

## *In Praise Of Objects That Need Care*

August Heckscher

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"Maintenance free." That is the advantage cited for many of today's products. Not to have to repair, refurbish, repaint, or upkeep is considered a supreme virtue.

But I'm not so sure.

Last year I sold a treasured old wooden boat in order to buy a new one made of fiberglass. My friends congratulated me on doing a wise thing, but I began to wonder as spring came around.

When that earlier boat emerged from winter quarters, her bright-work gleaming and her old wooden sides aglow with fresh paint, I would be carried away with joy at the sight. The pleasure was not repeated when I took over my little fiberglass vixen, her face fixed in a rigid, unchanging smile.

The point is: I really enjoy the extravagance of upkeep. It is certainly more rewarding than buying something new, or possessing something theoretically impervious to wear and tear.

We, ourselves, change as the years pass. The objects around us should also change gracefully, as we would like to do; the encrustations of age smoothed over and the weaknesses inconspicuously redressed. Things that don't change, stare uncomfortably at their owners, then suddenly stop working and become useless.

Acknowledge the pleasure of maintenance, and all sorts of secondary rewards open up.

Not enough has been said about the kind of people in the trades of refurbishing and repair. They tend to be old and wonderfully articulate. As I go forth, with a chipped platter or ailing clock, I am likely to find myself face to face with understanding human being, who knows what the trouble is. And the job is accomplished- along with many salutary remarks on the state of the world.

It is all well to create, and to recycle, but nothing excels being able to keep the original object, aging but not forsaken.