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wagon, got back in, hung another and continued until she finished – a little slow – and dangerous!

Wanda also became acquainted with clotheslines at an early age. She told me how, when she was a child riding a horse around the back yard, the horse ran under a clothesline and flipped her backward onto the ground. She wasn't badly hurt, but that adventure taught her to avoid clotheslines when on a horse. Then, as an adult, she learned some basic "clothesline rules" and facts which she wants to share with you. They are:

1. Don't hang clothes any day except Monday unless you have a baby in diapers – and never on Sunday!
2. Clean the clothesline before hanging clothes. Walk the length of each line, swabbing it with a damp cloth.
3. Hang the clothes in a certain order – always whites with whites and hang them first.
4. Hang the sheets and towels on the outside lines, hiding your "unmentionables" in the middle. (This was an early-day rule made when women's undergarments were not to be seen – the days before "shocking" underwear ads appeared in newspapers and magazines).
5. To be efficient, arrange the clothes so that each piece barely overlaps the next, thereby sharing a clothes pin.
6. Wire fences were a good place to hang small pieces when you ran out of clothesline.
7. Keep your eye out for thunder clouds, being ready to grab the clothes off the line before an afternoon shower got them wet again.
8. Gather the clothes well before dark – neatly folded in the clothes basket, ready to be ironed the next day.

A Clothesline Revival

By Bob Warren

WANT TO cut your electric bill? It's simple...let's use solar power. It's plentiful and free, so just pull the plug on your electric clothes dryer and string up a clothesline! But, before you start, you must know clotheslines may be illegal in your neighborhood, they can be dangerous and they can talk! – More about that later.

Some of you youngsters are asking, "What's a clothesline?" while others who grew up having to "hang out and bring in clothes" are saying, "I never want to see one again!"

I realize that starting a clothesline revival will be a hard sell to both the young and the older generations, but let's start with some history. The Internet gave me no clue as to the origin of clotheslines. So, for all we know, they have been around since cave-man days – maybe since the day Adam and Eve decided they needed to clothe themselves and started wearing

fig leaves or animal skins. They had to hang them somewhere to dry. Perhaps a grapevine rope strung between two trees in "The Garden" became the first clothesline.

Like many of you, I grew up knowing that, barring severe weather, Monday meant wash day. You didn't need a calendar. Before privacy fences blocked our view, a glance into any back yard revealed clothes flapping in the breeze, shouting, "It's Monday!"

Although I have experienced "hanging out and bringing in the washing," I went to some real experts, my wife, Wanda, and my daughter, Kay, to see what they remembered about clotheslines. Kay recalls, when she was only six years old and too short to reach the clothesline, being asked to hang her baby sister's cloth diapers out to dry. She put her little red wagon under the clothesline, got in it, hung one diaper, got down, moved the

Did you know clotheslines could “talk”? For those inclined to pry into their neighbors’ business, early-day clotheslines were message boards. There were few secrets when clothes were on the line. You could tell if there had been overnight company. That’s when fancy sheets, tablecloths and towels showed up. Lines announced the birth of a baby in the days of cloth diapers. You could “read” the ages of children by watching the clothing sizes change. Extra sheets, nightclothes and bathrobes meant illness had struck the family. When lines were bare on Monday, they said, “Gone on vacation,” then, sagging, over-full lines told the world, “We’re back!” Nosy neighbors judged people by how white their white clothes were. Dingy, gray clothes were to be scorned and whispered about.

No doubt, those were friendlier times when you knew your neighbor best by what hung on the line. But, before you decide to string up a clothesline, you need to know some of the pros and cons of solar drying.

First, the cons: Clothes have been known to freeze and break on the line and dust storms can leave clothes dirtier than before they were washed. Puppies like to pull down flapping clothes and kids playing hide and seek can wreak havoc with the sheets. Some complain that line-dried towels are stiffer than those tumbled in a dryer. Lastly, fussy neighbors may feel your flapping clothes are “unsightly” and report you to the authorities.

Some of the advantages of using clotheslines are: Whiter whites that smell fresher; you save electricity; you can use the exercise and fresh air and you get a free suntan. But best of all, our “Green Earth” advocates will love you!

Yes, clotheslines were a way of life in the early days. So do you think we can relax the regulations and have a clothesline revival?

Frisco native Bob Warren is an award winning humorist, historian and former Frisco mayor.





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