

THE TREASURES OF TUTANKHAMUN

Fifty-five years ago tonight (Hopkinsville Time) fifty men and boys, happy to be working from sunrise to sunset for a shilling a day, cut a trench to bedrock in the swirled, sandy floor of the Valley of the Kings, some four hundred miles due south of present day Cairo, Egypt.

Archaeologists worked only a short season in the Valley in those days. By April the pitiless sun, beating on its sheer rock walls, turned it into a furnace until late October, and the searing wind from the south, blew its sandy floor into choking storms.

On October 28, 1922, Howard Carter summoned his foreman and excavating crew and told him that he wanted to resume work without delay. The tourists would begin arriving by mid-December to visit the burial ground of the pharaohs. Since his dig would block the entrance to the tomb of Ramesses VI, one of the most popular attractions, he knew he would have to be finished by then. Carter had just returned from England and a meeting with the Earl of Carnarvon, who had been bearing the cost of his excavations for the past fifteen years and sharing in the infrequent glory of their finds. Carnarvon, disappointed by years of failure, told Carter that he had decided not to apply for a renewal of his government concession to excavate in the Valley. Only after Carter's pleading, and his offer to pay the cost himself if nothing were found, had induced Carnarvon to agree to one final season.

The prize he sought was the tomb of Tutankhamun, who had reigned more than 3,200 years before.

The Valley of the Kings, the royal necropolis, had been part of ancient Thebes, the capital from which the Egyptian empire was ruled at the zenith of its power. The Valley lay just a few miles away from the west bank of the Nile, whose unfailing waters nurtured Egyptian

With the end of the seemingly perpetual power of the pharaohs, Thebes had been possessed by the Persians, by the Greeks of Alexander the Great, by the Romans, and later, by the Arabs. Later, Egypt became a protectorate of Great Britain, although with its own ruling house.

For centuries the Valley and its surrounding desert, wild and inaccessible, had been the haunt of bandits. Only in the nineteenth century, as a measure of order was imposed, did archaeologists dare to begin excavating there.

In all, about thirty-three royal tombs had been found in the bedrock of the Valley but everyone had been pillaged long before by professional thieves, some of whom struck within a few years of the royal burials. What had been found by the Europeans was scarcely more than their leavings. Most experts of the day believed that the burial ground had yielded all its secrets.

Carter, who had spent more than thirty years in Egypt, disagreed. Certain cups and pottery jars had been discovered bearing the pharaoh's name. The finder, a rich, elderly American named Theodore M. Davis, who paid for the work of professional excavators, abandoned his project, and at the urging of the Metropolitan Museum's excavation director, Carter persuaded Carnarvon to take up the exclusive concession to excavate in the Valley.

Carnarvon, who was fifty six, had attended Eton and Cambridge. He had traveled widely. He owned 36,000 acres of farmland and his ancestral seat, Highclere, in Berkshire, was one of the stateliest homes of England. He was a collector and owner of a successful racing stable.

Carter, by contrast, was forty nine years of age. He had grown up in provincial Norfolk, the son and grandson of animal painters, specialists who catered to Victorian England's love for its dogs and horses. In 1890 he first went to Egypt as an inspector in the Egyptian Government's Department of Antiquities.

Carter, intense, driven, a bachelor, must have received a nasty jolt that day when the earl said he had decided to drop the concession. He had spent L 20,000 - well over \$500,000 in today's dollars and all he had to show for it was holes in the sand.

One last season, Carter asked. If the tomb were not found, he would pay for the work himself. Carnarvon relented and Carter hurried back to Egypt to get started on his last shot at finding the tomb.

In the first two days in November of 1922, a layer of flint chips were discovered. This was encouraging because rocks of this type were often used to block the entrances of royal tombs.

On November 4, 1922, Cairo time, the workman found the beginning of a staircase . Slowly and carefully under Carter's eye, the workmen began clearing the staircase. The top of the doorway came into view. And on the plaster covering that sealed the door were affixed the seals of the royal necropolis - the jackal god Anubis above nine defeated foes.

"It was a thrilling moment for an excavator in that valley of unutterable silence, quite alone save for his native staff and workmen," Carter wrote, " suddenly to find himself, after so many years of toilsome work, on the verge of what looked like a magnificent discovery." Carter did not dare to hope that he had actually found the tomb of Tutankhamun. The entrance seemed too modest- maybe it was simply the tomb of a royal relative. What was important was that no one had known that it was there and it still bore the seals on the door.

A more impetuous man might have continued to dig and satisfy his curiosity, but Carter ordered the stairway filled again. He posted guards and hurried to Luxor to send a cable to Carnarvon. It read, "At last have made wonderful discovery in valley; a magnificent tomb with seals intact; recovered same for your arrival; congratulations."

Carnarvon replied that he would arrive with his daughter in Alexandria on November 20. Nowadays, the trip from London to Luxor can be made in five hours; then it took several weeks. They were ferried across the Nile to the west bank and rode on donkeys on the

Carter and his assistant had already begun clearing the stairway again. As more of the doorway was exposed, the seals of Tutankhamun could be seen in addition to those of the royal necropolis. When all sixteen steps had been cleared and the entire doorway could be seen, Carter got a jolt. Holes had been cut into the upper part of the door. The damage had been repaired but the question remained: had this tomb, too, been pillaged?

The door was removed and a passageway lead another twenty five feet to another door. There were indications that this door also had been cut thousands of years earlier. Carter wrote of November 26, 1922; this was the day of days, the most wonderful that I have ever lived through." With Carnarvon, and his daughter nearby, Carter drilled a small hole and inserted a candle and peered in. "Atfirst I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, stange animals, statues, and gold--everywhere the glint of gold." " I was struck dumb with amazement and Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, " Can you see anything? IT was all I could do to get out the words, " Yes, wonderful things."

Aside from the fact the objects that Carter was gazing upon were priceless, the Antechamber looked like the back room of a rummage shop. Parts of three ceremonial beds, thrones, countless vases, chariots, magnificently inlaid boxes, statuettes, weapons, and much else besides --the objects of luxury, confort, and religious significance buried with the pharaoh for his voyage through eternity, and the greatest find in the annals of archaeology -- lay in untidy heaps.

Carter concluded that the tomb had been ransacked within a short time after the burial but ^{the robbers} had only taken gold and semiprecious stones, since mountings and parts of missing objects were found.

I finally had a look at the... Even so, he could

The period to which the tomb belongs is in many respects the most interesting in the whole history of Egyptian art and Carter was prepared for beautiful things. What he was not prepared for was the astonishing vitality and animation which characterized certain of the objects.

Reports of the discovery ^{begin} ~~has been~~ to circulate through Luxor and throughout the civilized world. In his early days, Carter had worked under Sir William Petrie, the father of scientific excavating technique, and he was determined that in dealing with his great find he would make Sir William proud of him. He knew he would need academic and technical assistance and he did not hesitate to seek it. He called upon the curator of the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian Department and its photographer, Harry Burton. Burton photographed each of the four chambers in great detail before anything was touched, and then photographed the thousands of objects after their removal. His handsome pictures were a remarkable achievement considering the conditions and equipment at the time. Architectural assistants, museum curators, draughtsman, chemists and others assisted in the work.

Excitement continued to build throughout the world. Objects found in the Antechamber began to influence women's fashion and jewelry. Popular songs were being written about the discovery, jokes were being told in vaudeville houses and music halls.

The one sour note was the fact Carnarvon had sold the exclusive rights to the story to the TIMES OF LONDON which in turn syndicated it to other newspapers around the world, including the Louisville Courier Journal. Carnarvon and Carter and their associates spoke only to the TIMES and only THE TIMES man was admitted to the tomb. The Courier Journal reported on July 25, 1926, " Gold-cased Mummy of Tut-ankh-amen is found in coffin."

When an electric torch was inserted in the Burial Chamber, it appeared to be a solid wall of gold. Actually, it was the shrine that covered the sarcophagus of Tutankhman. Made of wood, covered

Sourounding the shrine were four statues of goddesses of the dead, including the goddess SELKET.

Within the shrine were three others, the final one revealed that the pharaoh's coffin was made of solid gold. Within lay the linen swathed body of Tutankhamen, gazed upon by mortal eyes for the first time in more than 3,000 years. Covering his head and shoulders was one of the greatest of the world's artistic treasures-- the polished gold funerary mask--elegant, calm, remote and yet breathing with the life of a supremacy that had ended thousands of years before.

Carter gazed upon it, but Carnarvon did not. In April 1923, in Cairo, he had sickened and died. A mosquito bit had been nicked by his barber's razor; it became infected and he died. Whispers began to circulate that caused goose pimples in the dark of night all over the world. From the day of the discovery, gossip had whispered of the curse that fell upon anyone who violated a pharaoh's resting place. The press picked it up and now it seemed to come true. Who, after all, had ever died of a mosquito bite without yellow fever or malaria? For years afterwards, travelers in the Middle East spoke of diarrhea as "King Tut's curse," just as in Mexico they call it "Montezuma's revenge". The biggest problem with the curse theorist had was Carter. His fate should have been the most dreadful of all, but he lived on, with full honors, until 1939, when he died at the age of 66, peacefully, at home in England.

Not for another year after the opening of the Burial Chamber were the intricate linen wrappings that swathed the mummified body removed. The leading pathologists of the day examined the body, but they were unable to determine the cause of the king's early death. The mummifying process was pretty much a failure. Too lavish use of precious oils and unguents, instead of preserving Tut's remains through eternity, had all but destroyed them.

King Tut ascended to the throne of Egypt in about 1334 B. C. and died at the age of eighteen; frequently he is referred to as the "boy king." At the time of his death, he had ruled for nine years. His personal tragedy was to prove a boon to historians for this comparatively short life span gave him little opportunity to prepare the details of his own burial, a favorite pastime of the pharaohs 3000 years ago. Tutankhamen was buried in some haste in the celebrated Valley of the Kings and was far less than Tut's regal due. But its relative obscurity gave it one advantage -- it sank into the Theban sands and was not discovered by the robber bands that scoured the valley looking for gold.

Even though the king had a simple tomb, the pharaoh was nevertheless dispatched with all the paraphernalia that would mark him as a king. Not the least among these are his gold dagger with its starkly simple blade and the abundant rings, necklaces, and brooches, wrought in gold and inlaid with semi-precious stones. Two statues depict the king, mounted on a leopard, passing through underworld regions. Also made of gold, they embody the ancient Egypt belief that the king is kin to the sun god, bringing light wherever he goes.

Amid such a tumult of riches it is a relief to find artifacts of a more human dimension. One is a chair, made of ebony and inlaid with ivory, only twenty-eight inches high and thought to have been used by the king as a child. As Orsen Wells pointed out during the television documentary on King Tut, one ponders whether or not his feet would touch the floor. The design is almost 20th century modern with a concave seat and a simplicity broken only by the lion paws on the legs.

Another interesting item found in the tomb is a board, resting on an ebony sledge, on which an early Egyptian game called Senet was played.

There is a shrine made of wood overlaid with beaten gold. On the side panels are etchings of Tut and his queen in quite domestic scenes. In one, the queen is tying a floral collar around the king's neck; in another he is pouring water into her cupped hand. Inside the shrine is a low pedestal which shows the imprint of the feet of a statue. The statue was not found in the tomb and apparently was stolen by robbers.

Also in the antechamber are the king's crook and flail, an openwork buckle showing Tut at the reins of his chariot, a trumpet of thin gold and copper, an ebony and ivory stool with legs formed of ducks heads, a beautiful ceremonial chair and a portable chest with sides of plain red wood. Carved into the wood are the figures of Tut and the god Osiris. The king is making an offering of a lamp and a jar of perfume.

In the treasury room were found such items as jewelry, statues, a golden cobra, an effigy of the king carved from what appears to be fresh cedar, the goddess Selket and the alabaster jar which held Tut's mummified internal organs.

The last room excavated by Carter was the annex which was really a storeroom. The treasures here are small and personal -- an ivory headrest, a bow, Tut's game board, his royal scepter, an ornate stool and a pomegranate vase.

The treasures have been jealously guarded by the Egyptians ever since their discovery. As a tribute to the United States on its 200th birthday, and after lengthy negotiations, it was agreed that 55 objects of the total of about 5,000, would be loaned. Fifty five were selected in honor of the fifty fifth anniversary of the discovery of the tomb by Howard Carter in November of 1922. It is the most important and beautiful exhibition of ancient Egyptian art to come to the United States.

Two vessels of the Sixth Fleet, the U. S. S. Milwaukee and the U. S. S. Sylvania, which in the course of normal rotation to

were able to transport the treasures of Tutankhamun to our shores with precise gentleness.

The Metropolitan Museum is acting as the organizer of the exhibition. Both the photographs of Harry Burton and the objects themselves, have been brought together in a unique display. An attempt has been made to suggest not only the excitement of the astonishing discovery of the tomb, but the expert and painstaking work involved in the removal of the thousands of objects from the four jam-packed chambers of the relatively small tomb. In the six American museums, the 55 pieces are being presented in approximately the same order, following as much as possible/in ^{the manner} which they were originally excavated.

These treasures, which have attracted an audience of more than two million at the Smithsonian in Washington, the Field Museum in Chicago, and now the New Orleans Museum of Art, are being sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Robert Wood Johnson Charitable Trust and Exxon Corporation.

In Washington, D. C., where King Tut began his American reign last December, the wait to get in to see his treasures averaged five hours. In Chicago, 2,000 lined up on opening day to marvel at the glittering objects found in the boy pharaoh's tomb who lived in the 14th century, B. C. Now it is New Orleans turn, and TIME magazine reports that some of that old Mardi Gras madness has rubbed off on the Egyptian god-king.

Lelong Drive, leading up to the city's Museum of Art, has been painted Nile blue with a gold stripe down the center. The ~~Fairmont~~ ^{FREMONT} Hotel will serve you up a Sphinxburger, complete with Nefertiti's salad and Rames Gumbo. Exotic Dancer Chris Owens, in a new Egyptian costume complete with a vulture collar is gyrating through a routine entitled "Pharaoh's Favorite Toy." For those who must wait outside the museum, 16 portable "Tutlets" are at

From Marshall Field's candy kitchen, came chocolate
"Tut-heads" the perfect complement for your after dinner coffee.
But enough of the Americanization of King Tut.

While his treasures tour the world, Tut rests today in
the simple tomb where Howard Carter found him 55 years ago. Of
the more than 300 pharaohs who ruled Egypt, Tut's is the only tomb
found in modern times that survived with its royal mummy and much
of its contents intact. By the irony we have learned to expect
from history, this boy king who ruled for only nine years has become
the most famous -- and in Egyptian mythology, immortal -- of those
whose one wish in life was to live in eternity after death.

Tut achieved a fame that had eluded him throughout history,
confirming one of the funerary inscriptions found near his mummified
body which says, "to speak the name of the dead, is to make them
live again."

Speak softly thy name, "TUTANKHAMEN."