

# Honoring Your Treasures

Revisited

Melissa (Missy) Bradley-Ball, MS, NCC, BCETS, FAAETS  
[www.theomnibuscenter.com](http://www.theomnibuscenter.com)  
2011 and revised 2012

If you could save one object from your home if it became necessary to suddenly evacuate your home, what would you take and why? In the last several months, so many areas of the country have been impacted by events which caused devastating damage and even loss of life: historic floods, tornados, fires and hurricanes. The recent experience of Hurricane Sandy left many thousands of families without anything but the shirts on their backs and, if lucky, their families. More than one hundred people lost their lives and their loved ones mourn deeply. A nation watches while many offer up prayers and healing thoughts for them. Events, such as Hurricane Sandy also threaten to wipe out our tangible histories...taking the sacred and sentimental objects in our homes that seem to carry the stories from the lives who they were taken from. The ones we grieve are not replaceable, no matter how much insurance or FEMA contributes, but are the histories connected with those objects really completely perish?



When interviewed, people often say that they are grateful that family was saved and others things can be replaced, which is true to some extent. It is true that “things” can sometimes be replaced, but what happens to the sentimental attachments to those things lost? People grieve. Within those objects...those things that insurance may or may not be able to replace...are stories of love, connection and laughter. How do we honor those importance those objects symbolize?

In the closet is a beat up blanket that has been with me for more than 30 years. Fifteen years ago it became so fragile that, if I had chosen, I could have worn it like a poncho, but a good friend with sewing machine skills took the cherished object and did major reconstructive surgery. At first glance, the average person would probably toss it in a dumpster at the first opportunity or, at the most, use it as a packing blanket. Too worn to even take in public to use as a ground cover for a picnic, that blanket holds within its polyester and tattered soul the memories of the most tender and painful times in my life.

After the deaths of my parents and two very dear friends, as well as the “initiation times” of my own life journey, that blanket gave the sense of comfort. It was a now deceased friend who did the major surgery on my polyester soul friend to turn it from a poncho (the blanket had a hole in the middle large enough to put my head through) back into a blanket...so it also holds the love of her friendship and her recognition of the symbol of that silly blanket.

After the devastating Nashville tornado a few years ago, one home was completely destroyed and one family lost china that had been in the family for generations. Those family members were heart-broken. We can imagine all of the birthday dinners, Thanksgiving and holiday meals, the laughter, stories of the loved ones gathered throughout the years. A television show actually came in to rebuild the home and producers took the salvageable shattered pieces of china and made a large dining room table with the table top made into a mosaic of those pieces. The real meaning of the china preserved.

Our treasures are typically treasures because of the memories they hold and those memories can be honored through telling the stories associated with the lost objects. In the process below, we can recreate a “memory book” of sorts to recreate those memories.

#### Activity for Honoring Our Treasures

What are your most memory-packed objects that have been destroyed or stolen? If you have not had objects lost, you may still do this exercise.

What items have you seemed unwilling to part with, although you may no longer use them?

If you have been one of those impacted this year by the events which stole the objects away from you, which items are you grieving most?

Once you have your list, here is one way to honor those treasures:

1. Take or find a photograph of the object (ask family and friends if they might have taken a photo in a certain room or of a certain object (such as a piece of jewelry that is missing). If you are unable to find a photograph, Google the object, click “images” and see if you can find a similar item. Or, draw the object.
2. In a journal or a piece of art paper, attach the photo of the object and write about the object. Whose was it? How did you come to own it? If it was a gift, what do you remember about the day you received it? If it was something you inherited, who was it inherited from and what is/was your relationship with that person? What are the stories (first hand or second hand) that you know about the person...and that object (if possible)?
3. What is the one special message that object held?
4. What are your gratitudes of having had that object in your possession?
5. Tell the story of importance about the object (and the specialness of that object) to another person or group of people.
6. Repeat the first five steps with other objects that you no longer possess or need to give or sell?

Pauline Boss wrote an excellent book called *Ambiguous Losses* which held the quote: “Resilience erodes as rituals and celebrations are cancelled. “ When we honor those treasures by engaging in activities above, we both honor and grieve more effectively and we can keep the love and connection alive. It is the legacy and connection that connects us to one another and is the essence of life.