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Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

REMEMBERING MOM’S CLOTHESLINE

Carol Morrison, President of the Alpine Historical Society, recently received an e-mail with the following recollections of the clothesline—a relic of the past. The e-mail warned if you don’t even know what a clothesline is, better skip this! We thought it would be fun to share this with readers.

THE BASIC RULES FOR CLOTHESLINES

1. You have to hang the socks by the toes, NOT the tops.
2. You hang pants by the BOTTOM/cuffs, NOT the waistbands.
3. You have to WASH the clothesline(s) before hanging any clothes—walk the entire length of each line with a damp cloth around the line.
4. You have to hang the clothes in a certain order, and always hang “white” with “whites,” and hang them first.
5. You NEVER hang a shirt by the shoulders—always by the tail! What would the neighbors think?
6. Wash day on a Monday! NEVER hang clothes on the weekend, or on Sunday, for Heaven’s sake!
7. Hang the sheets and towels on the OUTSIDE lines so you could hide your “unmentionables” in the middle (perverts and busybodies, you know!).
8. It doesn’t matter if it is sub-zero weather, clothes will “freeze-dry.”
9. A long wooden pole is needed to push the clotheslines up so that longer items don’t brush on the ground and get dirty.
10. ALWAYS gather the clothes pins when taking down dry clothes. Pins left on the lines are “tacky.”
11. If you are efficient, line the clothes up so that each item does not need two clothes pins, but share one of the clothes pins with the next washed item.
12. Clothes must be off the line before dinner time, neatly folded in the clothes basket and ready to be ironed.
13. IRONED? Well, that’s another subject altogether!

And now a poem:

A clothesline was a news forecast,
 To neighbors passing by.
There were no secrets you could keep,
 When clothes were hung to dry.
It also was a friendly link,
 For neighbors always knew,
If company had stopped on by,
 To spend a night or two.
For then you’d see the “fancy sheets”
 And towels upon the line,
You’d see the company tablecloths,
 With intricate designs.
The line announced a baby’s birth,
 From folks who lived inside,
As brand new infant clothes were hung,
 So carefully with pride.
The ages of the children could,

So readily be known,
By watching how the sizes changed,
 You'd know how much they'd grown.
It also told when illness stuck,
 As extra sheets were hung,
Then nightclothes and a bathrobe too,
 Haphazardly were strung.
It also said, "On vacation now,"
 When lines hung limp and bare,
It told, "We're back!" when full lines sagged,
 With not an inch to spare.
New folks in town were scorned upon,
 If wash was dingy and gray,
As neighbors carefully raised their brows,
 And looked the other way.
But clotheslines now are of the past,
 For dryers make work much less,
Now what goes on inside a home,
 Is anybody's guess.
I really miss that way of life,
 It was a friendly sign,
When neighbors knew each other best,
 By what hung on that line.

Cute recollection, I think, although I'm kind of glad we are not judged any longer by whether or not our laundry is dingy!

Carol Walker and her husband Paul lived in Alpine for 19 years. Carol is the webmaster and newsletter editor for the Alpine Historical Society. She can be reached at cwalker@alpinehistory.org or 619-467-7766.

