



Dear Mom E-Letter—A Jar of Buttons

This time it began with a jar of buttons.

Just a simple glass jar filled with plastic and wooden buttons in lots of sizes and colors, sitting on a counter in an antique store.

Some, like my daughter, would consider it a bit crazy to save all those mismatched, used buttons. She calls me a flea market decorator. She may be right. I have old things—some wonderful, some simply sentimental—throughout my house. I'm frugal and sentimental: a dangerous combination that loves flea markets and antique stores.

Seeing the buttons yesterday was an unexpected, comforting reminder of Mom. Then I saw green cups and saucers, red-rimmed enamel pans and coffee pots, embroidered dish towels and heavy white mixing bowls. I smiled and realized why I love that kind of shopping. I felt like I was home, in Mom's kitchen. And it felt really nice.

Mom lived in a simpler time, had little, and saved everything. My brother and I talked today about energy conservation efforts touted by Al Gore at the Oscars, and how I described Mom as an early recycler in ***Dear Mom: Remembering, Celebrating, Healing***. Nothing went to waste if it could be used again. Nothing.

That included buttons. You never knew when you'd need one, when you could match up enough odd buttons to use on a new blouse or dress.

Do you save things your mother saved, just because? It's just more proof that we really do become our mothers after all. Today I keep extra buttons in a small jewelry box. Have I ever opened it to get a button to sew onto a garment? No. Will I ever throw them away? I doubt it.

I have threatened to have a flea market bridal shower for my daughter. A glass jar filled with buttons would be a perfect gift! Or should I be more practical and throw them away? Of course not. I may need them someday.

Why the sentimental journey now? My granddaughter, named after my mom, is visiting. I get to watch her learn to crawl, stand along stair railings and laugh with her infectious, one-tooth grin. I miss Mom at moments like that because I had always assumed she'd be there to see my children's children. And to teach them to save buttons.

But she's not. So the best I can do is make sure Faith Elizabeth knows the values of this woman whose life shaped mine, as I will help shape Faith.

I think I'll give my granddaughter a jar of buttons for her first birthday in memory of her great-grandmother, the early recycler. And I think my daughter will understand.

Thanks for sharing the journey called ***Dear Mom!***

Dee Dee

Dee Dee Raap is the author of Dear Mom: Remembering, Celebrating, Healing. All rights reserved.