# Lighten the Load

Tranquil Country Road
South Dakota

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**Simplify… Organize... Lighten the Load!**

# Rainy Day

*"While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me."*
—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

As I continue to read *Walden* by Thoreau, this quote caught my attention. Thoreau was talking about a rainy day which forced him to stay inside. Even though the gentle rain prevented him from hoeing his bean crop, he recognized that it provided the needed water to ensure an abundant harvest. As he sat inside, he contemplated the protection his cabin provided him. Thoreau was not lonely. He was quite comfortable with his own company and didn't even consider seeking outside entertainment or companionship.

Rainy days were prevalent here in New England this past month. What a blessing as it provided me the opportunity to change my daily routine. What about you? What will you do on the next rainy day that prevents you from working or exploring the out-of-doors? Will you hop into your car searching for distraction? Will you grab the telephone seeking companionship of a friend? Or, will you look around and say, "Gee, I am comfortable and content right where I am." Pull out your journal or a notebook and title a page, "Rainy Days Ahead." Start listing all the things you would like to do on those upcoming days. Here are a few ideas I discover this past month:

- Stay in bed and cuddle my cats. What a blessing to just be idle for a few hours.
- Listen to the rain pelting the windows, watch the rising steam from my mug of coffee and just meditate. Reflect on the past, project into the future, be present in the moment.
- Curl up on the couch and read a riveting book.
- Purge the excess from my life: in a closet, a drawer, the pantry.
- Box up my collection of *give-aways* for the local donation center.
- Write thank-you notes.
- Surf the web for way-out interesting things.
- Grab my slicker, head outside and take rainy day pictures.
- Head to the attic, dust off a box, search its contents and make a decision. Will I keep, trash or donate?
- Clean out my file drawer to make room for something new in my life.
- Remove and wash the curtains from the windows. Enjoy the scenery while relishing the blessings the protection of my home provides.
- Watch an oldie movie and cry if I want to.
- Organize my photos into an electronic album or photo story.
- Listen to my favorite music and dance around the room.
- Wash the kitchen floor.
- Learn to knit.

Cheers to the next rainy day. This is a day to enjoy your own company.

"Learn to pause… or nothing worthwhile will catch up to you."
-Doug King

# G = Garage Attack

During the summer months thoughts turn toward outdoor fun as you begin to reassemble the furniture and accessories for the outside room. While searching for chairs and cushions, the badminton set and croquet mallets, you may begin to realize that the garage has become a major dumping ground. (For those who live in warm climates without garages, it is probably the tool shed where the junk collects.)

If your garage is typical, it serves as a storage facility for those items not wanted in the house, items not ready to be thrown out, and items without a home. You may think that what you store in the garage is out of the way because you can close the door and block the view from those passing by. But, think again.

You may even wonder why you should bother to organize this mess? And, the answer is because the garage may be the last spot you see when leaving in the morning and the first thing that greets you upon return. Not many visitors enter your home through the garage, but you probably do. Daily trips through a congested, disorganized garage can be hazardous to your health and well-being, both physically and psychologically. Trooping around piles of junk has a strong impact on your mood as well as a possible risk for bumps and bruises.

Why not consider this space, whether attached or detached, as a room just like any other room in your home. True of all the spaces in your home, it can quickly become a black hole for the broken, useless and excess. A little organization in the garage can go a long way in providing safe and effective storage as well as shelter for the family car.

Garages are generally filled with things we occasionally use, things we think we might use someday, and things we have not used in many years. There are two reasons why clutter accumulates: (1) items do not have a home, or (2) they are not put away after use.

Organizing the garage takes time and effort. It is a good idea to think about the reward waiting at the end of this clean up time. Maybe it will be the money you saved because now you can find the things you need. Or, it may be the cash you acquired from selling the extra stuff. Think of that tax deduction you will gain by donating to those in need. It may be that you will be able to move around the area without fear of bumping into boxes and equipment. And, finally the reward may be the fact that now your car does not have to sit in the driveway under the hot sun or inclement weather.

Periodically review your garage storage area and determine what is working and what is not. Fine tune areas that need extra attention. And, remember the saying: “Don’t put it down, put it away!”

**An organized garage is a “Welcome Home Mat”**

# Summer Time — Photo Time!

Are you looking forward to vacation or is it already behind you? Summer time travels, family events and holiday celebrations are ideal times for snapping the camera lens. These precious moments are beckoning to be immortalized into a collection.

Beware! A collection of pictures, whether in print or on the computer hard drive, can lead to disorder if not taken care of in a timely manner. The accumulation leads to clutter, chaos and confusion – the vicious 3-C cycle. Clutter monopolizes precious space whether it be in drawers or in the computer. Chaos follows right along with the clutter when we desperately begin searching for that precious photo. Confusion is the result of the neglect of getting organized. Before you know it you are chronically disorganized, at least where the photos are concerned.

Is this happening to you? Do you have packets of printed photos or a discombobulated computer picture program waiting until you find time to get them organized? There is no better time to start the photo organizing than right now with this year's collection. Forget about the past and concentrate on the most recent pictures. You'll be happy you did. Take time to relive the special moments, bask in the warmth of memories and share your collection with family and friends.

Here are 3 easy steps to organize your photos:

1. Toss ~ Not all pictures are keepers
2. Sort and Edit ~ Categorize and subcategories to sort by name, date or event
3. Storage ~ Photo boxes, albums or a computer backup system

To read more about these three simple photo organizing steps, check out the TipSheet:

http://www.organizingresources.com/2_tip_secrets.htm

# Peaceful Haven — Pruning Time

As I work in my garden, the thought of pruning, actually chopping off healthy offshoots, is a difficult concept to accept. I am perplexed by the importance of cutting away what appears to be thriving in order to promote abundant blooming. But, all gardeners know the necessity of strategically snipping away in order to strengthen rather than weaken. The same concept is true in getting organized. It is important to prune away the unessential stuff in order to bloom with abundant living.

In January I wrote about the blessings of life and vowed to be conscious of the daily epiphanies as I create a peaceful haven during 2009. During the month of February, I worked in the kitchen to create organized zones for conversation, meal preparation, and cleaning. In March, I tackled the living room to clear the clutter and design a personal peaceful area. In April, I reevaluated the linens of my life and passed along items that no longer served a purpose. The bathroom was the organizing topic for May with the goal to save time and aggravation each morning. In June, I undertook the task to keep the small, compact laundry area clutter-free, efficient and attractive.

During the month of July, I will embrace the sharp shears and prune some more as I take another pass through my home and do a little more purging before I move on to the next area. Are you with me?