

Bill Rea ? Spring cleaning time

In many ways, I could be called a traditionalist.

The marking of various holidays often follow an established pattern, based on the traditions that I picked up from my parents and have followed since I was a little kid. Christmas is a good example of that, as things for me usually go as they have gone all my life, although they have naturally been adjusted as people have come into my life, or departed.

I'm one of those guys who holds to the concept of don't mess with something if it works.

There are some traditions that I know many people follow that I have not been inclined to go along with. But like any one, I can adjust to other demands of life.

I'm doing that right now.

How many of you reading this routinely give your homes a spring cleaning? I don't mean cleaning up messes that need to be cleaned up, because we all do that (some of us more diligently than others, to be sure). I mean going into places you seldom go, and finding things you had forgotten you owned.

My wife and I are currently in the middle of such an exercise.

One reason we haven't done this too much in the past is it's time consuming, and time is something that I don't have in much abundance. As a self-confessed workaholic, I spent a lot of my waking hours on the job, running all over the place with camera and note pad. That doesn't leave me with a lot of time for domestic chores, although some of them have to be done and I'll get to them. For example, while there was an event to cover last Saturday at the Caledon Pan Am Equestrian Park, I made sure I got home in good time to cut the lawn and do a few other chores that needed doing. It is hard to find time to do these things, especially since Beth also is in the habit of pressing me into barbecuing service this time of year (I like to think I am actually getting good at it too). But there are things that need to be done, so we have to get to them.

It was sort of a spur of the moment thing a couple of Saturdays ago (I think it was Victoria Day weekend) that I decided the garage needed a good cleaning, because it hadn't seen one in more than 10 years.

It's amazing how energetic I get when I'm impulsive. I think Beth was impressed, if not astounded, when she saw me lugging stuff out of the garage and piling it on the front lawn.

She was also impressed with the way I was sorting all this stuff. One pile was for stuff that was to go back into the garage, and there was another pile for stuff that was to be parted with. Beth was also quick to remind me that we were into one of those periods when Peel Region lets you put unlimited amounts of rubbish at the curb to be picked up.

Good thing too, because we were lugging stuff I had forgotten we had.

Some of it you expect to find, like garden tools, snow shovels and bags of that stuff I throw on the sidewalk in the winter to prevent people from slipping and falling on their heads and suing me.

There was a wide assortment of work gloves; actually pairs of work gloves. Two of those pairs I recognized; the pair I usually wear and the pair Beth normally uses. And I looked at all the others, wondering where they came from.

There was an old chair ? just an ordinary wooden chair. In my first apartment, I had used it as a desk chair. But it was falling apart.

One of the back legs kept falling off at inopportune moments, like when I was sitting on it. But it came from the house of my grandmother of happy memory, and it was hard to part with its sentimental value. On the other hand, if it had so much value, what was I doing burying it in the garage for more than a decade? It was Beth who announced it was going to the curb. It was I who didn't bother arguing.

There was an old electric floor polisher my mother stuck me with, I guess in the hope, probably forlorn, that I would actually use it. She should have known better. It hadn't been used since I was in my 20s.

The thing that really blew me away was the old toaster I found.

?What's a toaster doing in the garage?? I suspect is the question some of you are asking.

?I have no idea,? is the answer.

I suspect it was the toaster that came with me from my old apartment, along with my grandmother's broken chair when Beth and I got married 17 years ago next month. Naturally, we got some wedding presents from people who actually liked us (if you want to take a moment to give your head a shake at that thought, I'll understand), and if memory serves, there was a toaster in the mix. I think Beth preferred to use ?our? brand new toaster than ?my? old one. The old one somehow ended up in the garage.

There were a couple of other odds and ends that we couldn't identify.

It took about half an hour to get all this out of the garage, then I had to go to work with the broom, and then the hose. And then I had to put it all back.

That was enough for one day. I was exhausted.

But I was talking to my aunt on the phone that evening, and did not pass up on the chance to brag that I had the cleanest garage on my block.

Some of us will always find something to brag about.

There's been similar work done in other areas of the house. Beth stumbled on a whole bunch of pictures taken some 14 years ago when we moved into our house. I recalled seeing the pictures at the time, but had long since forgotten about them. Was my hair really that dark?

There's still a lot more to be done. We have both been collecting stuff over the years, especially as we have had to clear out the homes of our late parents. There have been cases where I have found myself paying for sins I innocently committed years ago.

For example, when my mother was still alive, I would often have trouble coming up with gift ideas for her at Christmas. But since she enjoyed reading, I always had books as a fall back. That meant Mom had lots of them, and guess who got them when she died more than 10 years ago. They've all got to be sorted and arranged. I think I proverbially shot myself in the proverbial foot.

There are a bunch of other places that need to be addressed, like closets, cupboards, drawers, under cabinets, beneath couches, etc. And I haven't even thought about the basement yet.

At the rate things are going, this traditional spring cleaning is going to take until spring (I'm not sure which year).

So much for traditions.

