



Memories

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Recently I noticed a huge, heavy box on a high shelf in my storage room. Because it wasn't labelled I had absolutely no idea what was in it. How shocked I was once it was at ground level to realize what was inside.

There were several hundred greeting cards. Some were from various birthdays and graduations that I had over the years. Many were sympathy cards that had arrived after the death of my mother. A leather pouch that was embossed with "Important Documents" contained wills and insurance policies from my dad who died in 1979. There were newspaper clippings, airplane boarding passes and souvenirs from trips.

Baptismal certificates from my parents' infancy were probably the oldest documents in the box. There was even a hand-made scrapbook from a wedding shower held in my mother's honour in 1949!

I had absolutely no idea that I had all of these treasures or how they ended up together in this manner.

It didn't take long to become somewhat overwhelmed with reading sympathy cards and letters written by those who had loved my mother. In fact, I quickly realized that it was emotionally best to just view five or six a day. I noted that many of the senders were unknown to me at a personal level and many of the others have also passed on. I decided to look for themes to commit to memory and physically keep only a few of them. It was so encouraging to notice that people repeatedly conveyed their thoughts that mom was special because she made everyone else feel special. Great wisdom for all of us to ponder!

I went through all the unique treasures that represented my dad's life – a pitchpipe from his Barbershop singing days, the seniority listing from his employment with the CPR, a baseball counter that he used when he was umpire at games. He even had a shin plaster and some one-dollar bills printed for Canada's 1967 hundredth anniversary celebration. All of these things will be passed along, with stories to offer context for generations to come.

Handwritten letters and cards sent to me as well as journals scribed by mom documented daily events and her consistent love of life and me. The idea of being loved never grows old.

It took several weeks to go through and sort everything. Then I found a smaller box and carefully re-packaged what I wanted to keep. This time I used a felt marker on the outside of the box to identify the contents.

This adventure caused me to think about many things. First of all, why were all of these items saved? I don't really believe in coincidence. Perhaps these were waiting for me so I could contemplate my history when the time was right. Secondly, I began to wonder who would treasure these items in the future for I am the last of our family of origin. My mom, dad and sister are gone, and I am therefore the keeper of the stories and the artifacts. Thirdly, I wondered what things that I have which could be passed on and valued by generations to come.

This week think about the idea that you are a curator of history. What do you have to pass on and what can you create that will be treasured for decades to come? You might not

realize it now but even just writing out a few stories from your life might be nuggets of gold to your descendants.