



PDX for families.



The Last Diaper Pail

Metro Parent, Your Baby and You, 2005-2006
Kids Vermont, May 2006

By Gigi Rosenberg

The diaper pail sat by the front door for two months. The yellow "Post-it" note on it read: "Drop off at Goodwill." But I never got around to it. Then last week, a charity called offering to retrieve any second-hand goods right from my front door. So, how could I refuse? My daughter is seven now. I'd been tripping over her old diaper pail for years.

Yet, on the morning of the scheduled pick up, I stood staring at the white and turquoise Graco pail, unable to lift it, walk five feet through the front door, and place it on the porch. Instead, I wanted to shove it back into the basement and hide behind the couch when the pick-up man rang the doorbell. Every time I relinquish my daughter's baby things, it's agony. After I sold her crib, I ached for days. Now, I wanted it all back: the bassinet, the swing, the changing table, the hats and booties, everything I gave away until the last item left was this smelly pail.

What did I really want back? Did I want my daughter's babyhood back? I remembered the infant days; I couldn't wait for my daughter to grow older. With each step she took, I got more of my life back. First there was pre-school and I had some mornings and then a playdate and I had two hours and then kindergarten and I had until two p.m. I love being a mother and I also love living for small stretches on my own grown-up terms.

This past August, when I'd planned to be home with my daughter full-time, I saw the

month like a movie trailer in my mind: wide shot of she and I running through fields of peaches. Pan to a close-up of me biting a peach and juice squirting in her eye. Cut to us giggling as we load boxes of peaches into the car before heading home to make pie.

I longed to be the mother I imagined some mothers to be, the kind who actually make pies for a month. I never knew these mothers personally; I only glimpsed them across the playground, in soft focus, their silky tendrils of hair and patient smiles.

Because the truth is by the time I remembered it was peach season, the peaches were bruised and overripe in the fields and my daughter was screaming as she fled the wasps. I couldn't wait for her first day of school.

Then, it arrived.

As my husband and I walked her to the new school where she didn't know anybody, I wanted to yank her back home. We hovered as she slid her crayons into her desk. As the other children colored, my daughter stood like a soldier. Then I realized we were the only parents left in the classroom so I hugged her goodbye for the umpteenth time and watched her relax into her chair and join the coloring. I want my baby to grow up and I don't want my baby to grow up. I am forever teetering on this edge, accepting the newness and clinging to old diaper pails like they were filled with gold. Sitting by the front door next to that pail, I recalled the last time this charity came to my door. We were donating some of my daughter's outgrown clothes. She was helping me sort them. I held up a pair of worn Mary Jane shoes.

"These don't fit anymore, do they?"

"Too tight," she said.

"Let's get rid of them," I said, and flung them into a brown grocery bag.

"Wait!" my daughter said, fishing the shoes out of the bag. While I launched into a speech about the importance of charity, she picked up the shoes and hugged them into her chest. As she rocked the shoes in her arms, I finally shut up.

"Bye, bye shoes," she said. "Bye, bye." Then, she dropped them into the bag and skipped away. Now I knew what I needed to do.

I stood up and hugged the pail's cold plastic into my body.

"Bye, bye," I said at last. "Bye, bye diaper pail."

I set it on the front porch and went inside.