

# Time Capsules

... in a world of disappearing digital evidence

By Mary Katzke

**IT WAS FIRST INTRODUCED** to the concept of time capsules by my father at our old farmhouse in Minnesota in the mid-'60s. I can't even remember what we put in there but perhaps it was a local newspaper and a handful of photos? In 2003, when the plumbing burst through the wall in my first home in Anchorage, before the hole was plastered away, I was inspired to place a capsule in the wall with current family photos and newspaper headlines. Over ten years later, when the rain came running down the inside wall of our Potlatch Circle condo in Anchorage and another renovation was required, together my son and I gathered report cards and current utility bills and recipes we both loved, to curate yet another disaster-induced time capsule.

I now face the blank canvas of our brand-new dream home in Homer, and wonder, without the pressure of a plumbing disaster, what artifacts to place in my newest capsule.

Having learned the art of preserving memories from our father, I asked my siblings what they put in their time capsules. My sister, Sharon, said she couldn't remember. "Probably a newspaper," because she didn't think anyone would ever find it. My brother, Dave, said he placed his capsule at work when they remodeled the factory where he was working at Jolly Green Giant in Blue Earth, Minnesota. He shared that they buried an antiquated piece of pea-sorting machinery.

My friend Gwenette resides in Florida now but back when she was a kid in Apple Valley, Calif., buried a time capsule in her childhood home. "I only did one with my brother, Randy, after our parakeet, Petey, died," recalls Gwenette. "I remember it well. I was five; Randy was 12. We put in the mirror from Petey's aviary, one of his blue feathers, a drawing I made of Petey with our calico cat, a popsicle stick stained orange from my favorite flavor, a bottle of our Nana's favorite bright red nail polish, Randy's 7th-grade military school report card, a brass button from his school uniform, a pix of our "mommy" by a pool, a pix of Ran-

dy, me, and cousins Cheryl and Bob, with our Granddad and Aunt Vera (our very young step-grandmother) on their farm by the pomegranates bushes, a rattlesnake skin from the farm, one of Granddad's cigar stubs, and Aunt Vera's recipe for dill rye bread. We wrapped it all in a kitchen towel embroidered by our Nana, put it in a 2-quart Mason jar, then buried it under my playhouse porch steps and made a secret map. We were going to dig it up on my 21st birthday but we sold the house and moved just a year later. Maybe it's still there."

For me, this will likely be my last time capsule because this Homer house is my forever home. I began my process by adding objects that reflect the current moment we live in: a COVID test kit and mask; a newspaper with headlines about Ukraine, a chemical explosion in Illinois, and certain political figures. I also added empty boxes of current medications and photos of our family. I included DVDs of some of my work and a copy of my book, *One Good Man*. I wrote a letter about the house that explained how we'd come down to Homer for years loving the rush of driving up over the crest just before descending into this lovely seaside town and imagining living there. Then, after actively looking for five years, and balancing a wish list with a budget, we bought this land. I wrote about how the view and the copious sunshine had kept us coming back to this spot, and dreaming of the house that could stand there. What colors would it be? Where would the gardens go? I described a wild yard that would be filled with alder, birch, fireweed, Sitka roses, puschke, and blueberries.

Maybe one day after I'm gone, the next homeowner will remodel the kitchen and find some delight in discovering my time capsule which captures this unique time in Homer's history and my personal life. ■

*Mary Katzke is the founder of Affinityfilms, Inc. and the author of One Good Man, and numerous articles and commentaries on social issues.*



## MAKE YOUR OWN TIME CAPSULE

### Choose a location.

This can be during new construction, repairs to your home, your backyard, or even a secret place recorded only by GPS coordinates.

### Choose your "container."

Your vessel could be an official style capsule, or Tupperware from your cupboard. The main consideration is moisture prevention.

### Select items that tell a story.

Consider the purpose of creating this artifact. Is it to mark an event in history? Or a person's life? Fill your capsule with items that give specific details to someone who might stumble upon your time capsule at a future time.

### Conceal or bury your capsule.

Remember one more time that moisture is not your friend. Try to wrap items or preserve them by laminating them. Record the location of your capsule so that you don't forget. Maybe even make a sign or create a treasure hunt so that a future Alaskan can find it.

## LESSON PLAN

