

## **The Days of Miracles are still with us!**

**By Arthur D. Royster**

Just about the time a jaded collecting world has been reduced to attributing glittering manufacturers to common black wound badges ("Mine *must* have been made by Godet!") a brilliant light has shone upon all of us.

We learn that Charles Snyder has, among other wonderful things such as Eva Braun's diamond-studded cigarette case, Hitler paintings and the stunning Goering Damascus shoe horn, Field Marshal von Bock's baton. We are told this came from a "vet."

In the columns of the Baltimore Sun, we discover that *another* Field Marshal's baton, this one purporting to belong to Albert Kesselring, was purchased at auction by Jason Burmeister for a half a million dollars!

And not to be outdone, famed philosophy student, Craig Gottlieb, the California dealer who authored the interesting book on SS Honor Rings, has just obtained Hitler's very own desk set. According to the breathless article in a San Diego internet newspaper, Mr. Gottlieb, who is Jewish but has no problem with dealing in SS items and other Third Reich memorabilia, obtained this directly from a veteran who lived in Eva Braun's house on the Wasserberg Strasse in Munich following the end of the war. There was, according to this article, a real "secret tunnel" leading to Hitler's office many miles across the city on the Koenigsplatz. Gottlieb claims that this is the *very desk set* on which the "fate of nations" was decided.

Isn't this a thrilling story? Unfortunately, like the two batons, it has as much validity as the Easter Bunny.

We have already looked at pictures of the recently made fake batons and enjoyed hearty laughter at their crudeness and we published the full-color advertisement for them by the American manufacturer but this New Miracle needs to be addressed more fully.

At the end of the war, Frau Anne Winter, Hitler's housekeeper at his apartment at Prinzregenten Str. 16. told everyone who would listen that Julius Schaub, Hitler's long-time aide, came to the apartment with specific orders from Hitler to remove any and all items with his name to prevent anyone from showing his personal effects in a circus. She

said often that "Schaub took all the uniform jackets, medals and desk material" away.

There are pictures taken in the apartment of the signing of the Munich agreement and while one is very unclear (and has been used by Mr. Gottlieb as "proof of the originality" of his piece, other, clearer pictures by Heinrich Hoffmann show an entirely different piece on the desk. Also, the magazine "*Kunst im deutschen Reich*" shows the inside of Hitler's offices in the so-called "*Führerbau*" in Munich and there is a lovely color shot of the desk. The Gottlieb piece is not shown. And further, Albert Speer's large color book on the new Reichschancellery shows Hitler's Berlin office, desk, desk top and all.

What a pity here. No such item can be seen.

But we must admit that a miracle has happened, children!

The article mentions the "Sepp Dietrich Honor Sword" which is a provable fraud and one hopes that the new million dollar find is not tainted thereby.

What Miracle will be next, collectors? A rubber Grand Cross that Goering like to wear in the bath? A diamond-studded hubcap from Eva Braun's early Volkswagen? Erwin Rommel's military hat? A portrait of Lady Ga-Ga in acrylics done by Hitler himself? Another Hitler Diary written on human skin from Auschwitz?

We live in an age of Miracles, indeed but if you believe all this bovine fecal matter, children, write me and I have a friend who will sell you a bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge is not on the market anymore but there is always the Golden Gate Bridge in California!

Faith is a wonderful thing but why abuse it. Just buy a cast copy of an SS Honor Ring and make Mr. Gottlieb a happy man.

ADR

## **History buffs could ink deal for Hitler's desk set**

**BY JONATHAN HORN**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2011 AT 9 P.M**

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/feb/05/hitlers-desk-set/>

**SOLANA BEACH** — Adolf Hitler's first Nazi ID card, Benito Mussolini's fez, and Nazi Gen. Sepp Dietrich's sword have all been in and out of the hands of Craig Gottlieb, a man of Jewish descent who deals Nazi memorabilia out of his Solana Beach office.

Now he has something with a historical significance that could trump all those.

Gottlieb is selling Hitler's inkwell desk set, used in the signing of the disastrous 1938 Munich Pact, for between \$750,000 and \$1 million. "That's basically the surface upon which the fate of nations was decided," he said.

His office in Solana Beach is, frankly, scary. It's adorned with a swastika flag. Several SS uniforms line the walls. A display case holds Nazi hats. An electrician once reported him to sheriff's deputies on fears Gottlieb was running a militia.

It's actually his line of work — selling mainly World War II items, with a focus on Nazis, the architects of the Holocaust. It's a path that Gottlieb, born to Jewish parents and who said he had family who died in the genocide, has had to reconcile.

Gottlieb, 39, said the items, much of them museum quality, preserve history.

He has visited the Nazi concentration camps of Dachau and Sachsenhausen.

"You go to one of those places and you sort of start to question what you do, even though I don't have a problem with what I do," he said. "A human being walks into a place like that, that's where this stuff really gets put in context."

His father was a World War II veteran, which Gottlieb said sparked his interest in the war as a child.

Gottlieb, who deals internationally, said his customers are not Nazi sympathizers.

"There's a following among collectors for things from Nazi Germany, and there's a reason for it. It's not because they're Nazis," Gottlieb said. "If I determine that one of my customers is a neo-Nazi or has some sort of leanings, I fire them as clients."

Gottlieb said many collectors are drawn to Nazi memorabilia largely because the items are relatively recent and because the Nazis produced a wide range of artifacts — from belt buckles to daggers to drinking glasses. Also, many people are interested in it from a historical perspective, he said.

He said most of his clients are “white-collar” men who are history buffs.

“When they’re not looking at my website, they’re watching the History Channel,” he said, adding his site gets about 1,000 daily hits.

And if they’re watching the History Channel, they have undoubtedly seen the inkwell set that now sits in a safe in his Solana Beach office.

The year was 1938. Hitler, Mussolini, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier used the inkwell set to sign the Munich Pact, the failed attempt at appeasement that annexed the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany. The pact was supposed to stop Hitler from his pursuit of conquest. It even prompted Chamberlain to declare outside 10 Downing St. that the pact meant “peace for our time.” Nazi Germany invaded Poland less than a year later.

Gottlieb is selling the set used for that document for its current owner, Jack McConn of Houston.

McConn was an Army lieutenant whose unit took part in the occupation of Germany after the Nazi’s defeat in 1945. McConn said he and his fellow soldiers actually lived for three weeks in the house of Hitler’s lover, Eva Braun, in Munich. He said the house was connected through an underground tunnel to Hitler’s office, known as the Fuhrerbau.

McConn said he and others were rummaging around, collecting souvenirs when a corporal walked up from the basement. McConn asked if anything else was down there, and the soldier said there was a desk set. McConn grabbed it, made a wooden box for it and shipped it off to his father in Houston.

McConn flew in last week to deliver the set to Gottlieb. It’s bronze, weighs roughly 60 pounds and is 24 inches long and 14 inches wide. It’s 1 3/4 inches thick. In the center, an eagle stands on a swastika, with the initials “A H” on either side. Two 2-inch inkwells flank the center design.

McConn said he was unaware of its historical significance until he saw Hitler and the others signing the Munich Pact on the History Channel.

“I could see it pretty clearly, and I thought, ‘Good Lord, that’s the one I have.’ So I ... put it in a bank vault, and I thought, well somewhere down the line I’ll sell it,” McConn said. “Now’s the time.”

McConn first tried to sell the set in Houston in 2008. The recession scuttled those plans.

Gottlieb knew about the set then and contacted McConn two months ago to see if he wanted to try again. While Gottlieb would sell the desk set to a collector, he said he hopes a museum buys it.

"I really would like to see this displayed publicly, so we can understand more about how Hitler did what he did during the war," he said. "One of the great questions we have is how can something like this happen?"

Tammie Gillies, regional director of the San Diego Anti-Defamation League, said she would like a museum to purchase the piece, as well.

"We hope that the kind of item such as this desk set won't be used to glorify hate, but will be used to help remind people of the hate and anti-Semitism of those times," she said.

Gottlieb graduated from Cornell with a degree in philosophy, then joined the Marines and was based at Camp Pendleton. He now lives in Rancho Santa Fe. His father was a Jew and his mother converted to Judaism when they married.

Gottlieb's father died in 1987.

"I think he would be proud of what I've achieved," Gottlieb said. "My relatives support what I do, though I can probably imagine that they 'wonder' sometimes. But, after I explain it, they're OK with it."

Gottlieb converted to Christianity in 1991, but said he still values his Jewish heritage.

He said the family members on his father's side who lived in Russia were never heard from again after 1940. They likely died in the Holocaust.

Gottlieb travels extensively searching for Nazi items, which he largely obtains from shows, veterans and their families.

"Within the field of military antiquities, it's the hottest part of the market," he said.

While he wouldn't disclose specific amounts, Gottlieb said Dietrich's sword sold in 2008 for "several hundreds of thousands." He said Hitler's ID would sell today for about \$50,000, though he said he sold it for less than that in 2009. A Nazi SS uniform is available on his website for \$10,995.

He said he will likely put the inkwell set up for auction in late summer, but he is accepting offers now.

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CHARLIE NEUMAN

Craig Gottlieb in his Solana Beach office with Adolf Hitler's inkwell desk set he's hoping to sell.