



**MICHAEL  
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# The Tooth Fairy

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## **MIKE FINLEY**



Everyone knows about Santa Claus, and how he lives at the North Pole with his elves without any women at all except Mrs. Santa, and makes toys for all the little girls and boys.

And everyone knows about the Easter Bunny, how he lives in the forest with his bunny friends, coloring eggs and weaving baskets from the branches of the yimyam plant, which is now an endangered species.

But what does any of us know, really, about that other major benefactor of kids? I am speaking of course of the Tooth Fairy.

Every time a child loses a tooth, and places it under the pillow at night, the Tooth Fairy turns up. Somehow he gets into our houses, finds his way to our rooms, sneaks the money under our heads -- where he gets it isn't our concern -- and then sneaks away without so much as a never-you-mind.

Obviously there is much that is not generally known about this friend to mankind, and it is the purpose of this book to set the record straight, and to recognize this much-overlooked figure.

Who is the tooth fairy? A better question would be, Who are the tooth fairies?, for in fact there are over 10,000 registered tooth fairies in the world, and an additional number of gypsy tooth fairies, thought to be in excess of 5,000, operating without any kind of certification.

I'll bet you didn't know that, gentle reader.

But the original tooth fairy was not always a tooth fairy. In fact, he spent the first 300 years of his career not giving gifts to kids, but breaking

into people's houses and stealing teeth they already had in their mouths, and making jewelry from them that he sold at a booth on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City. Fellow name of "Cal."

But one night, this Cal had a dream in which he saw that people -- kids, especially -- had a "thing" about losing body parts, and it wasn't very nice. He made up his mind he would change his ways, and so he did. For the remaining 700 years of his life, he spent every night out collecting the lost teeth of all the children of the area he lived in, and placing dimes under their pillows.

It was a rough business. He had to fight off competitors, dogs, and dads with baseball bats. Sometimes kids would try to trick him by clenching the tooth firmly in their fists -- prying the fingers apart to get the tooth was always a challenge, until the Tooth Fairy invented the knuckle breaker.

The dimes he got were part of a trust fund set up when his great aunt, who was the goddess of air and mineral rights, passed away. It is said that no matter how many kids lose how many teeth, the tooth fairy will always have dimes.

Twenty seven thousand eight hundred and eleven years ago, the original tooth fairy, Cal, went to live with the angels, in Canada. But not before he created a handbook, a continuing education program, and guidelines of professional ethics for tooth fairies to come.

Today his message has spread around the world, and if some kid loses a tooth and doesn't get a dime, well, it's news to the tooth fairies.

Few people realize that in the United States, tooth fairies are appointed by state legislatures, one per congressional district.

Needless to say, it is a plum assignment, and the list of tooth fairy wannabees is long indeed. Well-connected people are especially eager to use their influence to break into the fairy ranks, but to no avail. Legislatures are only on the lookout for individuals of sterling character, who are bonded, and who are not squeamish about the ins and outs of oral hygiene.

Tooth fairies are required to attend over 200 hours of basic training at the International Tooth Fairy Academy, Training Center and Research Institute for Orthodontic Commerce in Tierra del Fuego. There aspiring fairies are drilled in the various procedures tooth fairies in the modern world are expected to master.

How, for instance, does the tooth fairy enter the house? The chimney is out, of course -- that market is obviously already cornered. And that is just as well since the new higher-efficiency furnaces have made entry by chimney a virtual impossibility. But that is not our problem, is it, gentle reader.

No, after an exhaustive investigation the Tooth Fairy International Research Center concluded that the best entryway for today's homes is the dryer vent, and that is how tooth fairies usually enter homes, although a few old-timers still bore 38-inch diameter holes through the roof using battery-powered 12-mm portable jig saws. It is said that you can identify a tooth fairy by the lint on his mustache.

Making their way up from the basement to the child's room, sneaking in, making the dime drop, and getting the heck out of there without waking up Mom is the heart and soul of the tooth fairy operation.

Now, you may be wondering, what happens to the teeth? The teeth are all labeled and bar-coded, and then shipped to one of two hemispheric tooth fairy laboratories in Chicago and Cairo. There a team of skilled scientists examine each tooth, calibrating its size and condition, and checking for signs that the previous owner had been flossing and brushing properly.

That part is important, because if you haven't been flossing and brushing regularly, you get a computer printout in the mail, and you are on 6-month probation. At any moment, an investigator could pop in and ask to look inside your mouth. So get with the program, all you kids.

After the teeth are photographed and recorded, they are installed at the Museum of Teeth in Oklahoma City. There visitors can stroll through the exhibits of teeth through the Ages, noting the largest tooth, the sharpest tooth, the yellowest tooth, and strange and unusual teeth, like the bicuspid that looks just exactly like a famous celebrity -- sorry, we are not allowed to name names here.

The Museum of Teeth is open from 10 AM to 4 PM Wednesdays through Fridays, except in summers, when it is closed Tuesdays and Thursdays. It operates under a generous grant by the Proctor and Gamble Foundation, makers of fine dentifrices for eighty years.

The next time you are in Oklahoma City, stop in and see what happened to your baby teeth.

Meanwhile, that is the story of the Tooth Fairy, who he was, how he came to be, and how he created an institution which operates in over 128 countries and appears under the Quotron symbol TFRY on the New York Stock Exchange. It is a story of how one individual, with a bit of grit, elbow grease, and a sock full of dimes, stood up, broke into people's houses, and made a difference.

So the next time you hear some other child pooh-poohing the Tooth Fairy, or saying "it's just Mom and Dad," gentle reader, you be sure and set that child straight. Or you may both be getting a little visit from our legal counsel. Infringement of trademark and libel are serious charges, as I'm sure your parents are aware.

And give those back teeth an extra stroke, for us!

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**Michael Finley** writes about topics relating to culture and change. His book with Harvey Robbins, *The New Why Teams Don't Work*, won a Booz-Allen & Hamilton Global Business Book Award. Mike has also been named one of a handful of "Masters of the Wired World" by Financial Times Press. BH SmartDocs™ are published by BrownHerron Publishing and are sold exclusively on Amazon.com ([www.amazon.com/brownherron](http://www.amazon.com/brownherron)).

