

Having piles

No, no! Not the pruritic or prolapsing kind that requires ligation, excision, or other surgical mayhem. No, I have piles of *stuff*.

Graham C. Fraser, MB

The stuff I have resides in various parts and cupboards in our home, awaiting intermittent attempts at its disposal. Take books for example. If something written is between doe skin covers, hard covers, paperback, or washroom walls, I will read and probably acquire it. The other day I happened to notice, on our laden bookshelves, a small handbook of Dutch phrases. Essential, don't you agree? Nearby is a volume of 20th century poetry, the biography of A.A.

Milne, a guide to the river Thames, and Margaret Thatcher's *The Downing Street Years*. Perhaps I could get rid of that one by singing the old classic English ditty "Any Old Iron?"

I cannot justify their retention nor yet contemplate their heartless disposal. What about shirts? Take this beautiful custom-made blue one in Oxford cloth. When I don it on special occasions, increasingly it seems for retirements or funerals, I feel well dressed, even a touch elegant. It stays, as does the tattersall checked one next on the hangers. Putting on the latter on week-

ends gives me, I fancy, a bit of the old country squire appearance.

I have reduced my number of neckties to a chosen few which denote various associations and societies and, I admit, there is my old school tie.

When I was working, I always wore a shirt with a tie. Not for me the current white coat offset, and let down by the wrinkled open neck shirt often displaying a tuft of suprasternal hair, frequently gray.

My mother, who lived to be 93 and thus saw a lot of them, always said that "Doctors should look like doctors and smell like doctors." When I queried her regarding the latter, she looked up and said, with a smile, "Clean."

I recall when, over 60 years ago, our Scottish family doctor, with his black jacket, striped trousers, and crisp white shirt with dark tie, would meet all her sartorial and hygienic standards. In order to maintain the latter when he would visit, she always laid out a small basin of warm water, a fresh bar of soap, and a clean white hand towel. When he would use them, the toe of his shoe would invariably strike the ever-present, though thankfully empty, chamber pot beneath the patient's bed. This resulted in mutual amusement and a sort of an ongoing competition to see if different locations would spare the hapless vessel. They never did.

But I digress. Now you see that I cannot dispose of old memories, let alone all the things I have accumulated.

Please help me. Come round with some of those black garbage bags, white bankers' boxes, and a small van. Or a big one.

Dr Fraser is retired from pediatric general surgery at BC Children's Hospital, where he was head of surgery. He enjoys reading, writing, and erratic golf.

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