

My List of the Lost (and Found)

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Every time I move as I've followed
my restless husband from job to job
around the country, I lose something -
the big wooden salad bowl that didn't make it
to Connecticut in 1968, the new lampshade
that disappeared when we moved into the
house in Montecito in '79, and most recently,
the box that held my wedding dress, last seen
in the basement of the old house in Illinois
which we left in '94.

But even more mysterious are those
articles which have stuck loyally with me
across the years and miles, worthless
trinkets that show up in drawers, like the
mossy stone a freshman boy brought
me from Verona, from Juliet's house
he said, when his big Italian family went
to Italy for Easter break; like my fourth
grade autobiography, written in pencil
in a lined composition book with tattered
construction paper cover titled "My Life";
Like the seashell my husband found
when he was an exchange student in France
back in 1961; like the Life magazine with
Bobby Kennedy on the cover
dying on the floor of the kitchen
at Ambassador Hotel in LA, 1968.

And all those keys! Keys to post office boxes
and classrooms and closets in distant states,
keys to cars we turned in decades ago for newer models.

Most of the stuff in my life I keep good track of:
the books lined up in categories - poetry,
history, nature, travel in the living room,
Shakespeare and fiction in the guestroom, etc.;

The family photo albums up to date; my files
bulging but at least in some accessible order;
My mother's fine chairs and side tables
arranged rather formally, with pottery vases
and baskets displayed just so.

And then there are the surprises of
a life lived at forgotten addresses and
packed up in boxes so many times
Like the bright blue bathing suit that I bought on Maui
the year we spent there (was it '95?) and that I thought
I'd left in a hotel room at a womens conference
in North Carolina in '99.
There it was last week
under the summer t-shirts
in a bottom drawer:
blue as the sapphire sea
of Baldwin Beach where we
swam in the afternoons
under cloudless skies.