



## april inspiration...the things we carry

One summer, my younger son read a book on his summer reading list called, "*The Things They Carried*", by Tim O' Brien. It is a book of stories about the experiences of an infantry company during the Vietnam War. I remember my son (an Echo Boomer who takes to movies and the computer more readily than hunkering down with a paperback) devouring it. I recently rediscovered the book- ear marked, pages ruffled and text underlined in a pile of books that I was relocating to the bookcases in our study.

I read the description on the back of the book jacket. "They carried malaria tablets, love letters, 28 lb. mine detectors, dope, illustrated Bibles and each other." "Jimmy Cross carried a compass, maps, code books, binoculars, and a .45-caliber pistol that weighed 2.9 lbs. fully loaded. He carried a strobe light and the responsibility for the lives of his men." - *Serious stuff*.

They carried the personal essentials important not only to their physical survival, but their emotional survival as well. We all do the same, but most of our "stuff" isn't quite so serious and, of course, it takes up more than a knapsack. Most of us start out in our first apartments with a deficit and then start adding on with gusto. Before you know it, we have run out of storage and need to buy a bigger house so we can continue accumulating more stuff.

I like ponder this- if I only had a knapsack to go through life with, what would I carry? I think about this topic often as, at times I feel as though I am the *Curator of Stuff*. Mine, my family's and sometimes my clients. What should I keep? What could I really do without? It's easy to give advice to others, but not so easy when it comes to our own.

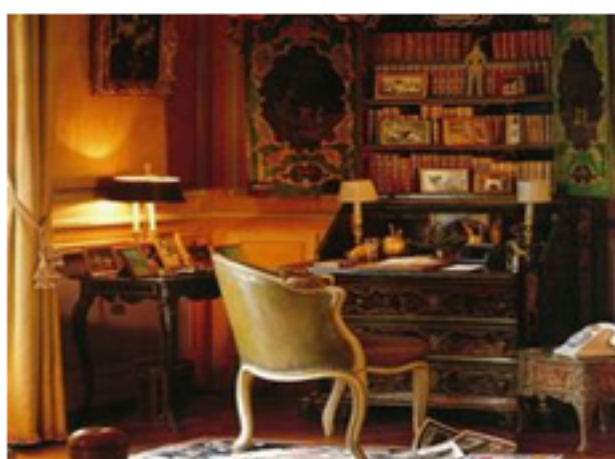


Villa Windsor

Most of what we carry isn't necessarily important to anyone else but us. I try to remember that as I make another file for each new year, tossing in *Playbills*, calendars, and other ephemera that was collected over the previous year. Actually, with very few exceptions, most of the stuff I save in those files is of interest only to me. I am wracked with guilt thinking of my family trudging through my paper trail after I am gone. It's important to me, since it is my way to recreate a year at a glance by just pulling out a file folder, but I certainly don't wish its contents on anyone. Really, who but me would care? I'm actually thinking of making a sign to tape onto my file cabinet that says,

***BUILD A BONFIRE, ROAST MARSHMALLOWS- DON'T STRESS- JUST BURN THIS STUFF!***

Ridding yourself of possessions can be SO liberating. Many of us cling to things that have sentimental value - letters from camp, our Grandmother's favorite pitcher, Boy Scout badges- mementos that remind us of our past and give some type of credence to our lives. If we are honest, there is a lot that we carry that isn't very important and we can really do without. If I use the rucksack analogy, my personal stuff would fill much more than Santa's sack (I'm talking about *the Global Santa* here).



Villa Windsor

Last summer, at a local book sale, I came across a double volume of the Sotheby's Auction catalogue of the Duke and the Duchess of Windsor's Estate in 1997. The sale included 40,000 items listed in 3,200 lots. ***That's a lot of stuff!*** For an anglophile like me, it was an exciting "score" and regardless of what you think of these two notorious characters, you have to admit, when it came to stuff, theirs rated an A+. I couldn't wait to page through and see the contents of their *Villa Windsor* in Paris- the numerous patterns of silverware and china, antique furniture and their personal items- jewelry, photos, clothes. It was an absolute treasure trove.

The first catalogue was devoted to household items from their homes including clothing, books, accessories-etc. All magnificent examples of their impeccable taste. The second volume was all about Edward- page after page of the Duke's official metals, awards, uniforms, photos of his time as the Prince of Wales and the King of England. They carried a lot in their rucksack.

What struck me when paging through those immense catalogues was, regardless of the quality and the beauty of what the Windsor's surrounded themselves with every day, in the end, for better or for worse, without an heir to pass down their treasures, it all became just another person's "stuff".

Now that I have gotten all that off my chest, I'm taking a quick inventory to see what things can be collected for our garage sale this summer. For me, there is nothing as therapeutic as editing our home every so often. I won't be too rash, you never know when someone might need that something or other....and yes, I really do need all my books, and photos, and artwork, but, I could clean out a few drawers and closets ... and no... I guess I really don't need three sets of playing cards.....hmmmmmm.

***Happy Spring Purging to all of you who dare!***

**President**

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