

A handsome gesture pays off with an elderly woman's smile

By Roger Dean Kiser

“What is it that Mrs. Mathers keeps talking on about?” I asked the nurse at the front desk of the nursing home where I had been working for about a week.

“I don't know. She constantly goes on about some darn little white plastic box,” the nurse replied.

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and forget about her ramblings,” she instructed.

“Yes, ma'am,” I said as I walked away.

Every day I went to work, Mrs. Mathers chattered about that little white box. She'd constantly lie in bed with her hands partially covering her face. When I moved her hands to wash them, I saw tears rolling down her cheeks.

“Before I die. My little white box. Please,” she said out loud.

“Mrs. Mathers. I don't know what you mean,” I'd tell her.

“My house. My little white box. Please,” she said, over and over.

Finally, one day when I was about to get off work, I walked up to the desk, pulled out Mrs. Mathers' chart, and wrote down her last known address. When I drove up, I saw there was an estate sale going on, with cars and people everywhere.

I walked around inside the house for about 10 minutes looking at what had been tagged for sale. As I entered the

dining room, I saw a gentleman wrapping various items and stuffing them into cardboard boxes. Sitting on the edge of the table was a white plastic box.

“Excuse me. Did you buy this little white box?” I asked him.

“I bought everything in this room.”

“Could I look inside this little box?”

“Sure. There's nothing in there of any value,” he told me.

Slowly I opened the box. “Oh, dear God!” I said to myself. “Can I have this box?” I asked the man.

“Not worth nothin' to me,” he said.

I ran out of the house and headed back to the nursing home. When I arrived, I walked into Mrs. Mathers' room. “Mrs. Mathers. It's me, Roger. Look what I found.”

Slowly, she opened her eyes, then started to shake as she reached out and took the little white box from my hand.

“Thank you, dear,” she said softly.

“You are very welcome,” I said, as I patted her hand. Then, like a gentleman, I bowed my head and left her room.

Of all my years of working in nursing homes, although there were many deaths, I attended only two funerals. One was that of Mrs. Mathers.

I stood by the casket for more than an hour as many people filed past. I could not count the times I heard her friends say, “Jane looks at least 20 years younger with her dentures in.”

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