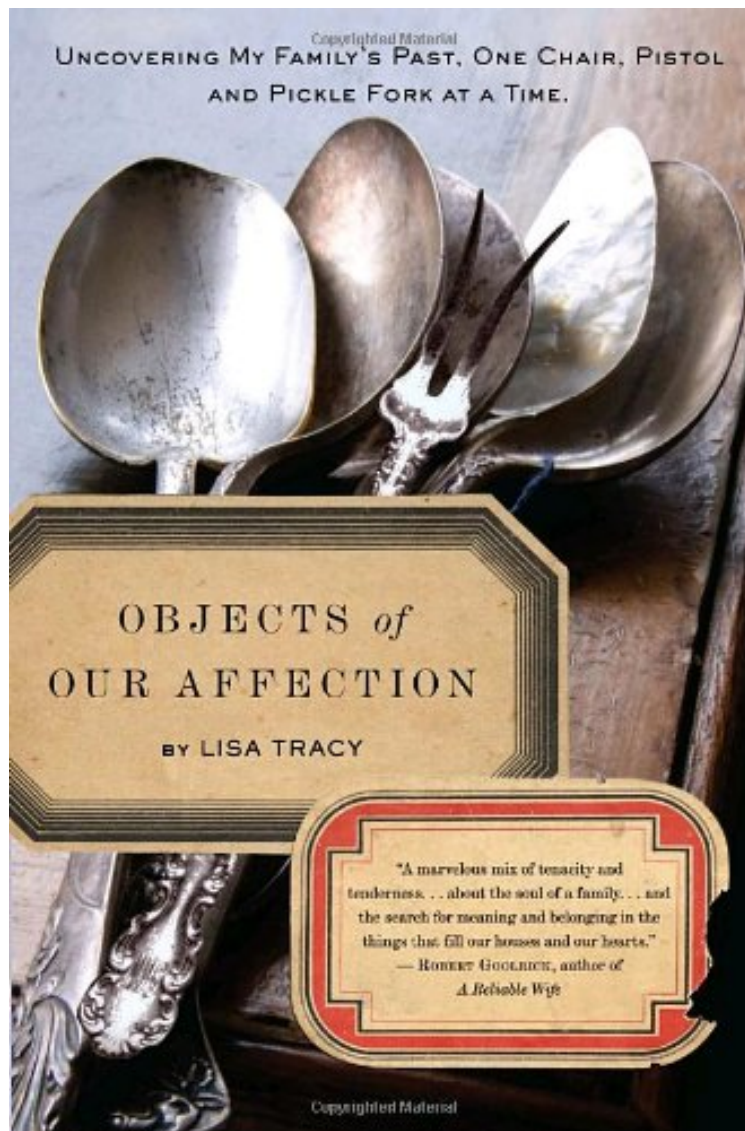


[E-BOOK] Objects of Our Affection: Uncovering My Family's Past, One Chair, Pistol, and Pickle Fork at a Time

Objects of Our Affection: Uncovering My Family's Past, One Chair, Pistol, and Pickle Fork at a Time

Lisa Tracy

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Lisa Tracy : Objects of Our Affection: Uncovering My Family's Past, One Chair, Pistol, and Pickle Fork at a Time before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Objects of Our Affection: Uncovering My Family's Past, One Chair, Pistol, and Pickle Fork at a Time:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I count myself among those fortunate not only to have read this

bookBy Gerald M. Malmo, IIIOutstanding volume very well written by one of the most cosmopolitan individuals you could ever encounter. The author has gone from being a very successful editor for the Philadelphia Inquirer to returning to her birth place to become a fraternity "house mother" in the challenging world of college life. With the transfer of wealth and history in today's society, every family should have this volume in their personal library. Moreover, I encourage every parent and grandparent to include this little chronology in their families' stockings come Christmas. Carefully read, it will make you think twice and reflect on your family lineage. I count myself among those fortunate not only to have read this book, but to have enjoyed the commentary and reflection of its author.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Think twice about getting rid of your pickle forks!By Elizabeth T. SmarttThis book REALLY made me think about the stories behind my family's stuff. Coincidentally, I read it as we cleaned out my grandparents' house after their passing, and it made the task even more poignant. What do we do with the partial set of silver? The egg-warmer? The antique "potty chair"? Where did they come from? What stories do they hold? Ms. Tracy went to great lengths to research her family's heirlooms and share this information with her readers, inviting us into their story. What impresses me most is that she was able to part with her family's items, even knowing their rich history. But, after all, we can't take it with us! A thought-provoking read and a glimpse inside one family's treasure trove of stories.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful personal tour through American HistoryBy Elizabeth K. JeffreyIn a time when so many things are disposable and lack any sense of history it is so refreshing to read about the journey one makes with the things of our families past. It is fascinating to think about how long a piece of furniture has passed down through generations and how it lasts through the general test of time. How having that piece is embedded in our memory of our own lives. This book is a wonderful journey through making difficult choices while at the same time reflecting on the meaning of the objects that surround and sometimes define who we are. In this day we often forget this element of ourselves. This books brings meaning and a sense of purposes from the people who have come before us.

After their mother's death, Lisa Tracy and her sister, Jeanne, are left to contend with several households' worth of furniture and memorabilia, much of it accumulated during their family's many decades of military service in far-flung outposts from the American frontier to the World War Two-era Pacific. In this engaging and deeply moving book, Tracy chronicles the wondrous interior life of those possessions and discovers that the roots of our passion for acquisition often lie not in shallow materialism but in our desire to possess the most treasured commodity of all: a connection to the past. What starts as an exercise in information gathering designed to boost the estate's resale value at auction evolves into a quest that takes Lisa Tracy from her New Jersey home to the Philippines and, ultimately, back to the town where she grew up. These travels open her eyes to a rich family history characterized by duty, hardship, honor, and devotion—qualities embodied in the very items she intends to sell. Here is an inventory unlike any other: silver gewgaws, dueling pistols that once belonged to Aaron Burr (no, not those pistols), a stately storage chest from Boxer Rebellion-era China, providentially recovered family documents, even a chair in which George Washington may or may not have sat—each piece cherished and passed down to Lisa's generation as an emblem of who her forebears were, what they had done, and where they had been. Each is cataloged here with all the richness and intimacy that only a family member could bring to the endeavor. "Even as we know we should be winnowing, we're wallowing," observes Lisa Tracy in one of her characteristically trenchant observations about America's abiding obsession with "stuff." A paean to the pack rat in us all, *Objects of Our Affection* offers an offbeat and intriguing mix of cultural anthropology, Antiques Roadshow Americana, and military history and lore, as well as a thoughtful meditation on the emotional resonance of objects—what they mean and the oh-so-fascinating stories they tell.

.com Lisa Tracy on *Objects of Our Affection* *Objects of Our Affection* is about one family, and it's also about why we Americans have so much stuff, and why we hang onto it. There are thousands of storage bins out there, not to mention unexamined attics, which attest to our love of our things... to the nervousness we feel about getting rid of Aunt Martha's soup tureen... to the sadness we feel if we even think of selling the antique chair that Grandpa always sat in... and to the stories we are even now attaching to that mug we just picked up at the flea market. My sister and I were in the process of trying to deal with a couple of storage bins of family possessions when I began thinking about it all: WHY was this so hard? We each already had a house full of furniture, and we sure didn't need any more. But this stuff had been in the family for many years, and it seemed sort of, well, disrespectful to get rid of it. And yet we did--or a lot of it, anyway--after a good deal of soul-searching. *Objects of Our Affection* is the story of that odyssey from the attic to the storage bins to the auction house... and beyond. What I learned in the process was that the family was in the furniture. Our family was military, for generations, and that made us the essential American nomads. I believe that is part of why my parents, grandparents, and the generations before them had held onto the things they brought with them as they traveled the globe. Their things had become their home, which made those possessions all the dearer to them. But we are a nation of nomads, and I think that sense of finding home in our things is why all of us hold onto them so tightly, whether we realize it or not. I also learned that, even if your family isn't loaded with things, anytime you acquire an object, a story starts around it. Once you realize that the stories are what you really cherish, that makes

it a little easier to accept the idea of letting go. Our own stories included traces of an 1870s childhood in Apache territory; battles in China, France, the Philippines, and South Dakota; a Down syndrome son who died young but left an indelible impression; my grandmother's secret marriage and subsequent annulment, which had never been mentioned in the family; a silent tug-of-war with a mother-in-law. The stories lived on in horsehair chairs and carved chests, in a silver locket, and yes, in that pickle fork--but also in a simple salt shaker. So... the objects: We can keep them, we can give them up. The stories remain. They are the heart of the matter. *Objects of Our Affection* is my fifth book. During a life as a journalist, I edited the Home Design pages of the Philadelphia Inquirer, wrote press releases about Jacques Cousteau, traveled 13,000 miles around the country in 14 weeks, and became passionate about what makes us tick, as Americans. I'm convinced our stuff holds a big piece of the answer to that question. --Lisa Tracy (Photo © Fran Fevrier) From Booklist

Do we own our possessions, or do they own us? That's one of the questions pondered in Tracy's memoir. Following their mother's death, Tracy and her sister were faced with the daunting task of sifting through her belongings. A military family whose history dated back to the American Revolution, the Tracys had acres of heirlooms, from an elegant, satin-bottomed chair that might have once been occupied by George Washington to a pair of dueling pistols purportedly owned by Aaron Burr. But while these items made for tantalizing stories to be told by the fire, what was their worth if one couldn't establish provenance? When the sisters decide to put selected pieces up for auction, they are both sobered—and occasionally surprised—by the prices they fetch. What they didn't account for was the remorse they would feel after the auction was completed, and the deals were done. Had they sold their family's soul? Tracy weaves engaging nuggets of military and social history into her tale, but the copious details about her family can grow tedious. Still, this will definitely attract the Antiques Roadshow crowd. --Allison Block

"Lisa Tracy's Family Furniture is a marvelous mix of tenacity and tenderness. Yes, it is about the history of certain carefully collected heirlooms; but it is about something much greater and more human. It is about why we hold on to the things we keep, how we let go of the ones we lose. It is about the soul of a family, any family, our expectations and regrets, our loves and losses, our search for meaning and belonging in the things that fill our houses and our hearts."—Robert Goolrick, author of *A Reliable Wife*

"Plush stories of love, war, life and death are lovingly tucked inside the drawers and chair springs of a remarkable family's furnishings. Lisa Tracy brings them to life with tender humor and due respect." —Tanya Maria Barrientos, author of *Family Resemblance*

"Lisa Tracy's *Objects of Our Affection* is a lovely and loving book, revealing the life of her well-traveled military family not just through the furniture they chose to keep, but through what they lost and surrendered along the way. Moving from the heights of San Juan Hill to the courtyards of China's Forbidden City, this book shows us why the possessions of our ancestors exert a profound influence upon our modern lives. Anyone who finds meaning and memory in the belongings of their forebears will enjoy this book." —Jeff Gammage, author of *China Ghosts: My Daughter's Journey to America, My Passage to Fatherhood*.

"*Objects of Our Affection* is a memoir in belongings, right down to the salt in an old glass shaker with a dented lid. Being a born Southern story-teller, Lisa Tracy has captured beautifully why we love our belongings—not for their actual value but for the family stories they hold, and for the way they allow us to follow the threads of continuity in the red velvet fabric of life." —Susan Caba, author of *Guilty Pleasures*

"This is a book that gathers emotional momentum as you read it. Gradually you realize it is a rare look at the women who have devoted their lives to the men who have fought America's wars. I read the closing chapters with tears in my eyes." —Thomas Fleming, author of *The Officers' Wives* and *West Point: The Men and Times of the U.S. Military Academy*