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'Through the Looking-Glass' owned by the 'real' Alice hits the auction block

November 27, 2009 | 8:10 am

Gerrick Kennedy is back with another contribution to the **Hero Complex** with a report on an interesting artifact that once belonged to the "real" Alice of "Alice in Wonderland" fame...



Former NFL player **Pat McNally** went down the rabbit hole of collecting a long time ago. "My mom was an antique dealer and my parents collected a lot of different things," said McNally, a punter and receiver for the Cincinnati Bengals from 1976 to 1985. "I had my first contract and -- what do you know? -- I spent part of it on a book collection." The 56-year-old has put together an impressive collection (among the gems is a first edition of "Goldfinger," inscribed by **Ian Fleming** to **William Plomer**, the South African author who edited several key **James Bond** books) and, for the last decade, he's been acquiring classics of children's literature. Now, though, he's ready to sell.

On Dec. 16, the former NFL All Pro will part ways with his treasure trove of children's books, including a rare first-edition copy of the 1871 novel "Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found

There," owned by **Alice Liddell**, the girl who inspired **Lewis Carroll's** tales of a youngster who goes on journeys of the surreal. The book, signed by Liddell, is expected to go for \$100,000 to \$150,000.

McNally is an interesting character himself -- the Harvard graduate is the only NFL player with a confirmed perfect score on the **Wonderlic** test, the IQ and problem-solving measurement used by teams since the early 1970s. He also conceived the **Starting Lineup** line of football figurines that became a toy-aisle success for **Kenner** and later **Hasbro** and inspired a whole sector of sports-star toy collectibles.

Why part with the "Alice" book and the other printed-page artifacts? "I enjoy the selling and the pursuit," McNally said. "When I reach a point where I feel the maturation has been reached I sell. I have certain goals and books I wanted and I achieved those."

This certainly feels like a maturation moment for all things Alice in pop culture. The little girl in the blue dress and white pinafore is surging in the popular consciousness.

On Dec. 6, **SyFy** will premiere the two-night miniseries "Alice," a modern-day reworking of the tale starring **Kathy Bates** and **Tim Curry**. Earlier this week, "Wonderland: Alice's New Musical Adventure," a \$3.5-million musical about a modern-day descendant of the Alice, began its preview performances in Florida and opening night is set for Dec. 5. At bookstores, "ArchEnemy" arrived last month as the latest installment in **Frank Beddor's** bestselling series "The Looking Glass Wars," which reimagines Alice as a refugee princess in an epic of fantasy battlefields and royal-court intrigue. And then, of course, there's the impending live-action Disney revisit to the rabbit hole. There's already considerable press and fan anticipation for **Tim Burton's** 3D film "Alice in Wonderland," which stars **Johanny Depp**, **Helena Bonham Carter** and Aussie newcomer **Mia Wasikowska** in the title role.



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The Dec. 16 auction is being staged by Profiles in History, an auction house founded by Joseph Maddalena. He said despite the intense interest in Alice at the moment, the hard-times economic climate will make for some bargains at the auction block. "Collectors are never going to stop collecting," Maddalena said. "The 'Alice in Wonderland' book -- why wouldn't it be worth a million dollars? Because of the economy. Some of these books are relatively cheap compared to what they would have been 10 years ago." Other titles for auction include Beatrix Potter's personal copy of "The Tale of Peter Rabbit"; a copy of "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" accompanied by a letter about Narnia written and signed by C.S. Lewis; limited editions of "Winnie the Pooh," "The House at Pooh Corner" and "Now We Are Six," all inscribed by author A.A. Milne and illustrator Ernest H. Shepard; and a limited edition of the first four Harry Potter books inscribed by J.K. Rowling. For bidding information, visit the Profiles in History website.



-- Gerrick Kennedy

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