

A Cleaning Adventure

Do you like treasure hunts? If you do, right now you may have one right above your lap! Yep. Your center desk drawer is most likely hiding something about which you've long forgotten, and may even be concealing something you've never even seen! Ever! That's what happened to me yesterday and this morning. Don't laugh! It may take you TWO HALF-DAYS if you tear into your center drawer too! If you have time to join in my adventure, keep reading.

When I finally gave in to the year-long daily urge to clean that drawer, (The necessity of the project was bolstered by the ever increasing force required to jam the drawer closed.) the first thing I drug out was the unorganized organizer. I carefully placed it on top of my desk while only losing about a half-dozen items overflowing its edges. I reclined and considered whether or not I could replace the organizer as-is and put this major project off until I had fewer responsibilities requiring my time. After gulping down the half cup of coffee that had cooled during my introspection, repining I groaned, "Might as well git-er-done."

The first thing of value I took from the drawer was all the pens, pencils and markers. I chose a red, 16 oz. plastic cup with a "Subway" decal for my new treasure chest and speared over 50 of these valuable "instruments for correspondents" point down in the container. I considered, now I could easily replace the "organizer" and end the project here, but there were too many cashed gems which had already caught my eye! I had to continue!

Next was "anything that looked like trash" – old sticky-notes and convenience store receipts with unidentified phone numbers of important people (names not included) from my past – these all went immediately into the Wal-Mart-bag-lined trash can ever present beside my desk, along with about a half-pound of rubber bands that either snapped, crumbled, or no longer demonstrated elasticity. Chunk!

OH! THE BUSINESS CARDS! Yep... Those had to be piled up then examined individually. Most of them joined the sticky-notes because I now had no end of that type information in either my cell phone or my computer. That's a nice thing about my computer; it can hold a heck-uv-a lot more business cards than my desk drawer! So those followed the way of the Rolodex... a decade ago. Enough about the trash. Wanna hear about the good stuff?

One of the treasures found was a 4" x 5" chart printed on plastic which had, among other tidbits of info., the necessary formulas needed by crop dusters to compute acres-per-minute and acres-per-swath. It had been in the "boss' desk" since back in the 60s when it was Dad's desk. I remember when I was in high school, once leaving that card out of place – where I had used it – then being chastised for my lack respect imparted to other people's "stuff", and if I didn't put it back where it belonged, I'd find myself mowing the runway with a scythe!

Today, I found it once again – right where it belonged – under the unorganized organizer. It was like finding an old friend, and when I showed it to my son, he too, appreciating its value inquired, “Where has this thing been forever?”

Now here’s the real treasure list: I found a piece of quartz which years ago had begged to be picked from a hiking trail in Arkansas, a cap-bill light I couldn’t envision myself living without – purchased at Bass Pro-Shop, rattlers from a snake who’d lost the battle and its life when I was a teen, two pocket size tape measures picked for necessity from a convention somewhere, a half-dozen key-chain flash lights, a dozen key chains and about 75 keys, an old E6B computer which pre-GPS was a necessity for all pilots, and a passel of little bottles – the contents of which ranged from eye drops and hand sanitizer to a couple of tiny sample bottles of metsulfuron – that’s a herbicide. I found 5 rulers, two magnifying glasses, two watches – one of which was a coveted Swiss Army watch... with a strap pin missing, three old calculators – only one of which had an operable battery, a 3 inch crescent wrench that I’d wondered about for over a year, three glove-box tool kits – all of which were made in the orient and only one of which had any quality, eight 2010 stick-on dashboard calendars, six pocket-size spiral scratch pads – Handy!, a 2011 pocket-book calendar/notebook/mini almanac with bonus pages containing weights and measures, and small amassment of various nails, screws, bolts, nuts and washers.

I found some money – 33 cents to be exact, two un-cashed checks – \$20 paid for having completed a survey which was now too old to redeem, and a \$9 refund check from the IRS. BUT GET THIS! I found 3 cash-cards: one from Wal-Mart, one from Dillard’s and one from a local restaurant! I hope they still have some credit left on them!

THEN I FOUND IT! THE THING I NEVER REMEMBER SEEING BEFORE! A round slide rule that upon input of the loft of an L16 81mm mortar, the resulting reading would be the distance and flight-time for a fired round! Now where did that come from? I have no idea, BUT... I put it under the unorganized organizer with the “acres-per-minute chart printed on plastic” for safe keeping! One never knows next time he’ll need to calculate a mortar launch!

Well... that’s about it for my treasure hunt. The consummation of the two half-days of drawer cleaning was a trash can full of refuse and a well-organized unorganized organizer placed back in the drawer all neat and tidy. It’s nice to now be able to eease the drawer out, make my selection from its contents then sliide it back closed without a slam, jam or whammy! Ahhh! ☺

Are you wondering what I did with all those wordsmith implements? Well... I too wondered what to do with them after I had put my drawer back together and realized I hadn’t placed ANY pens back in my drawer! I decided I needed better storage than the red plastic Subway cup so I retrieved a wooden cigar box from my “inventory of precious items for which I may someday find use” and proceeded to check each pen for its quality of mark. About two-thirds of them made the grade. The ones that made Mel-Tillis-like stutter-marks or didn’t write at

all joined the sticky notes while the pens I liked best were deposited handily in the desk. The remainder boxed and stored deep in a side drawer where I may cuff them someday if needed! I'm thinking about listing them on my financial statement. A cigar box of good pens certainly has value! Wouldn't you agree?

Now the pressing question: Why did I take the time to write this 1,200+ word essay about cleaning my desk drawer? Two reasons: 1) being laconic is not one of my attributes as a writer, (That was Bill O'Riley's word-of-the-day yesterday.) and 2) just to encourage you to maybe enjoy the same experience! Cleaning out your desk drawer is not only an adventure of history and discovery, but for at least a week or two, you should NEVER HAVE TO HUNT FOR A PEN! Good luck!

Gaylon Stamps, 5/1/13