

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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www.chuckroots.com

It's My Stuff

Sitting in my man cave, aka the loft, I grow increasingly more concerned about my stuff. You ask, "What stuff are you talking about?" Well, in answer to that staged question: Everything!

At age 68 many of you will say something like, "You're still a baby!" Compared to some of you, that is true. But, the reality of the situation is I have far more years of life behind me at this point than I do in front of me. This always gets me thinking: What about all my stuff?

"Stuff" is a euphemism for all those things that are mine which I have acquired during my lifetime. Very little of it has any value in dollars and cents. In fact, most of it is sentimental at best, and easily disposed of. And, to be perfectly honest, I'm an inveterate saver. It is hard for me to get rid of anything. Even old tennis shoes.

As I reflect on my stuff, I envision the day when I leave this world behind and step into heaven, only to be confronted by a sober-faced Saint Peter, wagging his head from side-to-side, tsk-tsking me in that classic parental look of disapproval. "Look what you've done!" he says to me. "You have left all your stuff for your wife and kids to dispose of. What do you think they will do with it? Is this how you want them to remember you?" I stand there duly chastised without a word offered in my defense. I've known for a number of years that I should have taken care of all of my stuff by disposing of it in an orderly manner. But, as yet, I haven't.

Think about it! I may not want to part with my stuff just yet, but I do have it on very good authority that I will not make it out of this life alive! This means that if I don't divest myself of my accumulated stuff, someone will have to do it.

For instance, my clothes closet. Mine is small by comparison to my wife, but even at that, I have way more clothing draped on hangers than I could ever need in my remaining time on earth. I must have 25-30 golf shirts hanging up. And nearly that many dress shirts mixed with other types of shirts that are not golf shirts. Then there are the slacks neatly hanging awaiting my use of them. But since I am retired, my normal attire each day is either a golf shirt and shorts, or blue jeans and a T-shirt. I still have several suits waiting for Sunday church, but otherwise, they just hang. And neck ties. Lots of neck ties.

Then there's the clothing that is special. What I mean by special is clothing that falls into the category of military uniforms. I enlisted in the Marine Corps 48 years ago. I still have those uniforms – even my camouflaged uniform from Vietnam! Later as a naval officer, I accumulated yet more uniforms, retiring in 2008 with 34 years of service. Once or twice a year I may wear one of my uniforms for a military event. I even have a flack jacket, "deuce gear", helmet, and back pack, plus other paraphernalia that is no longer used because it has all been replaced in the military supply system.

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I also have costumes and dress outfits hanging in the guest closet that are part of my involvement in singing in two barbershop choruses. The white tuxedo jacket looks great on stage under the klieg lights, but where else would you wear it? Or a costume depicting a peon or esne from the Middle Ages. It fits the part when everyone else in the chorus is dressed in period costuming, but otherwise, it looks stupid. Well, maybe I'd fit in in certain parts of San Francisco!

I have so much other stuff! For instance, my collection of books. As a minister, I have a wide variety of religious themed works that can all be found on the Internet now. Even I use my iPad Bible app in church! That's nearly enough for me to be declared an apostate! I have a vast number of books on the American Civil War. I love my books! But I don't need them so much anymore, even though I still try to convince myself otherwise.

Then there's my lifelong collection of coffee mugs acquired from traveling around the world. Who wants this? And my pile of military "challenge" coins. These are really cool, but may mean absolutely nothing to anyone else. A number of these coins were given to me by high ranking officers (generals and admirals) and various government officials whom I have served with or met, along with challenge coins others have graciously given to me from all ranks throughout my time in the military. Each has a story that resonates with a time and place in my life. Oh, and T-shirts. Man, do I have T-shirts!

Ah! How could I forget the stuff on my "I love me" wall! Certificates, awards, plaques, academic accomplishments, special photos, a shadow box, etc. Those of us in the military jokingly refer to these personal items as the "I love me" wall. Perhaps a few of these things will be saved by family members. Perhaps.

But the *pièce de résistance* would have to be my exercise equipment. I have hundreds of pounds of barbells, dumbbells and other devices for bodily torture sitting in my personal gym, otherwise known as the garage. There's the punching bag, the jogging machine, the Roman Chair, the bench press and leg-lift equipment. I figure all this will probably disappear in a garage sale.

In reflection, it's all just stuff. But it's my stuff. At least for now.

But I really should begin getting rid of a lot of this stuff. After all, I want my wife, children and grandchildren to have fond memories of me when I'm gone. For them to have to help truck a bunch of stuff out of the house may tarnish my image a bit.

Being a life-long procrastinator, I'll start on getting rid of my stuff next week!