

BLOGGER | DEBRA DARVICK

# My Clutter Calendar

If spring is a time for ruthless shedding, summer is for taking stock

**There's been a whole** lotta cleaning going on. Seems everyone I know is trying to get a handle on their "stuff." A child is leaving home (and leaving stuff behind); another is returning (with a new batch of stuff). And after two decades-plus, there's just too much stuff and *something has to be done*—now!

I find that spring cleaning and summer cleaning are completely different animals. Spring cleaning greets a new season, throws open windows to let in sunlight and fresh air still tinged with winter. Spring cleaning *looks forward*. It's frenzied, carried upon a crest of pent-up energy. Come the tail end of summer, only the wasps are frenzied—still building their gray paper condos in the space between our storm windows.

It's too hot to reach on tiptoe for that last speck of dust.

Summer cleaning means retreating to the cool of the basement. It's sitting on the floor, sifting through boxes, and inhaling the mustiness and memory of old letters, baby clothes, and cards signed with paint-smear handprints no bigger than a plum.

Must my husband save a two-foot-high stack of *Sports Illustrateds*? Surely the players have all been traded or sentenced for drug possession or sidelined with hamstring injuries. Do I really need to hold on to my grandparents' hard-sided gray valise? It reeks of cigarettes.

My mother and grandmother saved every letter I ever wrote to

them, and so I spend time reliving homesickness at sleepaway camp, my junior year abroad, first-job jitters. I open a sealed envelope and see the scrolled border of the page within. *A forgotten bearer bond!* But no. It's merely an appraisal for my mother's Persian lamb coat, which used to hang in the guest closet—my favorite hiding place because I could always count on finding a few quarters in the coat pockets.

Spring's decisions are a cinch—toss, toss, toss. Who names a dust bunny or cries out to keep it? But summer's are hard. My husband insists he will read these magazines. Who am I to deprive him of that pleasure? I save my grandmother's suitcase because every time I slide those metal latches and lift the lid, I inhale the shadow of smoke exhaled by her very breath. I am 5, 6, 7, 8 years old and with her once again. Summer cleaning tells us time, so much time, has passed.

And so I sit and cull. Remember and toss. Savor and save. The garbage bags grow bigger. The boxes in which I save grow smaller. And then I come across two blue plastic spoons molded into the shape of airplanes. We bought them years ago in hopes of feeding grandchildren one day. I tuck the spoons away in a box for the future—and make a note so I do not forget where I stashed them. ■



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