

KEVIN MILNE

The beloved broadcaster's reflections on life

Picture into THE PAST



Kevin's finally been reunited with precious photos he lost 35 years ago

Have you lost something and never got over its loss? Something sentimental like a ring or jewellery, a signed book or a special photo?

Decades ago, I thought of making a TV documentary about two of my great-uncles, identical twins, killed in World War I, aged 21. Their names were Laurence and Leo Donohue. But they were better known as Jum, short for Jumbo, and Tiny, because the only way they could be told apart was a marginal height difference.

I collected all the photos of Jum and Tiny from my uncles and aunts, along with

postcards the twins had sent from Europe. I put them in a chocolate box, along with other precious family photos I'd collected in the process. This included a small photograph of my Scottish great-great-grandfather George Milne, which I'd discovered in my father's wallet after he died. It was the only photo of George in New Zealand.

Then, somehow, 35 years ago, I lost the box and all the photos. I felt so guilty and stupid. Despite searching everywhere, calling everyone I'd shown the photos to, I never found the box. I even talked on the radio about the

loss. Still, I had this sense one day they'd pop up from somewhere – and they did last week!

I got an email from a second cousin I hadn't seen since her father's funeral years ago. Elizabeth wrote, "I'm finally tackling some of my father's boxes, including family photos. It's evident many of these photos were provided to Dad by you, including a letter that leads me to that conclusion. It would be lovely to see you again."

I couldn't sleep. At first opportunity, I was knocking at my cousin's door. There was no chocolate box. But unbelievably, among the photos were all those I'd lost. This included photos of my heroic great-uncles Jum and Tiny, their postcards from Europe and that pic of my great-great-grandfather. Here they were, right in front of me more than half a lifetime after I lost them!

It's probably too late now for me to make the documentary. But the photos are there for future generations to see and discover the heroism of identical twins who gave their lives for New Zealand at just 21. I'm ecstatic.

“Here they were, right in front of me more than half a lifetime after I lost them!”

Join the conversation

Have you ever lost a family treasure? Share it with us! Email nzww@aremedia.co.nz



Identical twins Laurence (left) and Leo are back with Kevin.