Collections. Many of us have them. They can be innocuous and extremely useful and necessary, like a folk dance club's collection of dance music or our own internal database of best-loved dances. Alternatively, collections in their extreme can take over every inch of extra space in our homes. Certain categories can be difficult to part with: friend's or relative's estates, things that were once sought out and beloved to us, gifts from loved ones.

Sometimes I feel sorry for things, such as old technology. Like weeds, they are perfectly good, trying their best to be what they are, but they are in the wrong place. For the old technology, their time has passed. I still own 78s, 33s, eight-track tapes, cassettes, minidisks, CDs. I have folk dance cassettes and records from my own teaching collection, plus those which belonged to the folkdancing mother of an acquaintance. (Would anyone like any of these? They are available.) When the library at my former workplace eliminated inspirational materials, books and cassettes, I adopted them.

Often collections are a reflection of a passion in our life:

I and many musicians of my acquaintance have numerous musical instruments, not to mention a quantity of music stands, each of which has a special redeeming quality.

One of my friends has a sweet spot for what she calls Brown Betty teapots and rescues them whenever she sees them and might find them good homes. She has recently parted with two, and is now down to 11 teapots.

At a recent exhibit of Seattle fashion at MOHAI, I met a seamstress who owns at least eight sewing machines, each with a story. One sewing machine was a present to her mother from her father, on the day of her birth.

Another woman collects Christmas items and literally has hundreds of Christmas villages, hundreds of ceramic Santas, and certainly dozens of glass brick presents which she stores carefully during the year and displays proudly and happily each Christmas season. It takes her and her son several days to set up the display and several days to pack them away again.

Still others collect living things. One couple I know has a glorious large back yard filled with the flowers they have collected over the years.

Caution: It is possible to get carried away with this. Some of us act as if the famous old song went this way: "Get new stuff and keep the old, one is silver and the other gold."

I was traveling recently to a music/dance event and even traveling with a big suitcase, the amount of stuff I had around me was limited. It was actually kind of nice, liberating even. So, on my return home, I've been parting with a little bit of stuff. Mind you, the casual observer would never notice. Perhaps I have some collections I am ready to part with now.

Several of my friends have had the experience of offering their treasured items to their grown up progeny, things they had perhaps been saving for these kids. Imagine the parent's surprise and dismay when their kids reject these items, saying they are not their style. My own parents used to say, "Don't buy anything! We have it." It was often true, but it was old fashioned, outmoded, fulfilling the purpose maybe but not desirable, perhaps a little dangerous to use.

How does all this fit into folkdancing? Simple. Knowledge too is a kind of collection. Those of us who have been dancing for many years have a huge collection of dances in our personal inventory of muscle memory and mental memory. True, some need to be dusted off and polished up, as it were, to be enjoyed again. Many of us have danced a variety of genres over the years.

I find it to be tremendously fun to try to revive dances I haven't done in decades and relive the memories as I rediscover the steps. Sno-King recently had an evening entitled "A Blast from the Past", featuring old favorites.

I encourage you to appreciate and be intentional about your collections of all types. Relish your personal dance collection, make a point of dancing and sharing old favorites (or an old favorite genre) along with whatever you are enjoying most these days.