

My mother did not collect things; in fact, she actively scorned the idea of spending time, space, or money on accumulating anything. She simply was not sentimental. I'm sorry now that she did not save memorabilia of any kind, except perhaps for Christmas pictures. As her first-born, I benefited by a small bit of her preserving a few things. I have a partially filled baby book with a few of my "firsts," such as the date of the discovery of my first tooth, first outing, first word, and first short dress, and even a sparse lock of my hair when I finally grew some. (For my first two years I was remarkably bald, with just enough hair to provoke remarks about what a fine "fellow" I was, resulting in Mother's never allowing me to be seen without a fancy bonnet, featuring ruffles, bows, feathers, and other such furbelows.) She sadly neglected the baby books of her next two children, merely recording the name of her first-born son; the twins never even had books.

When anything was outworn or outgrown, Mother was able to find a useful home for it, out of our home. Clothes went to friends or the church "missionary barrel," books were passed on to someone who would read them except for a very few re-readable classics, and toys were recycled to other children whether known or unknown. As my mother's daughter, I subscribed to her philosophy without really reasoning my way through it. It was easy *not* to complete the baby books of my children. We did not save any of their clothes or furniture or books. However, during the two years we were apart before Paul and I were married, I did save all his daily letters. Unfortunately, in the process of many moves, most of those letters have disappeared. I have two or three, but not nearly enough of them. When we moved to Virginia from Texas, we weeded through our large collection of books, giving most of them to the library or to friends. I learned the consequence of those disposals within the first two years of our residence in Richmond. Every book which Roland needed in his school work seemed to be one of those we'd left in Texas.

In recent years as I've been writing memoirs, I have realized the folly of not saving some things. Wouldn't it be wonderful to confirm some of my memories about our activities during the early years of our married life? All those daily and special events I had faithfully reported in numerous letters home - letters that Mother didn't keep after a reasonably short length of time but which I probably wouldn't have kept even if she had passed them on to me - many of the events that I've lost in a hazy sequence of time I could perhaps verify through those no-longer-existent letters.

Paul has managed to squirrel away quite a few photographs of the family. I can go back through years of pictures and verify some of my memories. Through the help of a curious and sentimental granddaughter, he has arranged most of the photos in chronological order, a wonderful resource for looking and remembering.

The fact that I do not save memorabilia of various kinds does not, however, make my home an uncluttered paradise of shining order. I collect daily minutia; magazines, recipes, newspapers, old towels, jelly jars, margarine cartons. When these things, this *stuff*,

become burdensome and threaten to overflow the living areas of the house, I ruthlessly cut them out and recycle them, where possible, or simply throw them away to make room for the next run of the trivia of living.

I mentioned Mother's Christmas pictures. *Those* she carefully preserved, along with any other snapshot or photograph that might have been sent to her during the years. When we were closing her home, we found boxes and boxes of such pictures. Martha and I, with some help from the rest of the family and a few old friends, spent hours trying to put names to some of the people in the photos. When we had done our best, we still had many piles of a myriad of unidentified persons facing us. Martha is a conserver, and she anguished over those unidentified folk. I volunteered to take care of them; she gratefully turned them over to me. I conscientiously went through the whole collection when I got them home. Then I contributed the whole mass of them to the waste paper drive. I've never regretted a single one of those lost pictures, but I do occasionally grieve over the consequences of my lack of a true collector's instinct. I'd love to have a couple of my dolls, my copy of *Little Women* and *Heidi*, some of my college notes, some of the boys' remarkably intelligent, clever, and perceptive sayings, and all of Paul's pre-marriage letters.

