

Honoring Your Treasures

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If you could save one object from your home if it became necessary to suddenly evacuate your home, what would you take and why? In the last several months, so many areas of the country have been impacted by events which caused devastating damage and even loss of life: historic floods, tornados, fires and hurricanes. Thousands of families lost everything in their homes. Those events threaten to wipe out our tangible histories...but do they really?

When interviewed, people often say that they are grateful that family was saved and others things can be replaced, which is true to some extent. It is true that "things" can sometimes be replaced, but what happens to the sentimental attachments to those things lost? People grieve. Within those objects...those things that insurance may or may not be able to replace...are stories of love, connection and laughter. How do we honor those importance those objects symbolize?



In my closet is a beat up blanket that has been with me for more than 30 years. Fifteen years ago it became so fragile that, if I had chosen, I could have worn it like a poncho, but a good friend with sewing machine skills took the cherished object and did major reconstructive surgery. At first glance, the average person would probably toss it in a dumpster at the first opportunity or use it as a packing blanket. Nearly too worn to even take in public to use as a ground cover for a picnic, that blanket holds within its polyester soul the memories of the most tender times in my life.

After the deaths of my parents and a very dear friend (now deceased too), that blanket gave the rare sense of comfort I had during those days. It was that dear friend that did the major surgery to turn it from a poncho back into a blanket...so it feels holds the love of her friendship and her recognition of the symbol of that silly blanket.

I saw the importance of objects that I was insistent on moving TWICE this year....objects that I will never use and don't even like...but they hold many memories. Now that I have them unpacked, again, with a garage sale looming, I am going to take some of my own therapeutic medicine. I will write the stories to honor and treasure the objects so I can let them go, because the memories still live on long after the objects are no longer sharing residence with me.

What are your most memory-packed objects? (stop and think a moment)

What items have you seemed unwilling to part with, although you may not use them?

If you have been one of those impacted this year by the events which stole the objects away from you, which items are you grieving most?

Once you have your list, here is one way to honor those treasures:

1. Take or find a photograph of the object (ask family and friends if they might have taken a photo in a certain room or of a certain object (such as a piece of jewelry that is missing). If you are unable to find a photograph, Google the object, click "images" and see if you can find a similar item. Or, draw the object.
2. In a journal or a piece of art paper, attach the photo of the object and write about the object. Whose was it? How did you come to own it? If it was a gift, what do you remember about the day you received it? If it was something you inherited, who was it inherited from and what is/was your relationship with that person? What are the stories (first hand or second hand) that you know about the person...and that object (if possible)?
3. What is the one special message that object held?
4. What are your gratitudes of having had that object in your possession?
5. Tell the story of importance about the object (and the specialness of that object) to another person or group of people.
6. Repeat the first five steps with other objects that you no longer possess or need to give or sell?

Pauline Boss wrote an excellent book called *Ambiguous Losses* which held the quote: "Resilience erodes as rituals and celebrations are cancelled. " When we honor those treasures by engaging in activities above, we both honor and grieve more effectively and we can keep the love and connection alive. It is the legacy and connection that connects us to one another and is the essence of life.