

Downsizing: It's a Puzzle

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My husband enjoys doing puzzles of all kinds: Sudoku, Wordle, crosswords . . . you name it. Oh, and jigsaw puzzles. Can't forget those.

Over the past few years since he retired, he has amassed a fairly large collection of his favourite brand, but as we start thinking seriously about downsizing our possessions, he's been looking at moving some of them along.

For any collector, the decisions involved in liquidating a collection are agonizing, so to help him get going, DH has started weeding out doubles that have crept into his collection.

He likes to make sure that the puzzles are complete before donating them back to the thrift shop for someone else to enjoy, so he generally assembles them if he hasn't done so previously.

He started this week with a lovely Christmas puzzle titled "Memories of December". It's an older one, dating likely to the late 70s. Both boxes have suffered some damage: they are scuffed along the edges, with additional torn areas where the boxes had previously been taped shut, either by the thrift shops or by previous owners.

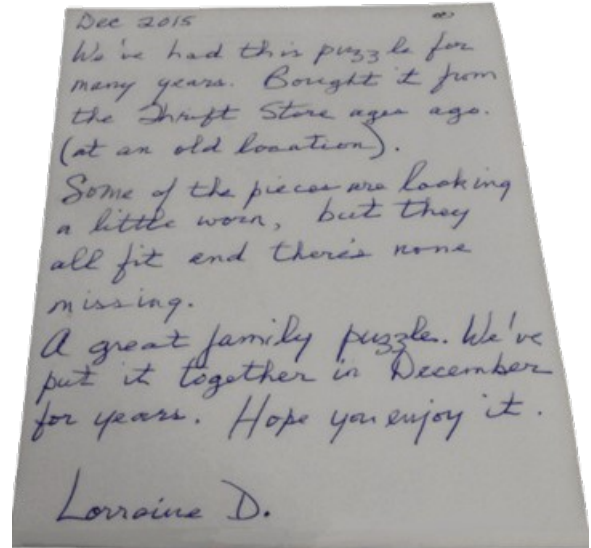


The first of the two puzzles was in great shape inside, and the pieces showed no wear. Lovely! . . . But uh-oh: there's a piece missing!



On to the second puzzle. Turns out that this one is complete, though the pieces are a bit worn.

But here's a bonus: inside the box is a lovely handwritten note from the person who donated it to the thrift store where we ended up buying it.



Dated December 2015, the note reads:

"We've had this puzzle for many years. Bought it from the Thrift Store ages ago (at an old location). Some of the pieces are looking a little worn, but they all fit and there's none missing. A great family puzzle. We've put it together in December for years. Hope you enjoy it.

Lorraine D."



DH is a bit sentimental, so Lorraine's touching note might make his decision more difficult: Should he keep the one that's slightly worn, but imbued with such lovely karma from Lorraine's family Christmases? Or the one that's in slightly better shape, but missing a piece?

And I'm going to make his decision even more challenging, because that piece won't be missing for long. I'm going to make a new one.

You may recall my 2024 post about how I create replacement puzzle pieces (you can find details of my method in that post from April 12 of that year.)



I traced and cut out and glued a replacement piece, then finished it with coloured pencils. It isn't exactly perfect, but when the puzzle is assembled, it's barely noticeable.



As for the scuffed boxes, I thought I could do something about those too. Although I won't claim they'll look new when I'm finished, I can promise that they'll look better than they do now, and they will certainly be stronger.



If the damage along the edges had been only slight, I'd probably have used a black marker to cover the marks. In this case, the scuffing was more extensive, so

I opted for different method.

To better cover the damage, I mixed black acrylic paint with an equal amount of Mod Podge.

The paint gives it colour, and the podge will protect and strengthen the surface and provide some sheen.



I added a drop of water to the mixture to help keep the podge from drying out, then used a paintbrush to apply the slightly diluted mixture over the white damaged areas of the box. When it dries, it will darken to the same black shade as the original box.

Both boxes had suffered similar damage, with the black finish rubbed off all of the edges. The paint/podge mixture will not only restore the colour, but gives a smooth finish and also serves to strengthen the box.

My repair didn't restore the box to like-new condition, but it did improve the appearance of the box, which will hold up better for more Christmases to come. Both puzzles are now complete, and both boxes look better than they have for a long time.



DH is going to have a decision to make. I know he kind of likes the idea of keeping that touching note with his own puzzle collection, but on the other hand, he's kind of taken with the thought of adding his own message to Lorraine's note and passing on the puzzle that gave her family so many lovely Christmas memories. (Lorraine herself purchased the puzzle at a thrift store, so returning it there would become part of a tradition of its own).

I think I might know which way he's going to go, but whatever he decides, someone's going to end up with a beautiful festive puzzle to add to their own Christmas celebrations.