

I finally got around to doing some spring cleaning here in the cabin. It doesn't seem like a high priority task earlier in the spring when there are lambs in the barn, calves coming, garden to start, and on and on. But, eventually, at least with our lifestyle, it becomes quite necessary.

I started in the little room where we come into the cabin. I don't have a lot of stuff sitting around here and there, partly from purely practical reasons but mostly, because I don't like clutter—on tables, on walls, and on shelves. But, there is a high shelf in this little room where there are some objects, many of which are not strictly necessary for living. Mostly, though, they are useful things that aren't taken into the kitchen on a daily basis.

When I do the spring, fall, or holiday cleaning, I empty the high shelf that goes around all sides of the little room, clean the shelf, and wash all the items that stood there. And, then, they go back to their resting place until I need them for some reason.

So, here is what is on this high—almost out of my reach—shelf:

There are six pitchers. One is heavy crystal. I bought that for my mother in Copenhagen years ago. Then, there is the green Fiesta Ware pitcher with a cover that my aunt gave my mother many decades ago. There is a chip out of the edge, but I use this container often. Another American made pitcher is blue with the mark "Hall." It is very handy for iced tea in the summer. And, there is a little green and white striped cream or syrup dispenser that my mother received from a lady in Tustin when she delivered butter to her.

Two pitchers came from Runo's home in Sweden. One I do not use, but it is one of the items I remembered with great pleasure from living there. When we visited later, Runo's mother took us to the storeroom to retrieve Runo's egg cup—each of the children had an egg cup with a chicken painted on the side—and she asked me if there was anything there I would like to take home with me. I saw The Pitcher. She had used it for milk or fruit drinks, and I had a picture with that pitcher sitting on the table. I told her I would like that. She wondered what I wanted that old piece of junk for, but she let me take it. It is not cracked at all, and I could use it, but it is very old and the glaze has crackled. It was made in Sweden long before I made its acquaintance.

The other pitcher I asked for that day was a little china container—white with an embossed design around the top and bottom. There is a little gold remaining in places, so I assume that the design had been gold at one time. On one side of the pitcher is a painted bunch of grapes, purple-red with green leaves. Runo's mother always used this little pitcher for vanilla sauce she served with certain desserts. I use it for the same purpose.

Then, there are the crocks. There are three of them. One is an old lard crock. I don't use that, but I like it. There is a smaller crock of blue and white that I do use. I bought that myself years ago, and I put fresh lard in it when I render the fat from our own pigs. It then goes into the freezer until I need it. The rest of the year, it resides on the shelf. The tiny yellow crock is a butter crock. It holds about half a pound of butter. Sometimes, I do use that, purely for the pleasure of seeing the bright summer butter in the old crockery.

There are two teapots on this shelf. They aren't anything special—but it

is a handy place for “backup” pots when I make more than one kind of tea. There is also one little vase. It is clay, made in the area where Runo grew up. My dad’s cousin Karl and his wife, Solveig, gave that to us when we moved from Sweden to America.

The shelf on the east wall holds plates. Two or three are cake plates that I use when I need them. A couple are old ironstone wear that came from my mother’s family. There is a little decorative plate with a picture of John and Jacqueline Kennedy that I bought when our high school senior class took a trip to Washington, D.C. And there is a tinier china saucer my mother gave me that she had bought on a trip.

The last item on this shelf is a blue Mason jar with a zinc lid, just there to remind me that storing food for the cold months was an important job for the residents of this area from the earliest days.

Everything on the shelf is now clean and back in place. I won’t often think about most of these things until I need one of them. But, occasionally, my eyes will catch a glimpse of an old lard crock. or a glint of crystal will remind me of the day I purchased that heavy pitcher in Denmark. There are not many such “not-needed” items in our cabin, and I wouldn’t like more of them, but a little connection with the past in this everyday way has a place in our lives.