

The background of the cover is a photograph of a beach. In the foreground, there is a wide expanse of golden sand. In the middle ground, gentle waves with white foam are washing onto the shore. Superimposed over the water and sand is a large, semi-transparent globe of the Earth, showing swirling blue oceans and white clouds. The title text is overlaid on the globe.

A World in a Grain^{of} Sand

**Lively Little Stories
of Household Stuff**

By Carol Van Klompenburg

Advance Praise **for** **A World in a Grain of Sand**

Time and time again, Carol Van Klompenburg captivates readers with her unique vision of the world. She can draw you into the smallest detail, this time bringing life and perspective to often discarded items. In her latest tales, she travels short distances throughout her home and tells the stories of the items that she built her life around.

Carol transforms what may be viewed as just everyday household items, taking readers on a trip to places of yesteryear. Carol doesn't miss details, and her stories often make me wonder what the things I surround myself with will tell about my life someday.

Sarah Weber, Co-Editor
Sioux County Capital-Democrat

A World in a Grain of Sand is stirring, lovely, and delightful. As I sat at my kitchen table reading it, Carol's stories and photographs made me look around and consider the artifacts in my own life.

Her stories and images transported me back into the lives of my own parents and grandparents. As I looked around, I saw remnants from their lives, now sprinkled in mine—their china, furniture, paintings, and books—and in the garage, all of my dad's tools.

Now I wonder which of their belongings and my own will survive into my children's and grandchildren's lives and perhaps even further generations.

Inspired, I am now considering which of these artifacts have stories I can share.

Dr. Robert Leonard, Anthropologist with bylines in *The New York Times*, *TIME*, *USA Today*, the *Des Moines Register*, the *Iowa Capital Dispatch*, and other publications. He lives in rural Marion County, Iowa

My mother's tears as she sorted belongings for yet another move belied her words, "It's just stuff." Carol's stories prompted this memory along with the realization that Mom's tears were not for the "stuff," but the memories attached to them. This book is an invitation to look around and share the stories our "stuff" contains.

Kathleen Evenhouse, Author of *Less Than a Widow*

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I started reading Carol's latest book on a flight back from Manila and finished it on my couch by the fire. I loved every story! Each tale is unique, and each is a door to a world of warm relationships, strong faith, and adventurous travel. I was entertained and inspired by what they revealed.

They are a great read for anyone who appreciates a good story, well told.

Kathleen Lauder
Cambodia Country Director (Ret.)
World Renew

Perhaps we work too hard searching for beauty and meaning in renowned galleries. Carol Van Klompenburg points us in another, simpler and far more accessible direction. That beauty and meaning is as near as our fingertips—in the everyday objects surrounding us. It's in a grandmother's crocheted purse or a bird house on the patio. In these simple, everyday objects, Carol hears a story, and teaches us how to hear one, too.

**Maureen Rank, Author of *Unbalanced:
Forsaking Balance for Budapest***

Carol Van Klompenburg's latest book *A World in a Grain of Sand: Lively Little Stories of Household Stuff* transforms the background of those ordinary objects now sitting in our homes and weaves them into wonderful anecdotes about everything from heirlooms and family memories to wooden shoes to cross-cultural moments and beyond. Divided topically into eight sections, the book is relatable, fun and easy to read, and sure to bring back some memories of its own.

Ann Visser, Retired journalism adviser, freelance journalist

Reading Carol's columns and short essays, I always enjoy her ability to find a fascinating topic where others might simply turn away without seeing something of interest.

Helen Boertje, age 91, Author of *When One Room Fits All*
Former columnist in multiple publications
Her current writing appears frequently on Facebook

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Our possessions hold memories. Carol's vignettes about treasured items in her life made me pause, look at the material things left to me, and remember the people who bequeathed them. That sparked joy!

Valerie Van Kooten

Administrator

State Historical Society of Iowa

This winsome book of “little stories” by Carol Van Klompenburg reminds us anew that household objects are never just meaningless “stuff.” A weaving in memory of a stillborn child, an old scarred-wood piano, a glass mobile in a window above an entry — each item in this book tells a story, and affirms that life, even amid human brokenness and loss, offers us beauty and joy.

Hugh Cook, Author of the novel *Heron River*

Freelance editor of fiction books (www.hugh-cook.ca)

Carol Van Klompenburg has written a delightful book. She provides readers with 52 short stories about some of her special belongings and the memories they bring. Anyone could enjoy spending a quiet afternoon taking this journey down memory lane with her or thinking about their own special belongings; I certainly did.

Dr. Janice Walton, Author of

***Aging Well: 30 Lessons for Making the Most of Your Later Years* and a Substack newsletter with the same name**

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Carol's memories. I like her writing style, especially her clever and uncanny way of relating them to life as we get older. She has a very pleasant way of recalling and describing past events. Then she relates them to everyday life with appreciation, good humor, and often candid reminders. I spent the last twenty years of my working life serving senior citizens, and I found Carol's writing spot on.

Bruce Nikkel, Executive Director of Bethany Home Society of San Joaquin County, Ripon, CA, 1987 – 2004

These are wonderful stories of family memories, people and places, brought to life for current and future generations to enjoy.

Jan Webber, Retired assistant to the director of the Center for Academic Excellence at Central College

Frequent email responder to these stories when they appeared as weekly newspaper columns

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Carol Van Klompenburg lets us in on the stories behind the objects inhabiting her home and life—objects she has chosen, cherished, and retained even through downsizing. Each has a unique meaning for her. In telling you those meanings through quick and very readable chapters, she also reveals her interests and values. Readers will recognize they too have objects in their lives that they retain as reminders—sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle—of who they are and what is important to them.

Bob Hutzell, PhD, Retired Clinical Psychologist

In *A World in a Grain of Sand*, Carol masterfully reveals the richness of life, the power of story, the courage of memory, and the intensity of emotional experiences that can be recalled in both the special and ordinary items gathering dust around our homes. What a delightful collection of anecdotes—I read it cover to cover and absolutely loved it!

Dr. Christy Berghoef, author of *Cracking the Pot: Releasing God from the Theologies that Bind Him*

Author Carol Van Klompenburg invites us into the heart-stirring space of nostalgia. Remember when Grandma was alive—or our favorite uncle? Van Klompenburg walks us through our histories by telling the story of our relics—from that six-inch figurine from when Dad played church ball to the Victorian-style doilies crocheted from our great-aunt's arthritic fingers. Our relics—our “stuff”—are story-rich. And being reminded of this truth is the gift of Van Klompenburg's book, *A World in a Grain of Sand*.

Cynthia Beach, author of *The Surface of Water: A Novel and Creative Juices for Writers*, 2nd edition

Carol has lovingly captured the associations that her everyday belongings carry. Some of these stories are nostalgic; some are heart-wrenching; some made me laugh out loud. They prompted me to think about the stories in the items I've chosen, for reasons beyond practicality, to keep in my life.

**Anne Petrie, Professor Emerita of Music at Central College
and professional copyeditor**

A World in a Grain of Sand

Lively Little Stories of Household Stuff

Carol Van Klompenburg

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Dedication

To those who create beauty around the globe
and
To those who pass on stories to coming generations

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to:

Those who went before me and preserved and passed on their household treasures and their stories,

Readers who responded to my columns with encouragement and their own stories,

My long-term writing group members, Bob Hutzell and Anne Petrie, for their suggestions and thoughts in response to early drafts,

Doug Calsbeek, Sarah Weber, and Kyle Ocker, the newspaper editors who first saw the potential in lively little stories of household stuff,

Kate Hoksbergen, for transforming my thoughts about cover design into a work of art,

Anne Petrie, freelance copyeditor, who converted my text from newspaper style to book style and suggested other improvements along the way (any remaining errors are mine),

And my husband Marlo, who remains my first reader as I work and play with words and stories.

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Preface

“It is only stuff,” people sometimes say when they comfort themselves following a house fire or a smashed knickknack. But that statement is not totally true. Treasures have tales. They spark memories and stories.

My possessions are grains of sand in which I see a wider world. The wall hangings, pictures, pottery, surrounding me at home provide pleasure. I enjoy their beauty. Sometimes, confronted by news of poverty, I feel guilty about that pleasure.

My household belongings evoke memories of events, experiences, and friendships. They remind me of the past and of how my world has both changed and remained the same.

These days, I own less stuff. In 2020 my husband Marlo and I downsized and parted with one-third of our possessions. We selected furniture by asking what would appropriately fit into our smaller space. We decided on smaller items using the question: Does it spark joy?

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After we settled in, as I enjoyed my new surroundings, I reflected on our past and present lives. I also thought of the future, even the future after I depart this earth.

Will my sons and their wives want our belongings? Probably not.

Will they feel guilty disposing of our possessions? Probably. At least a little.

I remember sorting my mother's treasure trove after her death: every card or letter she had ever received and carbon copies of many letters she wrote. *We cannot possibly keep all these*, I thought. I remember choosing from my parents' knickknacks, wondering *Why did they save this? What did it mean to them?*

When my siblings and I hoisted several loads of paper into a recycling bin and carried unwanted bric-a-brac onto a truck bound for a local thrift store, I felt sad—and a little guilty. *I wish I knew the history of this stuff.*

One day in 2023, as I sat at the dining room table, a new thought excited me. *I can write the anecdotes of my belongings for my children and grandchildren! And I can take pictures. Perhaps the stories will help them make informed decisions. Even if they choose to discard items, they will still have the photos and the tales.*

I walked through my home and garden and made a list of items with potential stories. Then I started writing them, one at a time. More items joined my list. I tested the pieces on members of my longstanding Pella Writing Group. To my surprise, they loved those tales and thought other readers would also be intrigued.

To test my group's opinion. I sent samples to several newspaper editors, proposing a weekly column, *It Has a Story*. The editors said yes! The columns began appearing each week in newspapers in Orange City, Oskaloosa, and Ottumwa, Iowa.

As the columns appeared, reader responses amazed me. One reader emailed me to provide her opinion about what an antique figurine might have originally held in its empty hands. Another thanked me for providing hope for parents of stillborn children. One couple wrote me their differing napping habits matched my husband's and mine. When a newspaper failed to run the accompanying photo for an African soapstone carving, a reader emailed to ask me to send her a digital photo of it. My grandmother's frugality impressed someone else. The reader observed that raising eleven children during the Great Depression was no easy task.

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I also used columns for group presentations. When I performed selected columns for clubs and church groups, audience members told me they turned first to my column when they opened their weekly paper.

The complete stillness in a crowd after I finished a poignant tale told me the listeners' hearts had been touched. So did the tears in my brother's eyes during a family reunion, when he read the story of our grandmother's purse.

Many responders requested I keep writing. I did.

By mid-2024, I had written fifty-two little stories about my household stuff, enough for a year of columns and for a book. For newspaper publication, columns appeared just as I wrote them—in random order. For book publication, they are organized under topic headings, although many could fit several categories.

When I finished column fifty-two, I realized writing them had given me a gift. I appreciated my belongings even more than before starting to write. "It's just stuff" has become less true for me. After all, I mean the words I sing at Sunday morning worship: "This is my Father's world." His world includes the work of artists and artisans along with the world of human bonds and behaviors.

As the eighteenth-century poet William Blake wrote in the first two lines of *Auguries of Innocence*, as I wrote I began

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower

In providing this collection as a book, I hope:

- *A World in a Grain of Sand* becomes one of the beloved belongings of my descendants;
- the anecdotes help all readers see the larger world in their own grain-of-sand possessions and appreciate them even more;
- and readers will share some of their own lively little stories with their children and grandchildren.

With hope,
Carol Van Klompenburg
Fall 2024

Section A:
Heirlooms and Family Memories



1 Ancestor Collages

Twenty years ago, I created a pair of ancestor photo collections. My husband Marlo matted and framed them, and they now hang in our entry hall. One collage (above, on the left) houses Marlo's ancestors; the other displays mine. Each collection begins with our great-grandparents at the top, our grandparents in the middle section, and our parents at the bottom—three generations from each side of our family.

About my great-grandparents we know very little. They are shadowy figures with just a few enduring legends apiece. My maternal great-grandmother Hurmana Kiel died in childbirth, and her newborn daughter was raised by an aunt. Great-Grandpa Kiel continued to live at his home with his other children. When his son John married my grandmother, Great-Grandpa Kiel moved in with them.

One legend says his two youngest children also moved in with my grandparents. The other version says he moved in by himself. The family story, however, is very clear on this: he was a difficult man to live with. My Grandma Kiel said he was her schooling in patience. He was quick to anger, and he was dirty. He frequently tracked mud and manure onto my grandmother's clean floors.

My maternal Huisman great-grandparents lived into their nineties, and I have faint memories of them as looking ancient and speaking

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Dutch. Early in their marriage Great-Grandpa Huisman had a falling out with the church, and from then on Great-Grandma Huisman attended worship services without him, taking her children with her. She eventually birthed and transported all eleven of them to Sunday worship.

Marlo, the youngest child of three, never met any of his great-grandparents. However, his cousin Roger Van Klompenburg researched the family tree and discovered Great-Grandma Greitje Van Klompenburg was widowed in the Netherlands. She immigrated to the United States with her four young children, then married USA widower Jacob Sinnema, the father of five. Eventually two of Greitje's daughters married two of Jacob's sons. We do not know if those step-sibling marriages created small scandals.

The only great-grandparent we know much about is E.J.G. Bloemendaal, Marlo's maternal great-grandfather who emigrated from the Netherlands to Iowa. He wrote *My America*, a book about his experiences, for people considering emigration. The book was originally written in Dutch and published in the Netherlands in 1911. Around 1965, his descendant Arnold Vander Wilt wanted an English version and asked northwest Iowa pastor Conrad Veenstra to translate it. Marlo inherited a dog-eared photocopy of that translation. In 2009 my company, The Write Place, republished that photocopy as a paperback book. *My America* provides us a detailed picture of E.J.G. Bloemendaal's life, values, and decisions as a Midwestern pioneer farmer. Marlo and I enjoy access to this insight into both his life and its broader picture of life as a pioneer in the Midwest.

We enjoy our ancestor photo collections, but we are sad we know little or nothing about our other great-grandparents. Our photo collections remind us that we are part of the flow of history. We have both ancestors and descendants. We see similarities in the faces of our great-grandparents, ourselves, and even our grandchildren.

The photo collections have motivated us to leave more complete records for future generations. In 2021, I wrote and published *Child of the Plains*, a paperback memoir about my childhood growing up in Orange City, Iowa. In 2022, Marlo completed *Looking Back*, a hardcover book with color photos. It included his ancestry, his childhood, and his adult life.

E.J.G. Bloemendaal didn't intentionally leave a written legacy. He wrote for his Netherlands contemporaries, encouraging them to emigrate. But it turned into a legacy for his descendants. Marlo and I have chosen the path that came accidentally to him—to leave a written

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legacy. We want to leave a few traces that we walked this earth. We loved and laughed and cried, and tried to contribute in some small way to the world's shalom.

When we pass on the photo collections, perhaps they will motivate our children to value and pass on their legacies as well.



2 Family Legends

My friend Mary treasures a slightly worn plate with an ornate alphabet inscribed on the rim, a plate she at first rejected. When her husband's parents, Bill and Bea, were decluttering, they gathered items they no longer wanted and asked their descendants to choose what they would like. When the choosing ended, Bill said sadly, "No one chose this plate. It was Harold's baby plate." Harold was his brother who had died from polio at age five.

"Oh!" said Mary. "I didn't know. Of course, I want Uncle Harold's plate."

She has displayed it in her living room ever since. Its story created its value.

Two crocheted white doilies perch atop pillows on my guest bed. Two orange carnival glass bowls sit on a shelf in my dining room. They have stories too. One doily and one bowl are from Grandma Kiel, the other two from Grandma Addink.

Grandma Addink's fingers, gnarled and knobby from rheumatoid arthritis, crocheted at the speed of light. In group gatherings, she compensated for her hearing loss by crocheting. She heard little of conversations. The less she heard, the more her fingers flew.

Grandma Kiel crocheted at a more relaxed pace, pausing from time to time to weigh in on the topic at hand.

Although they did Victorian-style handwork, neither grandmother was a dainty Victorian lady. They were Midwestern farm wives. Both of them helped butcher chickens, pigs, and steers, and they canned the meat. They preserved fruit from the orchard and vegetables from the

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garden. Crocheting was a way to bring low-cost beauty into a hardscrabble life.

Carnival glass brought beauty too. Known as the poor man's Tiffany, it was first created by Fenton Art Glass Company in 1908 as a way to bring beauty to lower-income homes. Glass was pressed into intricate scallops and cutouts. During manufacturing pieces were coated with a metallic salt, resulting in their trademark rainbow iridescence.

Fenton first tried to market the glassware at premium prices. That failed, so the company discounted it to carnival owners to give away as prizes, hoping to raise its visibility and popularity. That plan succeeded, and the product earned the nickname "carnival glass."

Both of my grandmothers' pieces are in the most popular color for carnival glass—a yellow-orange known as marigold. Since they are in the most common color and have no trademark embedded in their bases, their antique value is minimal.

I doubt that my thrifty grandmothers would have purchased these pieces. Grandma Addink married in 1910 and Grandma Kiel in 1914, so the timing would have been right for the bowls to be wedding gifts. I think it is more likely, though, that these bowls arrived later, perhaps as prizes brought home by sons whose accurate throwing skills won them at Midwest fairs or carnivals.

Grandma Kiel kept her carnival glass bowl, the smaller and lacier one, on a bedroom dresser for combs and hairpins. Grandma Addink kept hers in the curved-glass curio cabinet in her dining room.

Having gathered and written these bits of information, I have perhaps told more than I know. Already today, I am more sure of the details than I was yesterday when I was straining to recall them. And legends embroider facts.

In the coming days, when my children and grandchildren visit and I want them to have a sense of their heritage, I shall tell them the legend of the doilies and the carnival glass. And on that day, I shall be even more sure of its truth than I am today.

With each telling, our family legends gain credibility and power.



3 Boomerang Gifts

Two ceramic baking dishes perch on the glass-and-metal shelving in the corner near an oak table in our dining area. A brown bunny sits atop one dish, a pair of pumpkins atop the other. Hidden in a nearby cupboard drawer are a pair of mahogany plaques, a Delft Blue tile embedded in each. We purchased the casserole dishes; Marlo made the plaques.

What do they have in common? About four decades ago we carefully selected them as Christmas gifts for our parents. Both sets of parents lived in Orange City, Iowa.

We selected the baking dishes from the ceramics at Pella's Sunflower Pottery, owned by Bob and Connie Andersen. In contrast to most Pella residents, Bob and Connie fit the flower children stereotype, Bob with his salt-and-pepper beard and wire rims, Connie with her peasant dresses and long, frizzy-curly hair. (After four decades, however, I am no longer sure if her dresses and the hairstyle are facts or figments of my imagination.) Bob had earned a BFA from the University of Northern Iowa and was the potter; Connie helped with design and managed the business. They created a range of pottery, and we chose from the Regional Collection, rather than the more funky Organic Collection. The Regional Collection was definitely Midwestern, with its animal and farm themes, and was especially suited to our parents' Iowa kitchens. We thought the dishes would bring a bit of beauty and pleasure to their dining rituals.

We assured our parents that the pottery was oven and dishwasher safe, but neither mother ever used her dish for baking or serving food.

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My mother placed it on a lace runner atop her dining room table, and later flanked it with the two Sunflower Pottery mugs we gave her. Marlo's mother set her dish in an honored place on her kitchen counter, and there it stayed.

To make the plaques, Marlo cut sixteen-inch wooden squares from a chunk of mahogany, drilled hanging holes, and then routed and varnished the wood. He inlaid antique Delft tiles he had bought at a Belgian flea market. The plaques were designed to decorate walls, and these did achieve their intended use in both of our parents' homes.

In the decades that followed, the Andersens moved from Pella to Connie's Iowa hometown, Kalona. They added other product lines, but the Regional Collection remained their most popular. We raised three sons and became empty nesters. Our parents aged and then died. The baking dishes and plaques became boomerang gifts: they returned to whence they had come.

After boomeranging, neither the pottery or the tiles are used in their intended fashion. The pottery, we now agree with our mothers, is too beautiful to use, so it is home decor on our glass-and-metal shelving.

The work of a professional potter has endured better than that of an amateur carpenter. The Delft sprang cracks over the years—perhaps from age or perhaps from pressure from wood shrinkage. We now use the Delft plaques as trivets—protecting our tables from hot pans and casserole dishes.

I like to think that when both items graced our parents' homes, our mothers and fathers glanced at them from time to time and thought fondly of us. I know that now the pottery and Delft have been returned to us, we do the same.



4 Grandma's Cookie Kettle

The ceramic cookie kettle that first belonged to my grandmother has a cracked lid, carefully glued so that the mending barely shows. I don't know who mended it—not my grandfather because he was no longer living when that cookie kettle arrived at my grandmother's house.

It was a Christmas gift from my parents after she was widowed. A family photo shows her sitting on our floral couch, the black cookie kettle on her lap, the box and wrapping paper next to her. She had joined us for our family's annual exchange of gifts.

To the best of my memory, she accepted the gift graciously, but I have no memory of her using it. Her traditional thin-as-wafers sugar cookies always came from much larger two-gallon glass jars. Having

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raised eleven children, she did not know how to make small batches of anything, and with fifty-one grandchildren, she still needed an ample supply.

I don't think she used the kettle, but she didn't dispose of it either, not even after the lid had cracked. I know this because my mother inherited the cookie kettle after grandma had died.

Grandma believed in saving everything, including wooden cheese boxes and rubber bands, and she reused aluminum foil. Although her cookware was old, stained, and dented, she did not believe in new pans. When her children pooled their money and bought her a new set of pots and pans, she refused the gift and made them return it. Her old set was good enough. It still worked, and she would not let her children waste good money on a new set. One of my aunts told me that story with chagrin in her voice. Secretly I smiled, admiring grandma's frugality. Grandma must have softened over the decades because she accepted a cookie kettle which she probably knew she would not use.

For my mother, the family frugality was revealed in her table service. Seeing the bent handles and the scratched surfaces of her table service, my siblings and I pooled our money and bought her a new set of tableware. She didn't ask us to return it. However, she put it on a hard-to-reach shelf and continued to use the old tableware, saving the new set for special occasions—which never came.

My kitchen frugality displays itself in the sherbet dishes from the 1950s, inherited from my parents. It's an unmatched collection of three different designs, which I suspect my parents found on one of the Orange City garage sales they frequented. Several of the dishes have chips out of their rims. Before using them, I inspect them for further chips and fragments of glass, wincing slightly as I picture a fragment of glass making its way into my mouth and either chipping a tooth or cutting the lining of my stomach or intestines. I suppress the thought, inspect the dishes, and use them anyway.

When my husband and I downsized a few years ago, the people from whom we bought the house emailed us photos of a set of Pfaltzgraff dishes they no longer wanted. Would we be interested in the dishes if they simply left the set in the house? I responded with a resounding yes. I could upgrade my faded Corelle dishes and be frugal too. A double win.

When we moved, I disposed of my faded Corelle dishes, but kept the sherbet dishes. The Pfaltzgraff set had nothing similar.

Looking at my grandmother's cookie kettle and thinking of how she softened over the years, I think again of those chipped sherbet dishes

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which I use with trepidation. Perhaps I shall dispose of them and use the Pfaltzgraff bowls instead.

On second thought, I shall keep the intact ones and dispose only of those with the dangerous chips.



5 Rescuing a Milk Can

On the floor in our den, next to the television, stands a five-gallon metal milk can. Marlo bought it as a memento of his childhood on his father's farm sale about fifty years ago. The milk can reminded me of my childhood on the farm as well.

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It stood in our garage for a few months. Then I removed the lid, set a pot of Swedish ivy in the top, and moved it to our living room. A few years later, I put the lid back on and painted it with a simple antique look, a fad at the time.

When there was no space for it indoors, I moved it to our open front porch where it rusted in the rain and humidity. Marlo's mother winced at the crusty patches. I had become oblivious to its deterioration, but she liked things to look just right.

Then she thought of a solution. "Would you mind," she asked hesitantly, "if I took it back with me to Orange City and asked Joyce to paint it?"

We didn't mind at all. In fact we liked the idea. Joyce Bloemendaal was a long-term acquaintance married to Marlo's cousin, and we had seen samples of her beautiful Hindeloopen-style painting. Another Dutch-themed item in our home would be just fine.

Marlo's mother returned the milk can to us, transformed. Its rust had disappeared and Joyce had beautified it with Hindeloopen. We set it in our new sunroom, which had replaced the open porch.

Hindeloopen is a folk-style painting style, first created by Dutch sailors living in the village of Hindeloopen in the early 1600s. The painting, typically blues, greens, and reds, provided an alternative income when work on the seas dwindled. The sailors imitated the Rosemaling folk painting they had seen on their voyages to Norway, complete with scrolling leaves and dainty flowers.

I had learned about Hindeloopen when I interviewed Sallie De Reus, a Norwegian transplant to Pella who did both Rosemaling and Hindeloopen painting. I admired Sallie's work, but interviewing her did not result in my immediate purchase of Hindeloopen. It did, however, result in a gazebo studio.

When I had met with Sallie, she took me to see her studio—a tiny shed on the yard of the De Reus farm. She regularly left her house to paint there. I didn't envy Sallie's artistic talent because I did not aspire to be a painter. But I did envy her studio. How wonderful it would be to escape to a studio when I wanted to write!

I mentioned my envy of Sallie's studio to my husband Marlo. Later, when we replaced our warped front door and our sliding glass doors for energy efficiency, Marlo remembered my comment. He could reuse the five sliding glass doors as giant windows along with the warped front door for a gazebo. A friend offered us two more used patio doors. Marlo could now create an eight-sided gazebo in our backyard. It would work

A World in a Grain of Sand

as a greenhouse in the spring, and for the rest of the year it could be my studio.

Months later, Marlo completed the gazebo and vowed never to build a structure that complicated again. I reveled in a studio where I could escape to write. We hung a hammock in it and put in a desk and chair. On warm days, I opened the windows and enjoyed the breeze. On sunny winter days, the passive solar heat from the cement floor brought the temperature in the gazebo up to seventy degrees.

When I carried my laptop into the gazebo, an instant studio surrounded me. I could look out all seven windows and the windowed door panel and write—using a notebook in the hammock or the laptop on the desk.

Marlo and I have downsized to a smaller home, so I no longer have the gazebo. The Pella library has become my getaway studio instead. The milk can, its Hindeloopen still pristine, sits in our den. It has become a many-windowed link to the past.

These days I see in it not only our childhoods on the farm, but also Sallie, Joyce, and my mother-in-law. All three women appreciated beauty, made space for it in their lives, and have inspired me to do the same.

A WORLD IN A GRAIN OF SAND

As older adults survey their belongings, they wonder what will happen to these possessions after they die. Will they be treasured or trashed? Will the precious memories and stories evoked by these possessions vanish from the earth?

A World in a Grain of Sand offers fifty-two lively little stories about beloved belongings. These tales of treasures are both deeply personal and amazingly universal. They revel in beauty, celebrate friendships, and mourn loss.

As readers turn pages, they can laugh, lament, and remember with author Carol Van Klompenburg.

They can reflect on their own stories and memories. They might even be inspired to write a few similar stories of their own.



About the Author

Carol Van Klompenburg has worked with words and stories for over four decades. (If you count her first-grade poetry prize, that duration is longer.) She has published thirteen books.

The first of these was a nominee for the Christianity Today Book of the Year Award.

Her articles, short stories, and poems have appeared in books and periodicals, as well as in her weekly columns in newspapers. She has also taught high school and college writing, conducted writing seminars, and launched a writing service for businesses.

