

32. One Medium Suitcase

Of course, I would pack my laptop first. That covers photographs, lesson plans, projects of all sorts, writing, passwords and account numbers. Wow! Maybe I just need a backpack?

If I were really leaving home forever and could only take what could be packed in one medium-sized suitcase, I would also take those physical things that have a sentimental value for me -- my personal poetry books dating back to the third grade, the jottings and scraps in my lap desk (assuredly an embryonic Great American Novel or Poem), essays and research papers I've written in college, scribbled red criticisms and all. I must also take writing others have done -- the best student writing I've saved over the years, and letters from friends, family, and former students.

Music, too, must be saved, especially the music that has waited for me year after year, revealing something new each time the changed person I have become returns. I'll sacrifice my albums with their marginal notes, scratches, stains, and torn covers bearing witness for my iPod. Not so classy and tactile, but way more practical. As long as I have room for the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, Leonard Cohen, Dory Previn, Janis Ian and Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Mimi and Richard Farina, Eric Clapton and Robert Johnson, Buffy St. Marie.

Somewhere in the corners I must squeeze in a few remaining items that are special because of the person associated with each. I'll just wear my granny's ruby solitaire engagement ring which cannot be left behind. I am the third generation to hold this legacy in trust and must pass it on to the next. I also must take the shawl crocheted by Aunt Mary just before she died, the clogs handpainted by my best friend Jackie (even though I never wear them now), and the soft Teddy bear my husband brought me in the hospital. This large medium-sized suitcase is probably almost full.

And . . . last but not least . . . just so I can relax and enjoy the other things I've saved . . .

I must

must

must

find room for one pair of

worn-out,

raggedy,

faded,

but *oh so comfortable*

blue jeans.