

How to Squeeze a Gallon's Worth of Stuff into a Quart Bottle

by Marilyn Reeves

Moving. Most of us have moved – either by choice or by circumstance – at least a dozen times in our lives. The real challenge is moving from a bigger place to a smaller one.

My home in southeast Aurora was only a small 2-bedroom house, but it had a garage, a full-size basement and a yard. So when I moved to Windsor Gardens I had to trim the fat, so to speak.

First I went through my closets and pulled out anything that was a size 10, still hanging there, hopeful that its owner would eventually lose enough weight to wear it again. Ha! Who was I kidding? The sad fact was that my size 10 days were behind me. If, by some miracle, I learned to live on celery and yogurt, then I would celebrate and buy myself a whole new wardrobe of size 10's. But, in preparation for the move, I had to get rid of those old clothes – Good Will for the still wearable, the trash can for those worn at the seams.

Then there was my linen closet. I found, like Fibber McGee, that if I used a broom handle to shove the stuff back while quickly closing the door, most of the things would stay put until I had to open it again. Did I really need a half dozen sets of sheets, some of them dating back to the 1960's? Some of them were so threadbare I knew I'd never really use them again. And my ragbag was already full to bursting, so – sorry old sheets – you are destined for the trash heap.

But the worst nightmare was the basement. In one dim and dusty corner there was an odd assortment of empty boxes, covered with cobwebs. I am blessed with having a daughter-in-law who isn't afraid of spiders and doesn't get the willies if she brushes up against a cobweb. So Mary set them out and we filled them with load after load of useless junk, and then she graciously hauled all those boxes up the stairs and out to the driveway for the trash pick-up.

Why did I hang onto all that junk in the first place? Old appliances and coffee makers that were beyond repair. Countless electrical cords that belonged to ... who knows what? Piles of old papers, my son's grade-school homework, half-finished craft projects, shoe boxes filled with broken Crayolas, on and on. What a relief to be rid of all that cr... *uh*, stuff!

Now, when I get something new, I make room for it by getting rid of something old. It's not that hard. You just grit your teeth and close your eyes and pitch it into the trash. That's how to keep a "quart-sized" space from becoming a gallon-sized problem.