

Memories are worth their weight in gold

Mark Pavilons



?Some memories are unforgettable, remaining ever vivid and heartwarming!?

Joseph B. Wirthlin

We are the culmination of our thoughts, feelings and most of all, our experiences.

Those twists and turns, dead ends, delays and new routes we took are part of who we are. Without them, we are nothing more than skin, bones and countless miles of DNA.

While two of my teenagers were away on a humanitarian mission trip, I ventured into the unknown ? their bedrooms ? to clean and tidy. Often forbidden to outsiders, these dens harbour much more than dirt. They hide secrets, hints and tidbits. So, as any responsible parent would do, I snooped, all in the name of cleanliness and positive parenting!

And what I found proved enlightening.

In their bathroom, which I clean regularly, there are some decorations but one stands out. They pass it every day without giving it much thought. But I remember everything!

On a shelf sits a glass globe, filled with sand and shells that we picked up in Nassau, when Lexie was a wee babe. As I dusted and polished this globe, the memories of sandy beaches, ocean breezes and coconuts filled with rum flooded my mind. Priceless.

In my bedroom, I have a curio cabinet filled with literally hundreds of my personal collectibles ? everything from WW2 relics and historic artifacts to model airplanes and miniature spacecraft. This collection took years to amass. And yet, as I held that glass globe, it seemed more valuable and more meaningful than my entire array of tiny treasures.

My wife and I were lucky to travel a bit before we had kids, and enjoyed some sun-kissed islands.

In our curio in the living room are a few reminders ? some small, blown glass sharks from the Bahamas; a framed wine label from a bottle of Spanish wine; a couple of miniature wooden Muskoka chairs, and of course the art. I have an original sketch from old Cartagena, created by an elderly man who needed lunch money. We have a handmade rug, woven by aboriginal craftspeople, likely done in a manner reminiscent of their ancestors.

One of my personal missions while on vacation is to locate a crisp, uncirculated banknote from every country we visit. In the Dominican Republic in 1990, their bills were like rotten leaves ? well used to be sure. But a trip to the bank remedied that. My collection of bills are framed, telling their own stories to all who pause and look. I?particularly like the \$3 note from the Bahamas. They are artistic and colourful works of art.

My daughter, the world traveller and humanitarian, collects knickknacks from the world over ? a road map of her adventures. While some are very cheesy souvenirs, they make me smile because they are a reflection of who she is. From a tiny Eiffel Tower and gaudy picture frames, to key chains from London and Rome, this girl has quite the array of trinkets. Her room is also lined with

playbills from all the stage shows we've seen together ? Cats, Les Miserables, The Phantom of the Opera and The Lion King, to name a few.

One prominent framed print in her room bears a list of sentiments about individuality:??I am original, generous, kind, spontaneous, extraordinary, passionate, imaginative, gracious, precious, fearless ...? When I was 18, I?was none of those things. As I stood in front of it reading those word my eyes welled up. Wow.

As much as I'd like, I am not her mentor ? she is mine! I put down the glass cleaner and sat on her bed, grateful for the good she has done, and the lives she will continue to touch in her life's journeys.

My teenage boy is quite a different story. Before they left on their mission, he was interviewed by one of his teachers about the arts advantage program at his high school. She sees a great deal in him, qualities and talents hidden from his parents. Apparently, he's witty, kind, electric and funny with boundless energy! Who knew?

At 14, he's just figuring out who he is, wading through some muddy waters. He doesn't really have a sentimental penchant for making memories, but that's to be expected. One thing he bought me rests on my desk at work. It's a carving of man who's covered by a barrel. When it's slid upward, the fun happens, but I'll leave that to your imagination. I?smile every time I?look at it, and I?recall his face when he presented it to me.

It's funny, really, what matters in our lives.

Most of us likely have large TVs, beautiful pieces of furniture, vases, antiques and works of art in our well appointed homes. But I'll bet there are some ratty old mementos or old framed photos of the kids that melt our hearts.

They say you can't take it with you, but I have left explicit instructions for my wife to bury me with some of my toys. Many ancient cultures believed the dearly departed needed objects to accompany them on their journey to the great beyond. In my case, I want them by my side merely to confuse archaeologists when they dig me up in a 1,000 years! Can you imagine the looks on their faces if my bony, lifeless fingers end up grasping a lightsaber or clutching a toy starship? It's totally worth it!

Some of my stuff is put away, awaiting the day they can be put on display when our basement is finished. I'm tempted to dig through the boxes under the stairs and bring them into the light. Why wait? Memories need to be relived. Smiles need to be well fed.

I?urge everyone to exercise those memory muscles. Get out the photo albums. Find those knickknacks and display them proudly!

Oh, and if you get a chance, snoop through your kids' rooms!