Off mic with Phil Smith - a sense of loss

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Do you lose things? Is it your fault?

My ability to lose things progresses in line with the years. I'm generally convinced that things would be where I left them were it not for my ever-loving-spouse, children, children's 700 friends, the cleaner, my mother in law and the AIIC Bureau.

If left to my own devices my life would run like a well-oiled machine in which I would accomplish all my tasks with aplomb and distinction, and on time. As it is, I spend hours looking for things that are not where they should be, NOT WHERE THEY SHOULD BE.

Let me start with keys. Mine have a tendency to wander, or at least not stay put. I sometimes think life might be a bit like the Toy Story films where inanimate objects jump to life as soon as the humans have gone. Either that or my children are plotting against me, the scoundrels.

I'm an absolute paragon who always places the car keys in the dish on the hall table, confident that they will be there when I next need them. But come my next chore - taking my beloved to her archery class (not really a chore but unalloyed pleasure) - the keys are nowhere to be seen. If you're not surprised I'm guessing the same sort of thing happens to you. Piquancy is added when you can't find your keys and your wife is fuming and armed with a bow and arrow.

Sometimes I get up in the morning ready to launch myself into manly pursuits that involve a lot of planning and going to the shop for supplies. Let's say I've decided to paint the fence - you can picture me looking workmanlike in my overalls and high visibility tabard (you can't be too careful when working against a dark fence). I'm anxious to depart for the DIY stores to buy all the materials but am unable to leave the house because there are no house keys. None, not anywhere. I can't leave the house unlocked because people might steal my moisturisers and AIIC reports but neither can I leave and lock myself out for the rest of the day. So I have to stay at home and dream about painting the fence while watching daytime television. Mind you daytime TV has taught me a lot about antiques and incest.

Those of you who've worked with me will know I generally keep things in good order and have a pretty clear picture of my immediate environment so that I can locate my glass of water, microphone and colleague without too much effort. However I occasionally have difficulties finding the microphone under piles of paper and will at times swear blind I haven't received a speech that is staring me in the face. But with support such distractions can be kept to a reasonable minimum. After all, those booths are pretty tiny when you consider all the material vital to keeping the wheels of international relations turning.

You meet people who've got their lives in order. There is a place for everything and everything is in its place. Those of us who are intrinsically tidy and well ordered creatures but whose efforts are
undermined by plots and circumstance are wont to jeer at their tidiness, but all we're doing is showing our envy. I don't know about you but if I think about all the time and energy expended on looking for things that should not have been lost or mislaid in the first place, well I could have written the Great British Novel, learned another language or gone bungee jumping. The missed opportunities are endless.

*Phil Smith is currently trying to find himself and his luggage at an undisclosed destination.*

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