

THE THING IS...

By Fred Hobbs

At age 80-plus, it seems impossible to write successfully on the prescribed topic “The Thing I Miss The Most.” Dealing with a “thing” provides the opportunity to choose from a monumentally long list of “things” from which to choose. And that’s the problem. Choosing from that list the number one thing is a real brain rattler, at least for me.

Consulting Merriam-Webster I find eleven different definitions of “thing”: a matter of concern, a state of affairs, an event or circumstance, a deed or act, an object, specifically an inanimate object distinguished from a living being, possessions and effects, an article of clothing, a detail or point, an idea or notion, and a specialty.

Consequently, the thing is, I really can’t pinpoint the “thing” I miss *the most*. Many of the things that were drawn from my earlier life have been replaced by other things. These are things that are better, more convenient, effective, pleasurable and/or practical. I loved my first car, a 1929 DeSoto coupe with a rumble seat, but now I much prefer to drive my four-year old All Wheel Drive Subaru. I don’t miss my little blue portable Royal typewriter, now that I have at least a passing acquaintance and proficiency with my (mostly) trusty I-MAC. When I was a child, I used to beg my mother to let me squeeze the tube of yellow coloring in the white margarine package. I don’t miss that deed and feel lucky I wasn’t born a few years earlier and had to churn the butter on a family farm, which I also wouldn’t miss.

Those are just a few examples of relatively unimportant or silly things I don’t miss at all.

The definition of “thing” that has the greatest impact in terms of what most people miss is the one about events and circumstances. The definition comes very close, but not quite, to defining humans as “things.”

If I were to make a list of the *people* I miss it would be very long indeed. My beautiful wife of 47 years would be at the top, the one I miss the most. My immediate family, relatives, friends, acquaintances, even celebrities and historic figures would follow. They are flooding my memory stream constantly with recollections of people I miss. Often the events that surrounded them are recalled as well. And those are *things* I miss.

Leave it to the great Mark Twain to offer a short, pithy and memorable wrap-up on the subject at hand. “Out of all the things I have lost,” he writes, “I miss my mind the most.”