

Mummy needs sugar daddy

Story: CORINNE ABATT
Photos: STEPHEN CANTRELL

Not only is Dick Rosenbaum, owner of Birmingham Stamps & Coins, the only store owner in town to have a mummy in his back room, he may be the only one in the world.

Mummies are so hard to come by these days that putting a price on it is impossible—there aren't any others on the market, Rosenbaum said.

In 1976 he acquired the mummy of Irtui-Ru, son of Amen-E, thought to be a wealthy businessman or member of the Egyptian bureaucracy.

Research in the past few days has changed a few previous ideas about the mummy.

X-rays done just recently place the man at about 50 when he died a non-violent death. The absence of broken bones and the condition of the head indicate that.

ROSENBAUM SAID he has been told by experts who have looked carefully at the mummy that it is in excellent condition as well as the sarcophagus or outer container which is considered more valuable than the mummy itself.

When Marianne Timko, University of Michigan Egyptologist, translated the hieroglyphics on the mummy's covering last week, more facts came to light.

"She said it was older than we had thought," said Rosenbaum. "We had thought it dated from 100 B.C., she said 400 B.C."

The only part of the mummy, face mask and sarcophagus not to be in excellent condition are the toes. Rosenbaum said they were covered with gold thimble shaped ornaments and these were doubtless taken by grave robbers who broke off the toes to get the gold.

The fabric wrapping around the body is in tact and the two decorated leather ornaments over the breast and legs are still covered and easily legible for those who read hieroglyphics.

Irtui-Ru was about five feet to five feet two in height. Since people in the metropolitan area became aware of Rosenbaum's mummy, which he bought from an antiquities dealer, offers to buy it have been pouring in.

Rosenbaum said, "I know there would be no trouble in getting our price and more in New York City."

But, he doesn't want it to go to New York, or even out of the area. Rosenbaum has set his heart on finding a donor who will buy it and agree to either loan or donate it to the Cranbrook Institute of Science.

"Cranbrook has the second largest



Face mask, owner Dick Rosenbaum suspects, may have been made as a death mask, therefore closely resembling the deceased—with some added embellishments, of course.

Egyptian collection in Michigan, but no mummy," Rosenbaum said.

He said that in order to get it to the Cranbrook museum, he will sell it to a donor for much less than it would command in the New York or international market.

"That will be my donation to Cranbrook," Rosenbaum said.

It was stored at Cranbrook for almost two years while Rosenbaum and Robert Bowen, director of the Cranbrook Institute of Science, quietly worked to establish a fair price and find a donor.

Now in the backroom of the stamp and coin shop with specially installed security precautions, the mummy attracts 50 or more visitors daily.

Rosenbaum said this one was made only several hundred years before the knowledge of how to do them was lost.

"Lenin and Mao were done successfully and they tried to mummify Pope Pius XII, but he didn't last a week," Rosenbaum said matter-of-factly.

The sarcophagus of cedar of Lebanon, with its clear, colored decorations looks as though it was made maybe a hundred years ago. Snakes, as Rosenbaum pointed out, are dominant in the decoration. Along the sides are symbols of each of the 40 judges who Rosenbaum said, "will pass on his eternal reward."

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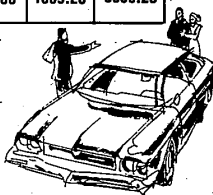
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