

WHEN IT COMES TO STUFF, IT'S HARD TO AVOID MORE

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This is a column about stuff. By stuff I mean the various and sundry items and gear I have gathered over a great many years, much of which has proved useful and often times necessary. Some was used in my work and maintenance of home, vehicles or whatever. The balance was for sport and recreation.

A friend in the same age category as myself who tendered the observation as a possible topic for my column reminded me of the plethora of stuff. It's not the first or only time the topic has come to mind, especially while reminiscing with contemporaries. To a man we all find that what we once considered essential tools or gear have become encumbrances cluttering up storage.

There are paths one can take to alleviate or put the situation back into perspective. First, the items in question can be dispensed with. The garage sale route is one proving to be increasingly popular. It works for people of all ages. For most of my outdoor friends and I the thought of disposing of things that have played such an indispensable role in the best part of our life in a mercenary way is loathsome.

I find myself and many of my friends would rather give these treasures to aspiring young people with a long future ahead. It gives the giver a certain pleasure to know that the tradition the item once represented has new meaning. With eight grandchildren I have no shortage of places to pass on my prize possessions, many of which have emotional value far outweighing their utilitarian purpose.

Finally, the one solution I cling to with the tenacity embodied by the old cliché "hope springs eternal" is to hold on to them awhile longer. Shake off your lethargy and continue on as usual. Forget the fact that your skill, stamina and success rate may not be what they once were. Make the most of it as long as possible.

I have started to divest myself of some of my goods, particularly those that I have more of than I need. We accumulate an overabundance of material things, some of which never see service. It's especially true in today's ever accelerating technological age.

One does not have to look far to discover examples in their inventory. One example that comes easily to mind is hunting knives. I started out with a '40's-vintage Case knife my father won for a nickel on a punchboard. Four knives later I have progressed to a Randall custom made beauty that I received from a special friend. They, along with two others will always hold a special place in my heart and will ultimately be passed on to those who do as well.

From time to time I find myself weakening and indulging in the very latest toy whose usefulness for me is long past.

My latest is a Global Positioning System (GPS) that allows one to navigate by satellite. They give today's foresters and engineers details that were only available through long hours of detailed legwork.

There was a time when I would have embraced and made good use of GPS in my work. If and when I ever master its use, it will primarily be little more than what I referred to above as a toy. With the grandchildren, hopefully, it will find and fulfill its full potential.

Well anyway, you have got the picture and I would like to point out that the general premise holds true for the ladies as well as us men. My better half has several

cookbooks and other household items along with jewelry that I am sure are earmarked for family members when the right time comes along.

For my part, I purposely shun garage sales and such to refrain from buying more stuff. Whenever I succumb to the temptation and find I have been had, I have one consolation. I am bound to have at least one grandchild who will benefit from my weakness.