

Today's column is by Athena M. Lyseth (Mrs. Harvey), Hinckley, Minn., whose hobbies are collecting names of newspapers, making pot holders, studying Old Testament history, reading and writing.

By ATHENA M. LYSETH

I enjoy all phases of housework except the easiest, the one that shows the most (when not done)—dusting. Perhaps that's one reason why I have never cared to have a lot of knickknacks, bric-a-brac or figurines scattered about.

But now as I reach retirement and rehabilitate a smaller home, I am starting to acquire some of these dust-catchers. As I move about my gas-heated, kilowatt-powered rooms, I think of the 12 by 12 tar-papered shack in which I went to housekeeping over 40 years ago. The miniature objects I am now collecting will remind me of yesteryear and make me more fully appreciate the advantages of today's home.

I shall never regret the long, lean years on the homestead prairies of Montana. They were truly happy. They taught us many things. They brought us the joys of simple living while the wide prairie vistas gave visions of better things to come.

A little copper pail only a couple of inches high will remind me of the water we used to dip from creek, barrel and cistern. It recalls how Dad and I carried water twice daily to a far-off pigpen when the creek ran dry. It suggests how scarce and precious water was on the homestead. That thought makes me respect my double sink more than ever.

The diminutive coal scuttle brings to mind the soft coal or lignite we sometimes burned, but more often the wood and animal chips we picked off the bald prairie. Thinking of how we battled with the lignite, today's thermostat seems more of a marvel than it used to.

This miniature coffee mill recalls the green coffee berries we roasted in the oven and ground by hand. It makes today's coffee-brewing seem so simple.

This very small, round, shallow pan is a replica of the pans we poured milk into, to be carried carefully down the cellar for cream-skimming a day or so later.

And this little barrel needs only a handle to be the churn that went 'round and 'round to the tune of "Come, butter, come". What do I do now with the hours I used to spend churning?

See this little toy lamp that burns perfume in place of kerosene. It truly reflects the light of other years. It asks us if we want the smelly, smoochy job of wick-trimming, chimney-cleaning and oil-filling again. It also asks if we remember the cozy hours we read out loud to each other while the blizzards howled without.

That little one-piece triangular iron needs a tiny pad for the handle, for those old "lead irons" got really hot and heavy. As we remember the tucks, ruffles and complicated ironing of former years we are grateful not only for our slick steam irons, but also for the easier, simpler clothing we now have to care for.

I have found a tiny artificial tree to tell us that we didn't always have Christmas trees out there on the prairie. Sometimes it was a paper or a make-shift one. Some years the lumber company gave us one.

The fruit cake was often an imitation. The presents were homemade or very inexpensive. The programs were miles and miles away with sled and horses. But the true Christmas spirit seemed to be around us.

All this and more the little tree will tell me as it stands on the north window ledge along with its companion counterparts of other days. I won't care for other types of knickknacks, just these and similar reminders of the olden days.

I don't want to become complacent nor take these standards too much for granted. I want to be grateful for all contributions to our easier ways. I want to improve the leisure that has been granted me because of these newer, better, more efficient things. As I look at my museum of arts of bygone days I'll think: "Lest we forget. Lest we forget."



Mrs. Lyseth

TODAY'S STAR LADY
Yesteryear Seems
But a Week Ago