



Nik Gaffney

A collection of photos laid out from an album.

STUFF

Storing, preserving memories

BY ANN WHITE

I am in my 70s and looking ahead. At what point do our treasures become a burden? I have a house full of stuff. Granted, some of it is junk and clutter, but many items have stories behind them. I feel like I am the guardian of treasures passed on to me. It is not a materialistic attachment but an acceptance that I am the keeper of our family history.

I am one of seven children, and we were all blessed with more family stuff than we could manage. Just because it is old doesn't mean we need to keep it, either. My attachment is to memories of my grandparents and parents, the comfort and importance they placed on them. In addition, after 45 years of marriage and two children, we added substantially to the quantity and the magnitude of stuff and memories.

I have been abundantly blessed, and I am truly grateful. But I also remember the burden we had in dispersing my family's possessions when they downsized from a five story house, filled to the brim, to a two story condominium. It took us years and lots of vacation time to do the work.

After my dad died and mom moved to assisted living, we gathered at the condominium. We amicably took turns choosing items one by one. We had an appraisal and knew the deflated value for tax purposes. We all walked away with personally meaningful treasures of roughly equal value to each of us.

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After mom passed, our sibling unit shifted. There was no more competition for our parent's attention, harkening a new relationship with each other. We became closer. The big family home is gone, and I had hoped that my home would fill the gap and provide the venue for classic family gatherings.

Then my husband died, I returned to live in Portland and COVID hit. So now it's just me and my little dog, rattling around in this big house, playing classical music all day to fill the void. Times have changed and we are all dispersed, living separate lives.

But back to my reality — what do I do with all this stuff? For one thing, I only have two children and four grandchildren. My daughter has a furnished home, and my son lives in New York City in a small apartment.

He has filled part of my real estate (basement, garage and closets) with things for safe keeping until he has more space. My son loved ceramics in high school and at university he was a prolific artist. Our home is adorned with his treasures, vases, jars, sculptures. Rather than crafting small tiles to test the glazes, he made something practical. There are boxes of his tea or sake cup samples in the basement.

See Page 16

Men, it's time to check your health!

It's Men's Health Month, a good time to think about any preventative screenings or tests needed at different stages of life. These can include:

- Blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol checks
- Colorectal and prostate cancer screening options
- Routine checkups to get advice on diet, exercise and safety

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