



Small Space Organizing

*A Room-by-Room Guide
to Maximizing Your Space*



KATHRYN BECHEN

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Letter to My Readers

Dear Readers,

Small space dweller, I understand you because I'm one of you. Whether you live in a city, a small town, or the countryside—in an apartment, condo, dorm room, or perhaps a cute little house you fondly refer to as a “cottage”—I've lived there too, so I know the challenges and frustrations, as well as the glorious freedoms and blessings, of living in a small space.

Economic times have changed drastically both in America and across the world in recent years. *Builder* magazine's 2010 “Home for a New Economy” was designed at just 1,700 square feet. And according to the *Wall Street Journal* in 2009, for the first time in twenty-seven years, home buyers opted for smaller homes. *CNN Money* reports 7 percent smaller—or one average-sized room. We're rethinking whether or not we really *want* a huge home, a big yard, and all the “stuff” that goes with that lifestyle. Do you?

I can comfortably say, *I don't*. You see, I can admire beautifully designed and decorated “McMansions” with the best of them. I have toured and written about them, organized them for clients, and had close friends and colleagues who live in them. But I also know, from hearing the comments of homeowners who dwell in large houses, that the cost—economically, personally, and

professionally—of paying for, cleaning, and maintaining a big home can be phenomenally restrictive rather than life-enhancing, at least for some people. *Restrictive and stressful is not how a home should feel.* On the contrary.

In addition, many people today feel strongly about the “green living” movement and are committed to leaving a positive legacy for future generations, including not using up more than their fair share of our planet’s precious resources. Small space living is one step in that direction because it conserves consumption of land and energy, and it also uses fewer material goods and furnishings than one would purchase to fill a larger home space.

Perhaps your own small space living journey has been, like mine, somewhat of an evolutionary process. My husband Steve and I have personally chosen, over time, to continually live in small spaces for a variety of reasons. Admittedly, it didn’t start out as a conscious choice. When we were mere twenty-one- and twenty-three-year-old newlywed babes with stars in our eyes, we chose to rent a tiny yet adorable house (20’ × 20’) purely for economic reasons. We had college loans to repay and new furnishings to buy, and we knew we would not be living in that town indefinitely, so we opted for the cutest place we could find for the cheapest rent.

At the time, like most ambitious, red-blooded Americans, I had the mindset that a small home meant a lack of living well. I longed for a beautiful large home and yard one day, and we were willing to work long and hard for it. Over time though, after multiple career relocations, it became apparent that for us buying and maintaining a large house was just not practically feasible for a variety of reasons. And so began my quest to adjust my “house size mindset.” I searched extensively for creative and practical ways to not just live, but to *dwell well* in a small space.

In 1992, long before most people had even heard of a “professional organizer” or there was a HGTV cable channel, I started my own business, *Organized With Ease*, and became a hands-on office organizer, seminar leader, speaker, and consultant. My business

was featured often in our local media. I worked with many clients who owned large homes and offices and were drowning in massive amounts of disorganized stuff. Closets bulged. Garages groaned. Piles of papers proliferated. And yes, my clients sometimes cried, *and even divorced*, because of it.

As I spent hour after hour of intense work sorting and organizing, I listened to their stories. That clinched it for me once again that small space living was the path I wanted to personally continue on so that I felt free to have meaningful life experiences and rich relationships, rather than be weighed down by maintaining the material stuff of life. I realized that small space living was a viable and attractive lifestyle *choice*. And my husband agreed.

It also dawned on me over time as I was adjusting my house size mindset, that it wasn't the huge amounts of space in large custom homes that I was drawn to—it was their fine aesthetic details. Bingo! Once I had that beauty epiphany, it released me to create a practical *and* aesthetically pleasing *small home*. That fact combined with the quality time I shared with others there, and I learned to happily dwell well.

I've lived in thirteen small home spaces of every size and shape all across the U.S. over the past thirty years, and now I'm pleased to share with you in *Small Space Organizing* what I know and practice in my own life. In the pages of this book, we'll journey together—like having a good friend and coach by your side—as we explore the nooks and crannies of all types of small homes and rooms. Then you can get *yours* in just the right amount of order so that you and your family don't feel it is claustrophobic, but instead *perfectly petite*.

I hope you'll come to think of *Small Space Organizing* as your lifelong “small space bible” that you can reliably refer to time and again as you progress through the stages of your life, moving from one home to another. I encourage you to read it through all in one sitting and then go back and refer to specific chapters as you need them. And (unlike your ol' eighth-grade English teacher!) I hope

Letter to My Readers

you'll write in the margins and highlight favorite tips and passages that motivate, encourage, and inspire you along your journey. Take notes on whatever ideas will help you get organized. Get out your colored markers and have fun. *Whatever it takes!*

So come on, *let's get started!*

Kathryn Bechen
San Diego, CA

“Small spaces give us
the opportunity to live
sincerely, forcing us to
choose which of our
possessions make our
hearts sing.”

Kathryn Bechen

Maximum Living in Minimum Space

Which small home dweller are you?

- You've just turned eighteen and are now footloose and fancy-free from Mom and Dad. You're headed off to college across the country where you'll share a miniscule dorm room with a roommate you've never met.
- You're a young single working person, living out your jet-set fantasy life in a tiny studio apartment in a trendy and expensive area of New York, Tokyo, Paris, or some other fascinating city.
- You're a newlywed couple who's just bought your first little home and are very proud of it.
- You're in a midlife career transition due to a company downsizing, and you've landed in a new city and state. Housing costs are much higher than your former city, so you've had to squeeze your large family into a much smaller home.

- You've just retired and are selling your large family home to buy a condo in a warmer climate.
- You're an elderly widow or widower who has just moved into a pint-sized assisted living space.

It really doesn't matter what your small space circumstance is or how you came to live in your particular small home. What really matters, I firmly believe, is that you (and your family, if you have one) know how to *dwell well* there.

Can that really be achieved? Absolutely, because small space living isn't just about the space; it's a *lifestyle choice* that's rich with blessings and—if *you make it so*—with beauty.

Big House Blues versus Small Space Grace

Consider these real-life stories:

I recall a close friend whose husband built not just one but two large homes. He had them beautifully decorated with the finest furnishings that money could buy. I remember her story many years later with a tinge of sadness, because with increasing frustration she complained to me that she couldn't go out for a fun day of antiquing with friends, or even to a coffee shop or movie, because she always had to be at home coordinating and overseeing the gardener, the maid, and the pool man, or waiting for a handyman or delivery truck. Her executive husband expected nothing less than perfection at home at all times, and he wanted her to be there at his demanding beck and call.

One day when she was at my own home, this monetarily wealthy woman said with tears in her eyes, "I love coming to your cozy and charming home because it feels warm and welcoming. It feels like a *home*. I feel like I'm rambling around in a huge, cold *museum*; my house may be beautiful, but *it has no heart*."

Contrast her story with another friend of mine. A gal of very modest financial means, she rented a 500-square-foot apartment yet

served Steve and me a delicious lunch at her kitchen card table and folding chairs. A lovely tablecloth, her grandmother's floral dishes, and a vase of fresh flowers graced the table. We held hands and prayed over her festive meal and thanked God for our blessings. Laughter and conversation flowed and wonderful aromas came from her oven. That night we slept snugly in her little living room on her sleeper sofa which was covered with a quilt lovingly handmade by her favorite aunt. Hers was *the blessing* of a small space home: cozy hospitality, fond memories, caring. She indeed knew how to *dwell well*.

Still other friends of ours rented a nice but teeny tiny apartment that had beautiful furniture and was spic-and-span. With a baby on the way, they sectioned off a nursery area in their own bedroom and hung a sweet, colorful mobile over a fresh white crib. When a group of us gathered for a meeting in their little living room, ice-cold tea and laughter flowed. None of us complained a bit about feeling cramped—we simply enjoyed our time together.

When we were newly married, another couple who became good friends owned a picturesque little home situated on the edge of a beautiful canyon, surrounded by gorgeous trees. Many a night we enjoyed grilled hamburgers and hot dogs on their patio, where we admired the glorious sunset and had great conversations.

Another dear friend invited me to her lovely small, one-bedroom high-rise apartment overlooking a beautiful lake. It was cozily and cheerfully decorated with rustic pine furniture and a pretty floral chintz sofa where we sat sipping tea while she showed me photos of her family. What a lovely way to get acquainted with someone who became a good friend I've now known for twenty-five years.

Since my humble newlywed days long ago, I've attended many beautiful dinners and lavish events because of my writing career and my husband's commercial real estate banking career, and I've enjoyed them. Yet I can say with conviction that these happy memories of time shared with authentic friends in their small homes are etched fondly in my mind *forever*, while the details from many of the big fancy dinners have long been forgotten.

How to Dwell Well

If you wonder whether you're maximizing not only the *living space* of your small abode but also *the life* you're living there, here are some things to consider on your own small space journey:

- Attitude is everything! You see your small home as a blessing and a beautiful escape from the expense and rigors of big home living and maintenance, rather than as lack of any kind.
- When you enter your front door after a long hard day, you immediately feel (and maybe even say aloud), "Ah, I'm *home*."
- You can easily find what you need when you need it, because your home is organized effectively in a way that suits *your* lifestyle.
- Your paperwork and filing is up-to-date and is not strewn all over the dining room table.
- Your bathroom functions as a soothing, spa-like environment where you revive and rejuvenate from the stressors of life, no matter how small the room is physically.
- You can easily cook meals that are both nutritious and attractive and can clean up your little kitchen with ease.
- You understand that renting is fine and that it's not necessary to own your place unless you choose to do so.
- You have a home office space that is comfortable and functional so you can conduct your personal and business affairs efficiently.
- Your garage, if you have one, houses your cars instead of acting as an overflowing storage unit.
- Your yard, if you have one, is easy and cost-effective to maintain because all your lawn maintenance tools are organized and in good repair.
- Your sleeping area(s) are serene and orderly, ensuring you a good night's rest.
- Your storage needs are taken care of in a manner that works for your lifestyle and budget.

- If you like to read, you have a little library organized in a way that makes finding your books easy.
- You have an organized space to enjoy one or more relaxing hobbies.
- If you have kids, they have an orderly and comfortable place to do their homework.
- You can have guests over to your home and feel comfortable entertaining them without feeling cramped.
- You don't put off having guests to your home until you get a bigger place; you enjoy them *now*.
- Your kids do not have to contact you by intercom or cell phone from another area of your home because it's so large.
- You and your mate share a special bond because you have time to enjoy wonderful life experiences together since you are not tied to endless big house maintenance, chores, and yard work.
- If you live in an urban area, you enjoy ease of transportation, partake in exciting cultural and sporting activities, and frequent beautiful green parks.
- You've put your unique personal stamp on your home by decorating it with items that you've collected and that speak to your heart.
- And last but not least, you feel *proud*, and not at all *apologetic*, about your little home because it's a comfortable and welcoming place for you, your family, and your guests.

Getting Started with Order

The most important ingredient of every small space that dwells well is *order*. Yes, uh-huh—good old-fashioned organization, plain and simple. You simply cannot live well in a small home without a foundation of order. That doesn't mean your home will always look picture perfect. But to function for you efficiently and effectively and to be a pleasant place to come home to, a foundation of order is paramount.

So let's begin the organizing process by asking yourself a few questions about your own current little abode so that you can go from where you are to where you ultimately want to be. Write your answers and notes right after the questions if you're so inclined.

Questions to Assess Your Small Space Needs

1. When you walk in your front door, how do you want to *feel*? What's the ambience you'd like to come home to? How does it feel *now*?
2. Which room do you spend the most time in? Is that the room you *want* to be spending the most time in?
3. Do you have sufficient natural lighting from windows, or does it feel too dark?
4. How many people live in your home? Will any be moving in or out in the future?
5. Are there any particular areas of your home that really annoy you? If so, what are your plans for change?
6. On a scale of one to ten, how organized do you feel your space is currently?
7. Are you happy with every single room in your home?
8. Is it easy to have guests come to visit for dinner, and stay overnight if necessary? Do you think they feel welcome and not cramped, or like they are imposing? Do you feel comfortable hosting overnight guests? (Some people don't.)
9. Are you happy with your current storage systems?
10. Are you comfortable with your paperwork systems?
11. Do you have a home office space or do you long for one?
12. If you have indoor hobbies, do you have a space set aside for them?
13. Does your home accommodate any special health needs you have?
14. Is your bedroom/sleeping area conducive to a good night's rest?

Downsizing for Rightsized Living

Before we get down to the nitty-gritty how-to of organizing your possessions and rooms in order to dwell well in your small home space, let's backtrack a bit and assume for a minute that you aren't living there quite yet. Instead, you or perhaps an elderly loved one have just started considering the big "D" word—*downsizing*—which may strike fear, angst, and dread in your heart.

Why? Because I'm guessing that you or your dear one have amassed many years' worth of stuff in and around your big home, three-car garage, storage shed(s), and yard. Not to mention that you've played out a lifetime of family memories here and you're feeling . . . um . . . *overwhelmed*, and maybe a little sad, about the whole prospect of downsizing, even if you *are* excited about it too.

Or maybe you're in the same situation as one of my former clients. She was the recipient of a huge marital home because of a divorce, but was left with a few sticks of mismatched leftover furniture, and boxes and more boxes of disorganized stuff to sort through and move. Overwhelmed and sad were her middle names at that point. Fortunately we succeeded in sorting out the boxes and downsizing her into—you guessed it—a small home she bought and decorated to her heart's content with fine French antiques, which suited her new life perfectly!

Never fear, feeling overwhelmed is normal! And here's some good news: you *will* get past it and will soon have a wonderful new "rightsized" home and life. Also take comfort in the fact that you're not alone; as I wrote this a Google search for "downsizing your home" turned up 424,000 results.

List Love and Binder Bliss

I'm a list lover, pure and simple, because lists not only help us remember things, they also help clarify our lives and our plans as we write thoughts down. If you're at the stage where you're even *thinking* of downsizing, I recommend you buy a 3" three-ring binder and some clear page protectors where you can physically collect all your thoughts and ideas as well as keep any paperwork and literature you gather along the way, all in one organized and convenient place. I've done this for every move I've ever made, and it works every time! You can buy the binder and page protectors at any office supply store.

Case in point: A friend of mine recently shared with me that her elderly parents spoke to her about possibly selling their large rural home and moving into a city condo, apartment, or retirement center. So she took them to tour properties one weekend, just to take a look. As we talked about the process they went through, she told me that in hindsight she would have suggested her parents make a list from the outset, clarifying their needs and wants on paper before they started their tour. As the old saying goes, "Let your fingers do the walking" to save time, energy, and angst. Having a binder along when they toured properties would have given them a convenient place to take notes and to store all the literature they gathered.

Physical and Emotional

Be prepared as you go through the experience of downsizing your home that it's not just a physical process. It's also an emotional time of letting go of possessions and sometimes of sad memories,

and also a time of remembering happy, meaningful family moments that took place there.

It takes careful thought, time, and many decisions in order to move artfully into your new life stage. My friend's dad, for example, repeatedly mentioned to her that they would not have room for their china cabinet in a small condo dining room, which was true. I suggested to her that perhaps what her father *really* wasn't ready to let go of was the idea that their china cabinet symbolized so many dear memories of them all gathered around the table as a family. Once she realized that, she assured him that they'd still have happy family times together in the new space.

It's normal to go through an array of emotions during your downsizing process, and it helps to get through it by keeping your mind's eye focused on the end result of a lovely new rightsized home, decorated in a style you love, in a neighborhood that's just right for you at this new stage of your life.

Destination Dreaming

Once you've bought a binder, have fun with the downsizing process! Pour your favorite hot or cold drink, cozy up by the fireplace with your binder and your favorite pen, and put on some relaxing music. Close your eyes, dream of what your future space and life will look like, and take notes.

Perhaps you're envisioning a cute-as-a-button, charming condo in a quaint little town or a cozy cottage in the woods. Maybe your dream home is a sleek, modern, urban apartment with all white and chrome furniture, an elevator, and a doorman. There's no right or wrong at this stage; for now you're simply dreaming, which will eventually get you to the final stage of a practical plan.

If you have a mate and/or children, you should all do this dreaming exercise and compare notes. Compromise will likely be in order, and with written notes you can cross things off your list and add new ones until you're all happy.

Possession Obsession

Start “editing” your current possessions before you ever put your home on the market; if you’re a renter, start about eight weeks before your move. Don’t get caught in the trap of “We had no idea our house would sell in a week!” mode, or you’ll end up stashing endless boxes of stuff into a moving van and paying twice as much as you need to move things you don’t even want anymore.

One thing to consider before you even start the process of sorting your possessions is the idea of selling your existing home furnished. Of course, you’ll still have to go through and decide which personal items to take to your new place, but if you don’t mind parting with your current furnishings, or if you prefer to get new ones, selling your home furnished is a viable option.

Here’s a plan to reduce the stress of possession editing. With a floor plan of your new, smaller home space in hand, start with the rooms in your current home that you use least often. Take your binder and pen and walk through every room, including outer areas like the garage, storage sheds, and yard. Take notes for each room and evaluate your belongings carefully, from largest to smallest. Here’s where you’re going to decide what to take with you, what to give away to charity or family, what to sell, and what to toss in the dumpster. (Yes, I know for some of you, that feels like another dirty “D” word. But trust me on this, you’re gonna grow to *love* this dumpster dumping thing!)

Family Love

It’s wise to consider involving the whole family in the sorting and tossing process. “Many hands make the work light,” as the old saying goes. Possessions have differing sentimental value and meaning to different family members, so it helps if all family members are present, or are at least available by phone for some of the decisions.

Case in point: I recall my elderly friend who was downsizing and selling her home of many years to move far across the globe. She was sure her fifty-something son still wanted his maple desk from elementary school that was housed in her den. He lived in a small, chic, modern urban apartment across the country. Possessing a totally different design sense than his mother, the son had no interest in the desk. However, he could say nothing to convince her otherwise. Lesson here? The item you may donate to charity if you edit possessions by yourself may be the very item your grown child wants to keep as a family heirloom. But then again, *maybe not*. Ask, and honor their wishes.

It's also okay to ask adult children and other family members to come and pick up the things they want, and it's wise to tell them a firm date for removing the items from your home. Also be sure that every family member gets something special, which sometimes involves *kindly* negotiation.

Let's Get Physical

Once you have a written plan in your binder, it's time to get started on the physical work. Keep in mind that it's best to plan to sort items for periods of no more than two hours at a time. You'll feel less overwhelmed and will make better decisions if you take regular breaks and allow yourself time to digest what you're doing.

Here's how to sort and sift:

- Gather some large drawstring trash bags, various size boxes with lids, marker pens, masking tape, and some large white adhesive-backed labels. Sort items into boxes/bags labeled Toss, Donate, Give to John, and so forth. Make arrangements to remove the containers from the house as soon as possible to keep the process rolling. (And no fair bringing anything back into the house, "just in case." Remember, I *know* some of you!)

- As you go through each room, ask yourself, *Do I want, need, or love this?* This is the time to decide if you really want all your books, children's toys, DVDs, CDs, tools, artwork, and that big huge bread maker in your kitchen that you haven't used in ten years.
- Sort through your clothing closets and get rid of items you no longer wear. Be realistic, and *please* don't be like one of my organizing clients who told me the story about how his mother, although he was now twenty-three years old, still had his little baby sleeper hanging in her hallway closet, complete with spit-up stains on the front, "for when he had kids." (Needless to say, he and his beautiful new bride weren't interested!)
- Remember now: sort, toss, donate, sort (kind of like lather, rinse, repeat when shampooing your hair!). Don't assume you can take everything from a larger home with you and just cram it in if you want a new smaller space that's *pleasant* to live in once you get there. Make wise choices and keep only what you need and love.

Okay, now that you've got the hang of how to edit your possessions before your move, let's take a little walking tour through each specific room.

Fabulous Foyer

Look at your existing entry or foyer and compare it with your new smaller one, if you even have one. Will your big antique hall tree and ninety-eight-pair shoe caddy really fit in your new foyer? Open the coat closet door and ask yourself whether you really need that fur coat from Aunt Matilda if you'll be spending winters in balmy Florida from now on. And what about the spare key caddy on the closet shelf with keys that no longer fit any lock you own? And those extra light bulbs? Will they fit the fixtures in your new space? Get rid of things like this, and you have my permission to be *ruthless!*

Kitchen Kudos

Sorting and editing a kitchen takes more time than nearly any room in your home, so allow double time for this room. Not only are there many small dishes and items to sort and pack, but as the hub of the home, kitchens are laden with memories, sometimes making it harder to decide what to keep and what to toss. Take extra time to reminisce with family members as you sort through items and tell stories about the happy times around your kitchen table. Also consider when moving to a smaller kitchen that you may not have a pantry for things like canned goods and large cereal boxes, and your cupboards may not go all the way to the ceiling. Refrigerators and freezers are usually smaller too, so plan accordingly.

Family Room Fun

Perhaps you once had large family gatherings for holidays, or all your teenagers' friends came over for big pizza parties in your family room. Those days are no more and you may have elected not to have a family room in your new smaller abode. This is the time to sort through games, trophies, wall memorabilia, and the like, and give them to children and grandchildren, or to charity.

Living Room Love

Your huge sectional sofa and big screen TV may not fit well, or look good either, in your new smaller living room. Consider getting rid of those and see chapter 6 for new furniture ideas.

Master Boudoir

Ah, the master bedroom, where we love and live! Your new smaller bedroom may not accommodate a king-sized bed and two nightstands along one wall, so be sure to take wall measurements before you move and to notice if there's a closet door to take into account. You may want to consider a smaller bed.

Bedrooms and Guest Rooms

Chances are, if you're moving to a smaller space you will have fewer bedrooms, or maybe none at all if it's a studio. Also keep in mind, one bedroom in your new home may have to serve as a room for kids returning from college for the summer, as a guest room, and as a home office all in one, so get rid of anything that says "dated bedroom."

Bathroom Bliss

Small bathrooms notoriously lack storage, so you'll want to be sure to get rid of any old extra raggedy towels, to toss lotions and potions you never use, and to ditch any old magazines you read while soaking in the tub.

Den Diva and Library Love

If you're a "den diva" and have cozy cases of books and knick-knacks galore, be sure to carefully weed through these. You may not even have a den or library in your new smaller digs, or that room may have to double as your hobby room. Keep only the items and books that are truly dear to your heart.

Hobby Haven

Yes, hobbies can be accommodated in small spaces, which I will teach you about in chapter 14. 'Til then, evaluate whether you really need 1,000 sticker packs for your scrapbook collection or 400 colors of thread for your counted cross-stitch hobby. Get rid of anything that you won't be working on in your new space—perhaps your quilting hobby has simply done its time.

Basement Blahs

Ah yes, the beautiful basement—often home to anything that hasn't found a place elsewhere. Now's the time to go through your old teaching supplies from when you taught third grade thirty

years ago, or to donate that old hamster cage your four-year-old (who's now thirty-four) once took delight in showing to his friends. Remember, you're likely to *not* have a basement at all in a smaller home, so *toss, toss, toss!*

Home Office Heaven

If you've had a whole room dedicated to office space in your current home, that's a luxury you probably won't have in your smaller space. But with laptop computers and a decorative folding screen, you can easily set up a corner or convert a closet into a cozy home office. Try to make your current home office as paperless as possible before moving. That way you won't have to pay to move and store large file folder boxes offsite if there's not room for them in your smaller home. Check with Goodwill Industries or other organizations in your town to see if they accept boxes of documents for shredding like they do in my city. And in some cities, local businesses or TV stations sponsor shredder events.

Laundry Room Lowdown

Go through your laundry area and get rid of any socks that have fallen behind the dryer, crusted dryer sheet containers, and old detergent boxes with just a tad of detergent left in the bottom. In your new smaller space, you may have fewer shelves to store laundry supplies. So please say bye-bye to any items you no longer need *before* you move.

Garage/Storage Shed/Yard

Moving to a smaller home space with perhaps a one-car garage or no garage, or to a condo or apartment building with underground parking that has no regular garage like a home does, poses a challenge for some downsizers. The best way to evaluate your garage and storage shed possessions is by considering your new lifestyle. Will you still be mowing the lawn? If you're going to be living in an

urban high-rise apartment home like I do, trust me, you'll no longer need a garden hose or lawn ornaments. Will you have a handyman on call 24/7 so you only need to keep a hammer, a few nails, and a drill? Do you still need that big snow blower you used on the East Coast if you're moving to Hawaii where you'll be making sandcastles on the beach instead of chubby snowmen in your yard?

Again, ask yourself as you walk through these spaces: "Will I really *use* this item in my new lifestyle?" If not, surely there is someone you know who'd be glad to take it off your hands. In the unlikely event that you might need something you do get rid of, it will likely be cheaper to buy a new one at that time rather than pay to move and store your older model anyway.

Collection Obsession

What's your particular "collection obsession"? Okay, I admit it. Organized soul that I am, I once owned enough teapots to rival Imelda Marcos's shoe collection! And Steve still has about fifty Santa Claus figurines he's collected since we were in our twenties. (We both love them, so we have no intention of parting with them.)

When you downsize, you'll want to make some decisions about your collection(s), and I hope what I am about to tell you about my teapot collection will help you decide.

I enjoyed everything to do with collecting my teapots . . . at one time in my life. But after I moved across the country and then packed and unpacked and dusted and arranged them during several local moves, I decided my teapot days were *over*. So I lovingly wrapped most of them up and donated them to my favorite thrift store, where the proceeds went to a charity dear to my husband's heart: animal shelters. The glass curio cabinet that had housed them for fifteen years, had been expensive to repeatedly move, and was a Herculean task to dust, I paid to have hauled to a consignment shop. My cabinet sold quickly and some other collector is now enjoying it—and *dusting it*—instead of me. And I'm a happy gal with no regrets!

Give serious consideration as to whether *your* particular collection(s) will still bring you joy once you move to smaller quarters, or whether your greater pleasure would be to give it to someone else who would enjoy it more at their stage of life.

Going Green

As you work through the downsizing and rightsizing process, please remember to dump as little as humanly possible into our landfills. Instead, recycle by donating your items to those who can use them, be they family, friends, or charity.

Celebration Time

Okay, now that you've gone through every room in your current home, taken notes in your binder, and donated, sold, or given away things you no longer want or need, it's time to celebrate. You've accomplished a big task! Treat yourself to dinner out or to a movie. As you contemplate moving into your new smaller digs, be thinking of creating your first lovely dinner gathering with new friends and neighbors.

Your Small Space Notes
