

Elephants are the largest living mammal, and have three living species – Savannah, Forest, and Asian. White elephants are considered holy in Thailand, and Ganesh, the god of wisdom in Hindu, has an elephant's head.

## Too Much of A Good Thing

I don't remember smelling the scent of fresh-baked cookies when visiting my grandmother. I don't remember most of the photos on display. I couldn't tell you the color



of her walls or the number of rooms she had, but one thing that always stuck in my mind was the parade of porcelain and glass elephants that she kept close to the front door of wherever she lived.

The elephants became a familiar and warm welcoming committee. They were the first thing I gravitated to after kissing my grandmother on the cheek and entering her domicile. This gentle beast was my grandmother's favorite animal and she would tell me tidbits of information on all the gifts she had received throughout the years. As soon as I could afford to buy my own gifts for her, I searched for interesting elephant offerings.

The first was an Asian-sculpted elephant figurine in a sitting position. He reminded me of a jolly Buddha, only as a pachyderm. He earned a place among the original gatekeepers of her home. My grandmother put him in the palm of her hand and said, "Look at his trunk. A large trunk means he is strong." Then, caressing the side of the figurine, she said, "It is good luck when the elephant's trunk is pointed upward."

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When you give a photo or a gift to my grandmother and it is put on display, it's like receiving an honor from the Queen of England. You have five children and four grandchildren vying for her attention and sometimes you feel a little left out. I've been lucky to see most of the gifts I have given my grandmother situated throughout her



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Still, online retail sales figures add up to only a fraction of figures for offline sales. This year, analysts expect online figures to reach just 3 percent of the \$217.4 billion seen in offline sales, according to the National Retail Federation. Online figures are up about 1 percentage point from last year, compared with an expected increase of about 5.7 percent in offline sales, according to the NRF.

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home. The living room is the highest honor bestowed upon your gift. If you are able to spy your gift on the fireplace mantle or the "elephant table," you know you have done well. To me, elephant earrings, pins, T-shirts and necklaces come and go, but the gifts

that provide daily reminders of your love are truly special.

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There are two other gifts that my grandmother has placed within her living room. The first was an elephant light. There was no shade or visible light bulb attached; you plugged in the elephant and from the top of his back, a soft golden light emitted through a decorative tortoise shell covering. He was placed on top of a side table, next to one of her couches. The second gift was a scene of sculpted roaming elephants within a glass-covered mahogany framed box. It was small enough to hang on your wall, which is where it was placed, close to the fireplace mantle.

For the past couple of years, elephants became a common gift-giving theme for my grandmother until one day she administered a proclamation. "And no more elephants!" were her exact words, clear and straight-to-the-point. She said this with a smile and half-chuckle in order to soften the bluntness of her

request. To this day, the parade of elephants has remained unchanged. As a family, we truly learned what it means to receive too much of a good thing.