

## Shoes, Dishes, and Guns

**The issue:** Mary Helen says we don't need another set of dinnerware. Our cabinets are already full. She insists that if we bring home her mother's Kylemore Abbey dinnerware, we must get rid of a set we already have. But I like *all* the sets we already have. I see no compelling reason to *replace* a set when we have the option to *add* a set!

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**I don't have a strong like or dislike of shoes.** My inventory includes crocs, work boots, hiking shoes and boots, casual comfy shoes, black patent leather shoes for funerals and debutante balls (my level of enthusiasm being the same for both events), multiple pairs of Teva sandals that are losing their soles, and running shoes. I never run, but I walk a lot. I bought most of my shoes (and boots and sandals) at thrift stores because they were 1) well made, 2) only slightly worn, and/or 3) irresistibly priced.

I just counted 26 pairs of footwear that are mine. That's an embarrassingly large number. True, many pairs were sorted into a laundry basket several months ago to be given away or thrown away. There are only about six pairs that I wear regularly. I hang on to all of them because I reason that even the most worn-out pair of shoes, splattered in paint, can be worn again for the next paint job. I'll pull out one of several ancient pairs of Teva sandals when I go kayaking in warm weather.

**Confession:** I have a seriously difficult time parting with anything: T shirts, pants, photography equipment, scraps of wood, wine corks, cardboard boxes, and plastic orange juice bottles. For the latter, I cut off the top and use the bottom to store tie-down straps, of which I have too many. Several are non-functional. There are so many items around the house that need to be discarded but I don't want contribute to a premature decommissioning of a landfill.

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**I like dinnerware.** Mary Helen and I combined households when we married eight years ago. Several sets of my dishes were boxed up and “atticed.” (A nice verb, don’t you think?) We’ve been using Mary Helen’s plates and bowls in The Botanic Garden series by Portmierion as our “every day” plates. Mary Helen’s mother gifted many pieces over the years until all options were exhausted: salad plates, bread plates, dessert plates, dipping bowls, salad bowls, serving bowls (with or without lids,) serving platters, a tureen, a teapot, ramakins, coffee cups, creamers, sugar bowls, a gravy boat, salt and pepper shakers and candle holders.

We have several other sets of dinnerware. We have my 16 place settings of Noritake fine white china for feast days: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Birthdays. I cherish these simple yet elegant plates with silver rims that show off the food. There’s a set of hand-painted stoneware dishes from Italy, and another from southern France. There’s a box around here somewhere that has my original Mikasa Margeaux wedding china from 1981 which has long been out of fashion. There’s the box of Mary Helen’s wedding china from 1985. Also in the attic is a set of “Pine Cone” plates I got at a yard sale. That set was the source of brief marital strife that became legendary in the family. In her last days as a “sales associate” at Linens and Things, Alicia bought me a set of large plates painted in an elaborate motif that we use often for family gatherings. We even have several “It’s your day. Celebrate!” plates.

Thirty years ago, when Alicia, Alayna and Phillip were toddlers, they dined from melamine kiddie plates and bowls decorated with the alphabet, teddy bears, trains, airplanes, animals in Noah’s ark, and whales (which, if you think about it, were *not* in the Ark.) You already know I have trouble getting rid of things, so you shouldn’t be surprised that I served my *grandchildren* from those very same whimsical plates and bowls!

Why do I like having so many different sets of dishes? Different dishes signify and dignify special occasions. They can transform an ordinary meal into an extraordinary event. They add visual interest. According to one website, “A unified theme can elevate your table setting. Whether rustic, elegant, or eclectic, find a design that resonates with your overall decor.” My problem is that

*everything* resonates! That same source states, “Your dinnerware should align with your aesthetic preferences. Do you favor modern minimalism, or are you drawn to vintage floral designs?” My answer: Yes and Yes!

Some dinnerware must be hand washed. That’s fine by me. I happily wash delicate dishes as part of the ritual, like the recessional that concludes a religious service. I don’t see washing dishes as a burden, but rather as a benediction! As I’m washing dishes, I’m thinking, “We just had a fine meal with people I love. We are fortunate in so many ways.”

Some women say, “You can never have too many shoes.” Some men say, “You can never have too many tools.” I say, “You can never have too many sets of dishes!

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**My brother-in-law Bob likes guns.** Bob has lots of guns. Glocks. Smith and Wessons. Colts. The list goes on and on. There’s one called a 357 Combat Magnum. Some of his handguns have never been fired. Many are desirable collector items in velvet-lined wooden cases with brass plaques. These guns would diminish in worth if used.

Bob’s grandfather was a South Carolina Highway Trooper. Troopers were expected to turn in their weapon upon retirement, but Bob’s determined grandmother went to the top of the hierarchy and insisted that she be given her husband’s service revolver. The story of Granny Richbourg’s resolve that prompted the authorities to relent and relax state policy is family legend.

Some of Bob’s guns were given to him by his father Henry, who accumulated an impressive collection of guns. Now that Henry has passed away, those guns have passed to Bob, including his grandfather’s and great-grandfather’s pistols and many other guns with sentimental value.

Bob has several guns that he regularly uses for target practice. One afternoon when Bob was teaching me how to shoot several different models, I asked him, “What’s the next gun you will buy?”

“I won’t buy another gun unless I like it more than one I already have. I have to be willing to part with a gun to get a different gun. That way, the size of the collection is stable, and I don’t accumulate guns I don’t really treasure.”

I was surprised by his answer, which revealed a reasonable policy: To add something new or different, one has to be willing to part with something. I think I can live with that philosophy.

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**The solution to the dinnerware dispute:** We brought home Nana’s Kylemore Abbey dinnerware. It will be the last set added to my collection. Henceforth, if I want another set of dishes, I agree to part with a set.

Onward,

GR Davis Jr

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Bob has a YouTube channel where he evaluates guns. Search for it @grandpashoots on Google and YouTube