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If your wife is German, let her retire

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Okay, so here's the deal: I married a German woman.

In prior columns, I've explained that in reaction to my saying wonderful things about her, she bought me a ride in a fighter jet at a charity auction. I suspected all along that she thought my heart would never be able to hold out for that ride, but in reality it was an act of love and generosity. She obviously knows me far better than I know myself.

That, however, is not the point of today's column, so maybe I should get to the point: She's German. Germans cannot stop working. In the column for which I wrote about how wonderful she is, I mentioned that while she was retiring from teaching, she would be getting no gold watch from me because I needed her too much. Little did I know just how right I was. She took an extended vacation and did absolutely nothing for all of 45 seconds. She then jumped out of the chair and hasn't sat down since.

You have to understand by way of background, I'm an only child with many neuroses. One of them causes me to become sentimentally attached to inanimate objects for the sheer pleasure of the memories they evoke. Couple that with the fact that I'm certain virtually everything I've ever stored in the basement or the attic some day will be worth an awful lot of money and you can see the likelihood of that personality deficiency coming into direct and opposite conflict with my "neat freak" German wife.

The good news is that, as our children grew from infancy into adulthood, I quickly discovered that if I built an addition onto our house I could store more stuff. At this particular moment, I am confident that the Beanie Babies my daughter used to love — she was convinced they were worth a lot of money even when she was in elementary school — must now be worth at least \$500 million. For those of you who are now interested in a deal, the price is negotiable and I invite offers

Over the years, our closets filled up — we made more closets. Now they are full too, or at least they were. Since June, my wife has systematically cleaned them, and I don't mean cleaning as in, "Oh, my wife is dusting."

My problem is that I can't stand the thought of losing all of my

memorabilia, and she truthfully believes I am overvaluing the Beanie Baby collection.

Retirement, in the right setting, is a blessing. Although I doubt I will ever be able to retire myself, I am thrilled at seeing my closets reorganized, rooms full of debris emptied and my wife's constant vigilance in getting through the immense task of correcting 25 years' worth of what doctors call "packrattitis."

And as if that isn't enough, she also has been taking care of me ever since I got the brilliant idea that I should prove I can still run as fast as any teenager. The good news is that I managed to run extremely fast; the bad news is the brakes on my Nikes failed and I have now uniquely proven beyond all reasonable doubt that the tensile strength of galvanized steel posts that support fences around tennis courts is far greater than that of my left rotator cuff.

Between slings, surgery, painkillers, physical therapy, chauffeuring me around since I couldn't drive, and helping me in my attempts to keep up with my professional obligations to my clients, my wife's done it all.

She's put up with more than she should have, and I love her for it. Perhaps just as importantly, I am slowly watching that portion of my house and yard emerge out of what was once an unrecognizable mess of my own creation. A gently organized, sanitized, categorized reassembly of a lifetime of chaos — which would have been uncontrollable decades ago had her Germanity not allowed me to let it all get completely out of control — is taking its place.

As a trial lawyer indoctrinated with the concept that a simple theory must be distilled into a simple theme that is easily remembered by the jury or by you, the readers, I leave you with the following: If you are lucky enough to marry a German woman, for God's sake let her retire.

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