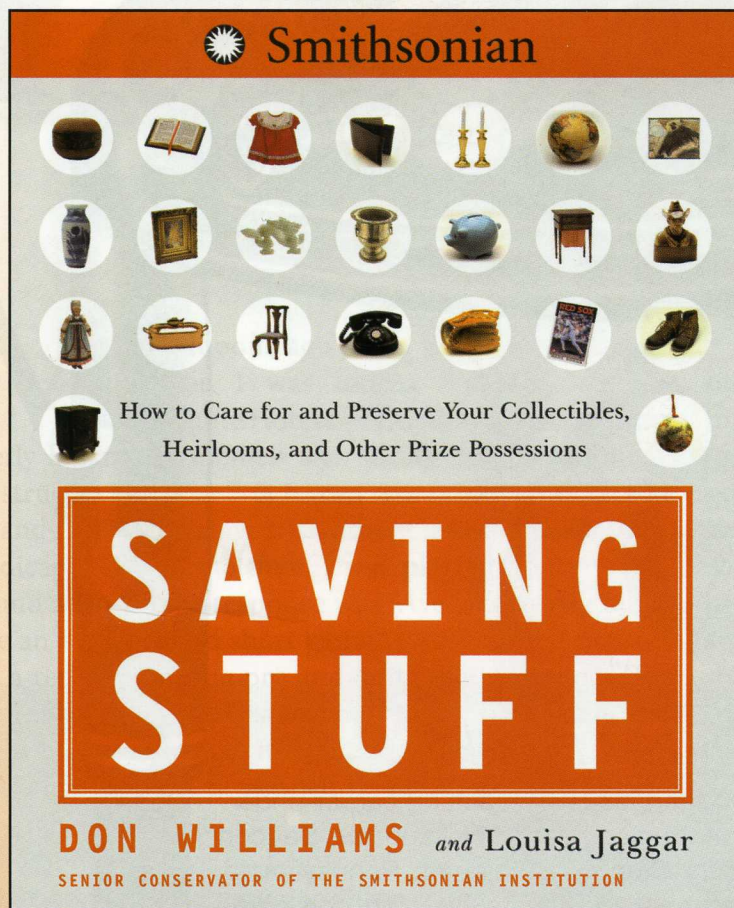


# Preserving for



*Williams' title -- senior furniture conservator at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum Conservation Institute-- can't convey his broad interests, almost all of which revolve around the history and preservation of anything ever made for human use, whether that be early wood airplanes or boule, the delicate metal and tortoise shell inlays used in 17th-century furniture.*

Williams also knows all about preserving the simple things many of us value most: snapshots, the kids' artwork, souvenirs collected on trips, and the furniture and fabrics we live with every day.

"Saving Stuff," is the title of Williams' 2005 book on how to preserve almost anything, and the basis for some of his public lectures.

"There are a few simple rules for preventing damage to what you own, and they all work together," Williams says by phone from Virginia, where his wife and daughters share space with his massive collection of rare tools and books and 24 varieties of shellac.

He says the biggest threat is moisture. All organic materials can be damaged by it. Too much or too little humidity, or too many swings between high and low, can cause deterioration not just to wood, but to books, documents, photographs, fabrics, leather and almost everything else organic. Only metal and stone are not affected.

"Humidity can actually desiccate the emulsion of a photograph or cause wood veneers to become detached," Williams says. "The only way to prevent that is to put your possessions in an environment where the humidity doesn't change."

He suggests that homeowners research the average relative humidity for where they live and try to keep their homes at that level all year long. A heating and air conditioning contractor can help, he says.

Light poses another threat, fading the finishes on wood and fabrics, natural or synthetic. The fix is a no-brainer, Williams says. Use shutters, drapes, shades or window film, and lower the wattage of bulbs.

Heat also can cause chemical deterioration of furniture.

"The warmer the air, the faster the reaction," he says. Every time the indoor temperature rises 18 degrees, the deterioration rate doubles, meaning your house's



