



Moving out and making choices

Unsere Kolumnistin hilft ihrer Mutter vor deren Umzug beim Ausmisten. Dabei fragt sie sich, welchen Wert die Dinge um uns haben, und wovon dieser Wert bestimmt wird. **medium US**

Nobody could claim that helping your parents to move from a large house to a one-bedroom apartment is easy. But it can be fascinating — particularly if your parents are the kind who have saved not only all your kindergarten drawings, but also your grandparents' love letters, and photos of ancestors you never knew you had.

Generally, the easiest things to part with are the large pieces of furniture; but you have to convince your parents that these pieces are used furniture, not antiques, and that you must charge prices people are prepared to pay.

Maybe that old bed has been in the family since the 1860s, but the antiques market is flat today, so it will be hard to find a buyer.

With many baby boomers moving from large homes into smaller ones, supply is greater than demand. Some antique dealers say that members of the younger generation simply aren't interested in antiques. Others will tell you that they can't afford to buy antiques because of the current state of the economy. Either way, it's certainly a buyer's market.

When it comes to the old photographs, I say if you don't know who is in them, there's no sense in keeping them. Others in the family prefer to make a game of it. My niece Jennifer sits in the corner reading out passages from 19th-century letters found in the attic, while my brother Ed labels the photos with names from those letters. Who will ever know if that baby is really our great-great-grandma Ella Bell or our distant uncle Reginald, who fought in the Civil War?

Meanwhile, another niece, Lisa, finds a box of papers that include Grandpa's school report cards and letters from teachers commenting on his poor behavior. Our favorite, though, is a letter he wrote to his mother when he was in eighth grade: "I know my grades are bad, and I did some terrible things this year. But I do think I should have a boat this summer. I promise to do better next year." The box contains a real treasure: an invitation to the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, hand-addressed to my great-grandfather.

Once we've sorted through everything, we call in an appraiser to tell us what, if anything, is valuable. Of course, just because it won't bring money on the antiques market doesn't mean it has no value. For example, there's that plate I had cookies on after school. Someone bought it for a few dollars 50 years ago. It might be worth 50 cents at a yard sale today, but I wouldn't sell it for anything. As we pick out what we want to keep, we aren't choosing things that the appraiser considers valuable. I want that cookie plate. My niece has her heart set on the children's tea set (with the words "made in occupied Japan" printed on it) that she used for tea parties when visiting Grandma and Grandpa. Ed wants the letter opener he made in seventh grade.

But there are still boxes and boxes full of stuff that nobody — neither appraiser nor family — considers valuable. For these, we decide to hold a garage sale. After all, one man's trash is another man's treasure. Soon the entire two-car garage is filled with these "treasures." Surprisingly, people come to it — and even more surprisingly, they buy a lot of the stuff. It's clear to us all that value, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.



"It's quite clear that value, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder"

ancestor ['ænsɛstər]	Vorfahr
appraiser [ə'preɪzər]	Gutachter(in), Antiquitätenschätzer(in)
attic ['ætrɪk]	Dachboden
beholder: beauty is in the eye of the ~ [br'houldər]	schön ist, was den Leuten gefällt
(beholder	Betrachter(in)
cookie ['kuki] US	Keks
distant ['dɪstənt]	entfernt
flat [flæt]	hier: flau
grade [greɪd]	Klasse(nstufe); auch: Note, Zensur
heart: set one's ~ on sth. [hɑ:rt]	sein Herz an etw. hängen
niece [ni:s]	Nichte
report card [rɪ'pɔ:rt ,kɑ:rd] N. Am.	Zeugnis
tea set ['ti: set]	Teeservice
trash [træʃ] US	Müll
yard sale ['jɑ:rd seɪl]	Flohmarkt auf dem eigenen Grundstück