

35th Storyworth: What Are Your Favorite Possessions And Why?

This subject is pretty easily described; my computer, my guitar, my cars and my phone, and not necessarily in that order ;-). So, starting from the back and working forward, let's review the phone. I have a "land line" which is a misnomer, because it is a VoIP setup from NetTalk. The size of half a cigarette pack, it connects using my router to my internet anywhere I can get a wifi connection, and drives a conventional phone. I happen to have a Uniden 8885 setup at each of Dawn's house and our Florida home, so I simply bring the NetTalk box with me and easily connect. That uses my long-term phone line which ends in 9241 and which still gets calls for Lynne periodically. Why? Who knows. But I always pass along her correct number to them. I use that phone to screen calls and get tons of worthless rings which I don't even listen to. Like car warranties ;-)

I also have a cell phone; a CDMA Palm Treo 700P, which was an early "smartphone" ending in 0041. It does ONLY the things I want it for, which includes SMS texting, but I also have a Samsung Android given me by Jess which I use via wifi for things like remote check deposits and the like. I am a techie, make no mistake, but I refuse to be tracked by all the ways we accept added costs and monitoring by phone companies so they can figure new ways to charge me even more. In case you wonder, I DO have a GPS capability for the Treo, but it needs a secondary receiver and uses Bluetooth, and the maps are WAY out of date ;-)

The WHY for the phones is because they allow me to keep in touch with friends and family, which ought not to be much of a surprise to anyone. I also have GPS in a portable form which can be moved between cars, which is a good thing because I own multiples of those as well. My favorite, even though I have been unable to keep it maintained as I would prefer, is my Porsche 993. I have written about how I was fortunate to keep it in bankruptcy only because it got wrecked at WGI just before the bankruptcy started, so had minimal value as an asset. I have repaired what was needed to make it road worthy. Sadly, track worthy is beyond my capability any longer, which is just as well, because my life has changed enough to make it a low priority for usage also. It has been parked for over two years at my friend Mickie's who also uses another of my cars in return for keeping the Porsche out of the weather, which sadly damaged its electronics while I was being screwed by Milt. Enough said about THAT anyway. Then we had Covid and my life with Dawn, which has made it less than easy to get to the Porsche, although I really do miss it terribly, now that I can again get in and out of it because of my replaced left hip last year, which had been making it impossible to get back out before.

My primary wheels are my Forester, which I bought so we could travel to Florida for winters. It has been a very reliable tool, and has been the basis for my urging Dawn and her sister Diane to each buy a newer version, except theirs have all the bells and whistles which are lovely, but more stuff to go wrong. And Dawn complains hers doesn't have the GPS. So she has to make do with her big Garmin unit, which she FINALLY found the windshield mount for ;-). I think you dear readers would agree that I have explained the WHY of my multiple vehicles before – the ability to be wherever I am not right this minute, the epitome of personal liberty ;-)

My guitar of course goes back to my college days, and although I have written about it before, I will synopsise that here; I like to be the center of attention, and music can do that. It is a 12 string, which can make up for a number of talent shortcomings. Plus, I am blessed with a decent voice, and my love of "folk era" music has given me appreciative audiences at a variety of meals and open mic situations. Sadly, Covid has interfered with that so I will have to almost start over once that passes. But I am encouraged also by my granddaughter's seeming to emulate my fretboard fingering – I think she will be likely to have an interest in learning to play, which will carry on my family's tradition of being musicians.

The WHY for my original acquisition of it goes back to my college days. I went to Clarkson, which is in Potsdam NY, a somewhat isolated small town in northern NY. But it shares its locale with SUNY Potsdam, which includes the Crane School of Music, which explains why it had such a well equipped music store. Having had nobody interested in my accompaniment with the trap drum set I lugged to school, I decided to emulate my sister and Dad and take up guitar so I could perform at the Ratskeller. Being of limited means, I nearly fainted when shown the \$3500 price THEN on my guitar, which was hand-made from West Germany (this was the late '60's), and I had only learned about it because I had heard Gordon Lightfoot's "Sunday Concert" album and his "Ballad of the Yarmouth Castle". I have loved his music, even though I knew little actually about him until recently. But I wound up buying and learning on a "garbage" six string, so mostly performed humorous stuff, because its tone was so bad. But then I returned from my Xmas break to find the music store had a fire, and the 12 string was one of the last removed, with half the strings broken, the neck warped and unrecoverable by them. So they accepted my offer of \$35 as-is.

Luckily, I knew a bit about deep hole drilling, so was able to install a draw rod down the neck which allowed me to draw it back straight. With a number of other repairs I made it a fully functional instrument, and it VERY unusually will keep tune for weeks at a time in its case, a gift my parents paid three times that for the guitar to provide me. If you still don't understand, I suggest listening to John Denver's "This Old Guitar" ;-)

I could not possibly write all I have on ANY subject without the use of word processing, and would likely have no brain cells left if I didn't use computers as a tool for storing information in a retrievable format. Ask any Librarian and they will confirm that it is ONLY the ability to have a logical indexing and retrieval system for information which makes it valuable. Computers are merely tools for me, no different from a wrench properly applied to a task for which it was made. As an engineer, I have always found programming a relatively useful tool as well, so many of the "apps" I use have taken advantage of some of those added skills. Like the use of "look-up tables" in Excel (and earlier spreadsheet software on a variety of platforms back to the earliest Tandy Model 100 ;-)) to automate decision-making when I was doing heat run testing for GE, or the melding of a database of family and friends' address information to enable me to produce what seemed like personally written Holiday Greeting Cards and their mailing labels, even as I was about as lazy as possible. The fact that I probably spent three times as much effort to "automate" that as it would have taken to simply hand address them was never the point; the intellectual challenge of making it happen was the reward in itself ;-)

Other parts of my "computer" include all the networking and servers and things which have all my music, videos, manuals, etc, and enable me to watch where I want, print as I need, and find info whenever I want it, so long as I have access to an internet and server connection. So that means internet needs to be included in my "favorite possessions" although I don't really own one and the price of it relative to its necessity for daily life seems inappropriate. As more of what we all do daily become more dependent on such interconnectivity, it must eventually become a necessity for us all, and should therefore become a public utility. I won't hold my breath for that to happen, because that is not the "American Way". But it is clear that the "have's" and the "have not's" are rapidly diverging in opportunities, which is making a mockery of the "equality" we seem to believe we provide as a society. The simple economics of a \$75 monthly cost just to have connectivity seem beyond the reach of so many who NEED it. I don't claim to have a solution, but I am certainly aware of the problem, and believe that awareness of an issue is the first step to correcting it ;-)

And using my brain to solve problems is, I would say, the most important "thing" I possess, because that motivates me on a daily basis – I am ALWAYS looking at ways to "fix" things, even when they don't seem all that "broken" – just to make them even easier to possess. Because that's what Engineers DO ;-)

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