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Times have changed. Our children entertain by ordering or picking up food. They are both excellent cooks, but will they pull out the good china that needs to be washed by hand, or polish the silver, or iron a damask tablecloth and linen napkins? They currently don't have space to store fine china or silver. We got married in 1970, and in those days, we received a lot of silver — much of it I don't use. However, it fills two large inlaid hand-carved wooden trunks made in Pakistan. They both have big brass padlocks, and I keep the skeleton keys secured.

In Panama, I collected hand-stitched

molas made by the Guna Indians. In Pakistan, I acquired hand-knotted Persian and tribal carpets over many cups of sweet tea. My husband enjoyed collecting pre-war brass (that needs to be polished). My favorite pieces are the brass camel bracelets that adorn our coffee table, always a conversation piece. They are reminders of riding in open carriages through the bazaars and following the camels with a rhythmic gait as they balanced a load of hay triple their size. Then there is the art we have collected from the Virgin Islands to China.

We all collected books and have leatherbound National Geographic issues dating back to the 1970s. The world is read-

ing everything online, and digital media is the way to go. My basement has boxes of papers related to our family history, documents certifying our genealogy, letters from my grandparents, generations of yearbooks, school records and boxes of photographs.

The photos and photo albums we have lovingly cherished are fading. They are cumbersome and falling apart. The videos of our children are on outdated technology. I have travel guides from the places where we lived and others we visited. Some are dusty and in poor condition, but they all tell stories about our family history. How do you organize that, and to what purpose?

As I am aging surrounded by all these

objects and beautiful memories, I ask myself what to do with everything? I need a conversation with my children as they have not noted any specific attachment. The things my parents inherited were a burden. They did their best to preserve it and ensured we all had a family sofa, a clock, some of the china or crystal that filled the pantry.

I don't want our family history lost in a massive estate sale where things are turned into monetary value, but the history is lost. Does history matter? I haven't resolved this dilemma, nor do I know where to start.

*This essay was produced through a class taught by Tom Hallman Jr., a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter at The Oregonian.*



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Mandy Goldberg