Its a medium brown Carlos Vega cigar box with a small brass latch and rounded edges. The box has been in my family for about 40 years, yet no one except my uncle Bobby smokes cigars, and he wouldn't smoke a Carlos Vega, they're too small he would say. As far as I know the box has not held a cigar inside of it since the day my Papa sold the last one from his San Francisco liquor store about 40 years ago. Ever since that day, or so I am told, my Papa kept the box under the counter of his shop, depositing all manner of unique and relatively rare currency into its machogony shell. If a customer bought something with a two dollar bill, the bill went in the box, right along side buffallo head nickles, Kennedy half dollars, Eisenhower silver dollars, Susan B. Anthony dollars, old Federal Reserve money, and indian head pennies. The box was a place of honor for lost, forgotten about or under minted currency, that had earned a better station in the world than to just be handed over for a pack of gum.

Every evening as far back as I can recall the Carlo Vega cigar box remained under the counter at my Papa's shop, that is with the exception of one night each spring. Why is this night different from all other nights? I joked to my brother and sister as we rode to Grandma and Papa's house in The City; because tonight we have a cigar box at our Seder.

On seder night when I would walk into the Grandma's dining room, my first action was not to notice the fine china and crystal that she had put out for the seder, nor was it to check to see where my folded paper place card was located (I always sat next to Auntie Eva anyway), no my first conscius act was to quickly scan the room and ashuridly locate the Carlos Vega cigar box atop the china cabinet behind Papa's seat.

With it located the Seder could begin, all was right with the world. Grandma would begin by lighting the Yom Tov Lights, then Papa would chant the Kiddish, go wash his hands, we'd eat the parsley, dipping not once but twice in salt water to show intention and then Papa would lift up the Matzah cover I made in Sunday School and take out the middle matzah, the afikomen. He would say, "This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt, let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in need come and share our Passover. This year we are here. Next year, may we be in the land of Israel. This year we are slaves. Next year, may we all be free." Then he would place it in a special bag and remind us all that without it we could not complete the seder. As soon as he wasn't looking, I would steal it.

When the seder was drawing to a close and everybody was tired and very full, Papa would tap his glass with his spoon, Grandma would yell out, "David, not the good crystal!" and he would reach for the afikomen. But it wasn't there, Papa would look under the table, on his seat, make loud protestrations about not being able to finish the seder without it, and then he would purposefully interogate each person at the table as to where they had seen it last, and had they taken it. Finally he would get to me, and I would admit to having the Afikomen in my possession, reminded by my Mom that its okay to steal on Passover, but you never lie.

Now the negociating would begin, he would ask for it back, I would ask how much it was worth to him, he would set some pitifully low reward, and I would counter with an extremely high amount. Back and forth we would go, everyone laughing, until finally he would reach for the cigar box behind him, open the small brass latch and say

to me, "Danny, we really must have the afikomen to finish the seder, you drive a hard bargin, but I have something here that I think you'll like, shall we trade." I would then hand over the matzah and Papa would give to me, my brother and sister a unique piece of money from the Carlos Vega cigar box.

When my Papa died five years ago, he left the cigar box and all its contents to my Dad who now leads our seders. Tuesday night when my family held our seder, my niece Rebbekah was finally old enough to ask the four questions and to hide the affikomen. When it came time for the ransoming of it back, she performed like a pro, of course she was coached by a very experienced uncle. After all the laughing and jeering, my Dad reached behind his seat and pulled out the Carlos Vega cigar box, he opended the small brass latch, easing the mechagony cover open and extracted from it a two dollar bill, he then handed it to Rebekah in exchange for the Matzah.

One statistic that I heard at school last week is that 95% of the Jewish community that identified themselves as Jewish attends a Passover seder. Passover is a bigger draw than Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashannah, according to this statistic more Jews go to a seder than light the candles on channukah. Why is this, what does a seder have that Jews don't find the rest of the year. Seder's have matzah covers from Sunday school, grandma's matzah balls, an Auntie Eva and an Uncle Bobby, your wedding china in the living room, family songs, practicing the four questions, and at least in my family Carlos Vega cigar boxes from Papa's store. What makes seder so special, we do! The Passover Seder is the most celebrated Jewish holiday because we put more into it than anything else. The key to seder's success in Jewish families is that no one does it for us,

even if you attend a seder and don't host one, their is still a greater level of participation and involvement than just about any other holiday. What makes seder's work is that each and every person