



Some of this and a little of that

* Two friends have confided that they have almost all their Christmas shopping completed. I, on the other hand, am nearly finished with my back-to-school purchases.

* Kurt, the third grader who lives next door, has been writing his father's name instead of his own on the top of his various classroom papers. When his teacher finally penned a query back as to whether he'd changed his name, he explained he just wanted to see if she were on her toes.

* Speaking of teachers, my favorite so far this year is the one who jocularly calls herself a "library media expert" because the term "librarian" conjures up a vision of a little old lady with glasses and this particularly young woman says she doesn't ever plan on being "one of those."

* When it comes to eating at our house we have a semantics problem. The youngest will eat oatmeal but only if it is referred to as porridge, à la the three bears. Her father will not touch meatloaf until

it is molded into certain shapes and called meatballs.

* Fall, among other things, means that soup weather is once again with us. In preparation for it we have been buying the big one-handed soup mugs one at a time and all in different patterns.

The variety encountered in the soup mugs reminds me of my bachelor days when I set up housekeeping with a hodge-podge of dishes that Mom had cast off, plus finds at garage sales, antique shops, etc. My favorite place setting comprised a blue willow patterned cup a friend donated and a chipped dinner plate covered with rambler roses, a survivor of the set my parents began housekeeping with. Meals definitely seemed more of an adventure then.

Just in case we'd forgotten that autumn has its own glory, the purple chrysanthemums in the neighbor's front yard, the red-leaves of the dogwood all around us and the striking orange berries of our own pyracantha serve to remind us that summer's end is not the finish to nature's splendor.

The special lessons, along with school, have started. Music, swimming and dance — for starters. Now that I have some free time I plan to enroll in a few classes I've been promising myself: guitar, conversational Italian and auto repair.

I have been reading up on some of the fashions for fall. As I see it I have several options: don culottes and go gaucho, borrow my husband's vested suit and buy a fedora, or pull down the flowered bedroom curtains and make a matching peasant skirt, apron and babushka. Actually I lean toward jodhpur and ascot, but our town zoning laws forbid keeping a horse in the backyard.

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