

Cathie: I can remember that *thump-thump-thump* of the treadle, and the whir of the, of the belt. And it was my grandmother's, and she was the one who always did the sewing in the family.

Melody: My partner and I interviewed Cathie Behrend, a resident of Lohman Village about an ornament she owns, which resembles a treadle sewing machine. Though merely a diminutive replica, Cathie describes how the ornament evokes a sense of family, work ethic and generational connection through telling a series of deeply personal stories of her childhood and beyond. For Cathie, the ornament reminisces the years spent living with her grandmother, a woman who spent many hours peddling away on a treadle sewing machine. After her grandmother's death, however, the ornament took on new meaning when Cathie's brother repurposed the table of the machine as his dinner table. Her young niece recognized the ornament, not as the treadle sewing machine of Cathie's youth, but as the dining room table of her own.

C: I'm a retired elementary school teacher. I've been here at the Wartburg for five years. I'd always lived in a house before and when I let my own house go I didn't want to live in a building. I wanted something close to a house and these cottages are *just* right for me. I like to read. I like to sew. I like to bake. I like to do jigsaw puzzles, you name it. But those are a lot of solitary things and that's not good, so I enjoy the community that I have here with the neighbors. We eat together, we go places together, we take trips and we do things like that. So I enjoy that very much.

The object is a little old-fashioned sewing machine with a treadle on the bottom. It's actually an ornament, this is not an actual sewing table. You press the treadle and it ran a belt and that made it work.

Now my grandma is one of thirteen children. And their family, in Germany, did what a lot of families did. One person would come over here, get established, send for the next one, and the next one, and so on. Nana came over when she was fourteen, all alone. The only memory she told us about was that she was seasick the whole time.

I wanted to do something else other than the sewing machine, but we can't find it. She had a little ball of navy blue yarn that was made from the wool from the sheep on the farm, and then they spun it and dyed it, and she brought it over with her. And we've had it for a long, long time. I've tried, turned the house over looking for it. My brother's tried to find it, none of us could find it. So I went with the sewing machine, the treadle sewing machine which was also good. Grandma lived with us for the whole time I was a child. We never had a babysitter, my brother and I, because she was always there. And she did a lot of sewing. She did patchwork quilts, each one of us had a quilt of our own. As a matter of fact we had more than one because as the years passed they got worn and torn and washed thoroughly. So I can remember at least two of them. Now the only thing I have from her patchwork is a dresser scarf, that have on it different pieces. These are crazy quilts, they are not these expensive, Amish, named kind of quilts, these are crazy quilt kind of things. And I can look at this and see things that are my mother's Sunday dress, and that was a beach dress that she had, an apron, a dress that I had. So that brings

nice memories back when I look at them. This treadle, was finally, really too old to really be useful. And after grandma died, we kept it in the house, and when we broke up the family house, my brother took the machine, the treadle machine. We got rid of the sewing, that no longer worked, but he kept the table and the treadle because his wife wanted a round kitchen table. So he got the round wood and placed it on the sewing machine base and fashioned it on. And for many years, that was their kitchen table which was a lot of fun because you could look down on it and think of grandma again. As a matter of fact, this summer when my nephew and his family came down to visit, they have a very curious seven year-old girl. Ruby just, is into everything. And while the adults were sitting here talking, Ruby was wandering around the room picking up all the little knick-knacks that I have. And she came to this knick-knack and immediately came running over saying, "Look! Here's grandma's table", because she remembered it from her grandmother, although it's her great-great grandmother's sewing table. So I kind of like that that memory is being passed along.

The quilts that grandma made for us did wear out after a while, and my brother when he married and moved to upstate New York... As a teacher, men teachers cannot make it on ten months of pay they work in the summer too. And he painted houses with another guy from his school. And one day, they were painting houses and, you know, the ladders and the drop cloths covering the bushes and everything, and all of a sudden this lady comes out of the house, "Young man! Young man! Your grandmother would turn over in her grave if she could see you using her quilt as a drop cloth! Take that up right now and take it home!" (laughter). He had been using it as a drop cloth. It was so worn out by then that that's all it was really good for, but he packed it up and he put it back in the car. And that's what he did with it, that was his memory.

But I was in Michael's a couple years ago, and it had been of Christmas ornaments, this was there and I couldn't leave it there because it was definitely something to remember grandma by. I remember when grandma got older, she had an apartment on the third floor of our house and she could go up there, close the door and, you know, shut us all out, very nicely. At one point, though, she fell on the stairs and she broke her pelvis, and she had to have bed rest. And that was hard because she was always very active. When she finally got up the doctor gave her a walker to use, but grandma was a stubborn dutchman. She picked it up on her elbow, and she walked carrying it, on her elbow. She was not about to use that thing. She could walk.

Oh, grandma was excellent at peeling apples. We used to have an apple a day, at the end of the day. And she was able to peel the apple so that it all came off in one long peel. And the tradition is, you throw it over your shoulder, and however it lands, that's the initials of the man you're supposed to marry. All kinds of different letters all the time. And I never married, but it was a lot of fun when I was a kid. (laughter)

Melody: Cathie's stories of family, hardwork and generational memories are a powerful affirmation of the weight objects can carry. Important objects are the keys to clarifying blurry memories... to reminding us of memories we'd forgotten we had.

Cathie: Rainy day, elementary school, and it started out a beautiful day, but by 3:15 it was pouring. I came out of school wondering how I was going to get home, and there was grandma with two umbrellas. And that's a very specific memory. Because she did not go out that much. But just the fact that she was there with the umbrella. Mom had sent her. And I felt so protected and proud, it was very nice. Everybody else was getting wet. (laughter). I had somebody there with umbrellas. I feel happy. I feel that she's looking down on us, and watching us, and seeing the things that we are doing. She could be very stubborn sometimes. But she was always very lovable. She did make my brother and I swear a pact that when we got older, we were going to go to the dentist. Because when Nana died, she had three teeth in her head, and ten in her jewelry box.