

## **Grandma's Closet Was Two Feet Wide**

My Grandma Read's closet was two feet wide. She had a four foot wide three drawer clothes bureau. That was all the space she needed to store her modest wardrobe and yet she always looked immaculate but sharp.

Now I'm not saying she was poor. In fact she and grandpa would have been considered folks of some means in their day. Why, they even had a car or two over the years, though I can't recall grandpa driving much. He preferred to walk and take the bus. The car came out for Sunday drives and other special occasions, I'll bet in this day and age grandpa wouldn't even own a car. People just lived far more modestly in those days. Nothing in excess is always a grand rule of thumb, for possessions as well.

Grandpa was a cobbler by trade as well as playing trombone in the Vancouver symphony and many other vaudeville and movie house gigs. Grandma's four pair's of shoes were always in immaculate condition. Four you say!? Isn't that just a wee bit excessive? Well- there were her working in the house flats, a simple, white, four lace affair. There were her shiny black leather going to church and special occasions, three-quarter top, ten lace one inch heel, boot/shoes. She had an old pair of high top flat healed shoes to work in the garden and a pair of slip on rubber overshoes for rainy days. The last pair were her fancy, pale blue "pretty" shoes with a slightly tapered one inch heel and I think she only wore those for birthday parties and when having company over.

I can almost recall every one of the few frilly blouses, skirts and dresses that grandma owned over the years. When a new one showed up I knew another had been worn beyond it's years and no

doubt recycled into something else useful. I'm sure she made many of them herself. A favourite of hers, and mine and others I'm sure, for special occasions, was a pleated skirt in Lawrence family tartan, always worn with a finely crocheted blouse.

She had a pretty dress with tiny pastel flowers of pale green and blue. It was a favourite of mine too- for any day she wore that thin cotton dress I knew it was going to be a baking day. Pies or tarts and always warm fresh scones. She splurged on aprons and I think she always had three clean ones on hand, though she may have made them out of recycled fine flour sack cotton for all I knew.

I admit Gran kept two good woolen coats in the hall guest closet. One light and one long and heavier. She had a small closet in the basement as well where she and grandpa kept their round the house and yard work cloths. Gran had an old, white, heavy cotton, high collar jacket for colder leaf raking days and a lighter short sleeve jacket for hotter days with a pair of thin fabric, pull on sleeves for a garden planting day. She kept a well worn wide brimmed round woven hat that kept the sun and rain off her face. Gran was 85 when she died, but she didn't look a day over 60. Though grandpa smoked a pipe occasionally and the odd cigar, tobacco never touched Gran's lips unless of course it might have been on grandpa's lips in a kiss.

Yes Grandma's closet was 24 inches wide because people lived merrily and unstressed without excess in those days. Grandma died at 85 in 1973 I miss her dearly and the planet misses her and her kind immensely. They tread more lightly on the planet in all those years than someone today of age of 25 with a 10 foot walk-in' closet and 25 pairs of shoes.

**Lance Read - A Canadian in Cuba**