

Warning: my artifact is terrifying. That's kind of the entire point. Please don't remind me. Trust me. I know. My artifact is a pair of white porcelain salt and pepper shakers in the shape of, admittedly misshapen, feet. These have been lovingly called "the feet" by my mom's side of the family. (We are oh so creative!) These date back to the mid-1900s. (no one seems to remember exactly when) My Grandma, Lulu Edwards (my great-great-grandma) and Auntie Jane Edwards (My great-great-aunt and Grandma Edwards' daughter) went shopping in a little trinket shop. Jane remarked on how horrible they were and Grandma Edwards later went back and bought them for her. They have since been passed down from the Edwards and eventually, the Lairds. The feet are gifted to people by the former owners whenever they hit a milestone in their lives like high school and college graduations, 50th anniversaries, births, and weddings. The current owner is my cousin Allie Williams after she graduated college earlier this year. They symbolize keeping memories and passing them down through the feet and the scrapbook that comes with them, with pictures of most of the recipients since my Great Aunt and Uncle Betsy and Chuck got them for getting married in 1986.

Memories are vital to human interaction. Remembering people and their names. Remembering that you have a doctor's appointment or lunch with a friend. But then there are the memories that really matter. Your graduation from high school, your wedding day or the birth of your child. (You know. *Theoretically*. If you have graduated, have a kid or are married.) And there are memories on an even larger scale. The customs of your culture or family. The experience you had in a major war or event. Memories are how kids in school nowadays are able to be taught about the Civil War and the roaring twenties. Nobody was recording the battle of Bunker Hill. Someone came back and talked about what they remembered from their experience. When an event is forgotten, it is erased from history. Everything that happened then is just gone. The danger of that is then, forever, we are learning something wrong and it is extremely unlikely that the event had no impact on anyone, anywhere or anything.

Now I know that a lot of people don't have extended families as tight-knit as mine so it can be difficult to keep your family memories on such a large scale but even if you try to keep that toy you played with every night as a kid or your mom or dad's dessert recipe, it is keeping something that was valuable to your history. Although my sister says I'm a hoarder, so maybe

don't follow my advice. I think I'm just sentimental but apparently not. Another really good way to preserve memories is to physically print out photos. When you physically print out photos, they become not just documentation of events that happened but also keepsakes. If you look around at the student artifacts in our Keeping History Alive exhibit, they have pictures from completely different times. Photos are the easiest way to keep memories (or... you know, *history*) alive because they are literally a picture of what was happening. When you go through pictures from the past, you can, as The Guardian put it, "trigger a buried memory and recall a precise moment in time much more rapidly than words." Pictures are proven to leave an impression on people. Studies have been conducted that prove that people can feel a sense of familiarity with pictures that they have seen before, even if they wouldn't have been able to recall on their own. They also take up less space so hopefully, you won't get called a hoarder by a family member.

All things considered, you should probably try to keep some random object like salt and pepper shakers that, when not explained, look like you're a serial killer bringing "the feet" in for a class museum exhibition. Or maybe something slightly more normal. I got a lot of weird looks from people this quarter. Consider printing out a picture and being "old-timey" because being the pessimist that I am, who knows. Maybe no one will remember this generation because of the lack of selfies that were printed out. But if you want a little more hope, because technically I *am* supposed to convince you, physical picture can be time capsules into past time, whether that be yesterday or 100 years ago.

Sources

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