

The Brotherhood of Chairs

I must have inherited a chair gene, because my little house holds fifty-six chairs. Last week I cruised the Costco aisles and entertained the notion of replacing my middle-aged office chair. I plunked down, twirled around, leaned back, calculated a few sums, adjusted the seat height, and walked away. I need another chair like I need another book.

I own wooden chairs, metal chairs, leather chairs, sports chairs, kiddie chairs, conference room chairs, a plethora of rescued, reupholstered, refinished chairs. One stout courtroom chair. One good looking park bench. One eye sore. A model chair. And miniature models of model chairs.

Chairs line the rafters, molder in the attic, crowd the library, encircle the dining room, and camp out on the front porch with tree frogs and stray cats. Most are quadrupeds. One glides. One swings. The three-legged Hans Wegner quartet sculpt the demarcation line between Modernist and Packrat.

In the back corner of Mom's basement in brother's section of abandoned paraphernalia, is the chair Uncle Billy died in. But who's Uncle Billy? Both my parents are only children. One day a dilapidated rocking chair, from my sector of the basement, conspired with the chair Uncle Billy died in.

Together they birthed the Brotherhood of Chairs, where, I'm told, members are sworn to longevity. They're urged to get underfoot, multiply like dandelions, root under the in-law fence, and hitchhike when abandoned at the roadside. Generations of chair sitters testify to the emotive power of the Brotherhood.

After all, who can part with the chair that rocked you as an infant? Witnessed a first kiss? Braced a fall? Couched good news? Pillowed the bad? Look around, a mob of chairs back every corner.