



Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History  
Presented by Development Office – Legacy Giving  
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PERSONAL PROPERTY DISPOSITION –WHAT CAN I START DOING THIS WEEK?

As a professional in the world of objects, I have observed that when your heirs are left tangible personal property (objects), many times one of two things will happen:

1. They fight about them, or
2. They don't want them.

Therefore, here are a few "jump start" ideas that you can start right now as you wisely begin to start on your estate plan for your objects!

Make a few inventories and use technology when possible. For example: use inventory software, video recordings, ask someone to film you or self-narrate, make a voice recording, take photos and put them on your computer with captions, make a shoe box with 3x 5 cards and photos, etc. Anything that helps you start documenting will do the trick.

Start by grouping items into *good –better-- best* and make those into a list and/or video recording. And say WHY they are good, better or best. Your list can also try to estimate value- if you dare.

*You may want to contact a professional appraiser to look at certain items and document their current value to help you. Appraisers even have a name for this sort of document as the objects enter into your estate plans, called "An Appraisal for Equitable Distribution," keyed to fair market value and projecting value into the future. Objects that are valued at over a certain figure need to be discovered as . significant value may pertain to your Trust...*

Identify a hypothetical group of the MOST SENTIMENTAL items; be sure to state WHY THEY MATTER.

Start to identify specific objects that need to go to specific people and SAY WHY.

Write three salient details on masking tape or on a small card that you stick on backs of objects- say- what they are, who they are given from, and any historical provenance. Or affix a reliable stick-on with a number and keep a list or little booklet, listing each numbered item along with what it is, where you got it, when you got it and any other relevant information....what we are after here is to put the item in context: your family's

context, its historical context, its apocryphal beginnings (George Washington slept on this foam pillow for example...)

If you make a video, go around the house room by room and NARRATE THE ROOM. When you hit the terrible closets and drawers and cabinets, open them, don't take much out, but narrate a little bit. (A room by room narration is also helpful for insurance purposes...)

- They key to this is that your memory will be associative when it comes to starting a real distribution plan. One item can kick start your thoughts on another in all that mess of a closet – or the dreaded garage! DO not worry too much about the small stuff as in life, in estate planning...
- Do not start your good-- better ---best pile by pulling through *the worst*: for example, the eggbeater in the back of the drawer, the inherited deadly toxic pots and pans...thinking that you have to get rid of the fodder before you can concentrate on the BEST....No!!! start with the BEST, and inventory the BEST first. Forget about the little objects of little value: those will be left for your heirs to throw out. Start with the BEST items when you think about your home's tangible objects for an estate plan. Remember the small dumb things take up the most psychic space....

If you have time or ability, turn the video narration(s) into a "drop box" and send to your heirs and ask if they:

1. want the object,
2. want to know more about the object,
3. remember something you forgot about the object, or
4. have a sentimental attachment to the object

All of these suggestions will help you start to plan just how much you might need to sell or give away in the future, or at least know the SIZE of the task of doing so.

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