Treasured Lady Aunt Jemima

Marriage was an adjustment for Randy and me. Divorced and single for many years, we both enjoyed our private space. Thankfully, we had the foresight to sell our homes and begin married life in neutral territory. We bought a house in Ann Arbor and blended our households. The move led to discussions of where to place our personal belongings.

"Where do you suggest we display your little lady, Randy? There are many choices: the bookshelf, the niche, or an end table. Whatcha think?"

"Mom always put her on a kitchen counter. She is about the size of a saltshaker. Can we put her by the stove? She won't be in the way, and we can watch over her."

Randy related how his mother treasured the cast-iron figure of Aunt Jemima, who was often pictured on a pancake box during his growing-up years.

His mom loved how Aunt Jemima looked, including her blue bandana with white polka dots that held her hair in place and a large chef's apron that covered her snappy red dress with a wide-flowing white collar. She thought the beaming smile on her flour-spattered face was most engaging.

Aunt Jemima provided a safe place to save coins. Katie, Randy's mother, kept a stash of singles on a top shelf in a kitchen cabinet and regularly deposited dimes into the iron lady but never emptied the bank. Katie was a thrifty woman who amassed every dime and dollar she

could and prompted her two boys, especially Randy, to save, save, save. She asked, "Any dimes in those tips from your paper route?"

It wouldn't be hard to remove the screw in the lady's butt and open it to see the bevy of cash. Who knows, maybe there's a rare dime worth thousands of dollars.

The significance of the cast-iron figure to the Yake family is of far more value than her monetary worth. Even though I think of having her refinished, I stop because I know it might diminish her worth. But, alas, she will remain untouched and worn, just as she has been for many years. I expect the lady will remain just as she is, full of coins, to be inherited by another Yake who will treasure her as much as Randy and I have during our many years of marriage.