

Act of kindness returns 50-year old memories to local bricklayer

Deep in the airshafts of the Maricopa County court building lay the answer to a question that was 50 years old. A question that may never have been answered if not for a recent discovery.

Dennis Cahill, who comes from a long line of bricklayers, says it all started when he was working on the Maricopa County east court building in 1963.

He says he finished his shift and realized he lost his wallet.

"I thought I lost it in a porta-potty," says retired Local 3 bricklayer Dennis Cahill.

"I only had one dollar in the wallet," he adds.

And while one dollar could buy him a small dinner at the time, he opted not to conduct the messy port-a-potty search.



Dennis Cahill's wallet after more than 50 years.



The airshaft at the Maricopa County east court building in 2014.

More than 50 years later, a Caliente Construction worker tasked with helping renovate the Maricopa County east court building sees something in the same airshaft Cahill had been in the day his wallet disappeared.

The worker while getting rid of asbestos and lead paint in the 5-foot deep, 30-foot wide and 180-foot high airshaft finds the lost wallet - intact. He promptly returned it to his superintendent.

"I've been in construction my whole life," says Caliente Construction Superintendent James Williams.

"I was compelled to return the wallet to its rightful owner or family member. I think I would want someone to do the same if it was my father that had lost this," says Williams.

Williams says he spent a couple of hours Googling Cahill's name until he came up with a family member who he called right away. That family member put Williams in touch with Cahill's son.

"I played cloak and dagger with the son until he was sure I actually had his father's property and I was sure that he was really the son," says Williams.

The wallet contains all the items Cahill was carrying with him that day on the job in 1963. He had a draft card, driver's license,



James Williams and worker who found wallet Oct. 2014.

Social Security card, a bricklayers skill card, a picture of his former wife and infant son, and the infamous dollar bill – now worth about four dollars since it’s a collector’s item.

“Mr. Williams went through an incredible amount of effort to find me, and that says a lot about who he is as a person. One heck of a nice guy,” says Cahill.

Cahill now resides in Bear Flat a community about 20 miles from Payson. He says he’s going strong with life and is happy in his retirement because of his good union pension.

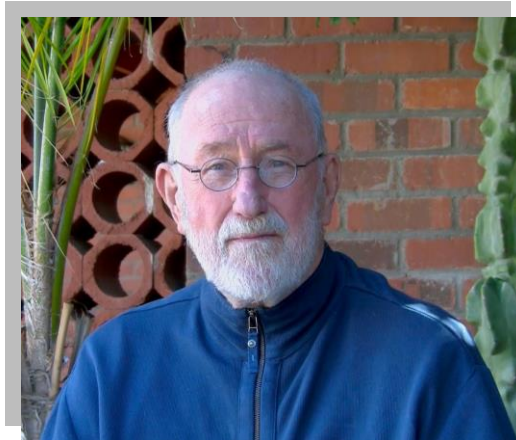
“I love socializing at the retirement home close to where I live. I’m really getting into this game called Mahjon,” says Cahill.

Cahill proudly says that his support for his union is still strong.

His son, Jim Cahill, currently is the President of Bricklayers Local 3.

“I’ve been a contractor, member of the Tempe City Council, ran for Tempe mayor. I even have a senior center in Tempe named after me,” says Cahill.

“But I’ve always considered myself a bricklayer – and to this day I’m proud to say I’m a member of Bricklayers Local 3,” he says.



Dennis Cahill at Bear Flat community near Payson, Ariz.