

HOW GRANDMA DID IT - THE WAY IT REALLY WAS

Monday - Wash Day - It took all day for a family:

Build a fire with newspaper, corn cobs and wood.

Pump buckets of water and carry to fill the copper boiler on the kitchen stove.

Gather up the laundry - Strip the beds. Saturday night only baths do not leave clean sheets.

Rinse diapers and menstrual cloths.

Heat the water. Dip out enough to fill a tub three fourths full.

Lift the wash board off its nail and place it in the tub.

Get a bar of lye soap from the storehouse or unwrap a bar of P&G (Proctor and Gamble) soap from the store and put it on the board's soap rack.

Go to the pump again and carry water to refill the copper boiler.

If the water is from a well it will be hard water, so add lye to soften it. Stir vigorously with a strong stick, like a portion of a hoe handle. (Use this stick for a probe to stir and lift hot clothes later). Wait a few minutes. Skim off minerals. (If water was from the cistern, the water will be soft. Lye will not be needed.)

Shave a bar of lye soap, or a bar of P&G (Proctor and Gamble) soap, into the water.

Scrub every item of clothes separately on the board and wring them as dry as possible.

Carry tubs of cotton and linen items and put into boiler of boiling water, being careful to sort out woolen, for boiling water would cause them to shrink and mat. (No danger to nylon, polyester, etc. There was none.)

Dump the tub of dirty water far enough from the house that mud won't be tracked in. If there is no one to help carry the tub, you will have to use a bucket.

Go to the pump again and carry buckets of water to fill the tub with cold clean rinse water.

Add bluing to the rinse water so the whites will look whiter.

Carefully lift the hot clothes from the boiler into another tub. This is a step fraught with danger! Drain as much as possible, then place the clothes into the rinse water. Douse up and down until satisfied the soap is out. Wring as dry as possible and place in a basket. If the rinse water becomes too soapy, you may have to dump it and go to the pump and bring enough buckets of water to start a new rinse.

Prepare starch: measure out starch needed according to the number of shirts, dresses, aprons and linens to be starched. Mix into a paste with cold water. Add boiling water while you stir vigorously until the starch is clear and the thickness you desire. Douse each item to be starched and wring as dry as possible.

Pick up the apron or bag of clothespins and head for the clothes line with the basket of clothes, if it is not raining or snowing. If it is raining or snowing, find chairs, nails, clothes hangers, racks if you are fortunate enough to have racks, and any furniture over which you can drape as many as possible at a time and let them dry in the house.

If the sun is shining, get a wet cloth and wipe the line. It will be especially dirty if

there has been a dust storm, a brush fire or if there is a road or railroad near by.

Shake out each garment and hang as straight as possible, linking one to the other with one pin covering the hanging edge of them both.

If it is just clear freezing weather outside, go ahead and hang them on the line. They will freeze dry more rapidly than they would in just the wind.

When clothes are dry, carefully remove the clothes pins one at a time, dropping them into the bag or apron with one hand while capturing the garment that pin held in place in the other and carefully folding it into the basket - or drop it into the basket if it is below zero out there and fold it in the house later. Or just drop it in the basket. You will probably have to iron it anyway - maybe even sprinkle and roll it up before ironing it, so a few wrinkles now won't matter.

Tuesday- Ironing - It took all day for a family:

Sprinkle each garment or linen until just damp enough to iron. Roll up and arrange in basket or in a pillow case to allow the moisture to spread evenly through the items. (A plastic bag would have been wonderful, but there were no plastic bags!)

Build a fire in the stove. Of course it is hot in the house in July, but how else is your husband going to have that perfectly starched white collar when he goes up to preach, the rest of the family have unwrinkled clothes so you won't be ashamed of them, and you have smooth linens on beds and table and lovely crisp curtains at your windows?

Heat the irons - at least three of them if possible so one can be hot at all times needed. Iron every piece until dry and smooth.

Fold carefully or hang on a hanger, if fortunate enough to have hangers or a wardrobe in which to hang them. (There were no closets in most of the homes then.) If there is no place else to hang them, use a handy nail.

Toilet:

Grab a cover and make a run for it. If it is snowing, get a coat, scarf or hat and maybe boots, and you might need a snow shovel to get into the out house. If it is raining, get an umbrella or raincoat and rain hat and maybe boots or go bare foot. If it is night, put on a robe and whatever else the weather dictates. If it is a beautiful sunshiny, warm day, just be sure you are decent.

You may want to grab an old newspaper or a Sears Roebuck catalogue just in case the paper supply is dwindling. Be sure to avoid the slick pages and even the regular ones may need to be massaged between your hands until they soften before use.

If it is at night, take a light. There may be critters at home in the facility, and you will need to know where to sit anyway. A man or a child may have preceded you and left their mark! And you will need to know how full the vault is getting. If it is nearing the level of the seat, sit carefully or partially stand and make arrangements to empty it.

Bring up the horse drawn manure spreader. Tip the little house over backwards. Be sure it is not occupied at the time, and if some member of the family's cinema idols are displayed on it's walls, it might be wise to remove them

first just for safety's sake. Scoop the contents into the spreader and spread it on one of the outlying fields. It is not wise to put it on the garden where human diseases might contaminate the crop. Set the little house up again and equip it for use. A can of lime with a scoop makes it possible to keep the odor down some if used by the occupants after each trip.

Telephone:

That's that varnished wooden box on the wall with the funny projectile in the middle front with a black mouthpiece looking at you. Coming out of the right side there is a cord. On the end of it there is a sort of black bar bell with a sort of grate in the middle. That gadget hangs on a hook about 2/3 of the way up when not in use. That's the receiver. You listen through it. Right close to it there is a metal crank.

To make a call, take the receiver off the hook. Hold it in your left hand and turn the crank with your right. If you are calling in town or beyond, one long ring gets the operator who will connect you with the person you are calling. Here's a sample conversation: "Hello! Hello Claude! This is Bertha Mildred. I want to talk to Aunt Julia." "Sorry. Julia isn't home. She went to Martha's to help her can peaches this morning. Do you want me to call her there?"

If you are calling your neighbors on the same party line, one long and a short will get the Alma Nelson home. Two longs will get the Wilson's, two longs and a short the Hannah's, and so on. If you hear one of those rings that fits your home, pick up the receiver and yell into the mouthpiece. If it is not yours, but you are curious, just listen in quietly if you want to eavesdrop. Be careful, though. Sometimes people hear you breathing and resent that. You may be asked rather forcefully to hang up!

If there are six long rings, run to the phone quickly and find out what tragedy there is to report, who is injured or ill, what new show or evangelist is coming to town, who had a new baby, who is having a sale or what other news there is in the community to share.

If there is a storm, there is a great possibility you can't get any calls or call anyone with your phone. In that case, go out and follow the line until you find where it is down on someone's fence. If you get there first, take it off and set the pole up again. You may meet your neighbor running the line, too. It will be easier to set the pole up that way and you can have a face to face chat. In any case, service will be restored.

Mail:

In town each family had a box at the post office to which they made a trip every day when possible. In the country we had a mail carrier who drove the twenty five mile route daily with his horse and buggy. Stamps cost two cents the first I can remember. Mail was very important for it was the chief means we had of communicating with family, learning what was going on in the world, carrying on business outside the community, shopping for clothes, household items, and even some kinds of farm equipment. A Sears Roebuck catalogue was among the essentials in every home.

Illness or accident in the family - neighbors helped neighbors:

Pneumonia usually lasted about 6 months and, with my mother at least, the high fever took her hair along with her strength for that long a time, and emphysema developed as she grew older. Measles were feared because of the frequent devastating effect they had on eyesight and sometimes hearing. Their odor was horrible! Those with them or with other contagious diseases were quarantined. A bright red notice was posted on their door warning anyone who approached of the danger. In case of some diseases, as smallpox, no one was allowed to leave the home for work or for any other purpose. Only those who were away before the notice was posted were allowed to stay away. Smallpox and meningitis were especially known as killers, as was the flu of 1918! And every pregnant mother feared the German measles because of the damage it often did to babies. Blindness was a common result. Cindy Loving is one of those victims - blind for life.

Our doctor credited my sister with saving the life of a neighbor by preparing soup and oatmeal porridge for her daily and almost force-feeding them to her. In memory I can still see her running through the plowed field down the hill across the creek and through the fence to carry out her mission.

Mrs. Hudson churned butter every day for almost six months to provide my father fresh buttermilk for nourishment while my father lay bedfast. It was one of the few foods he could eat and enjoy. None of us had refrigeration to keep it fresh otherwise. She was never paid a penny for her work nor for the food.

Our entire family, with the exception of me, had smallpox. The quarantine sign was up and even the doctor could not come into the house. He looked at his patients through the window, and could do nothing but give me orders. I was very young. Almost daily there would be food on the cistern platform provided by some helpful family member, neighbor or friend, and they all had to come, some for miles, in a horse drawn conveyance or walk.

A bad cold took a mustard plaster for the chest and onion syrup for the cough. During the winter, the onion syrup was usually on the warming oven of the kitchen stove ready for use at all times. To make it, onion was sliced, covered with sugar and put on the warming oven. Moisture from the onion was drawn into the sugar forming a thick syrup that we then took by the spoonful when we had a bad cough.

A teaspoon of soda in a glass of water settled the queasy stomach and was sometimes taken at the first sign of illness. Soda was also the antidote for insect bites and bee stings. Vinegar had many uses, not the least of which was a conditioner for the hair after a "shampoo" with laundry soap.

Grocery Shopping:

Staples usually made up the grocery list - flour, sugar, crackers, cheese, sardines, P&G soap. I remember the joy with which we welcomed Dreft, our first experience with a detergent that did not leave a soap scum on everything washed in hard water. The shopping was usually done on Saturday night. We would load the buggy or the lumber wagon with the eggs and cream we had

saved through the week, drive to town where we knew we would see our neighbors and friends bringing their produce to the produce house, too. Then we could chat with them at the grocery store while the grocer gathered our order from the list we gave him. Almost all of the items were behind the counter. Only the grocer had access to them. There were no bags to hold our purchases. Small items were wrapped in newspaper and tied with string. We didn't expect to buy fresh foods. There was no refrigeration for them, and besides, we grew our own fruits and vegetables and canned or dried to preserve them.

Consecrated olive oil:

Among the members of the church, this was a standard medication, with faith. It was not at all unusual to see the Elders with an open bottle of the oil praying for the purification of the oil and the efficacy of its use in faith. And many are the testimonies of those who used it in faith. For ear ache, it was warmed and drops placed in the aching ear with cotton to shut out the air and keep the olive oil in place. For sore throats and upset stomachs, it was taken by the teaspoonful. For scrapes, lacerations and burns, it was applied topically. My mother's orthopedist used it on the open wounds that framed her shattered leg bones when his own medical skill was ineffective. Her bed sores also responded positively to its application.

Mother was in a very bad automobile accident, and it was determined that her leg must be amputated to save her life. When I arrived at the church's hospital in Independence, my brother, Dr. Norman Nelson, was just exiting the surgery saying, "We just piled the hamburger back in the wound and treated it with antibiotics until we can amputate." They couldn't amputate because Mamma's blood pressure went too low. Again and again they prepared to amputate and each time her blood pressure plummeted.

So Mamma's leg was placed in traction awaiting the time when she could be strong enough for the amputation. In traction, her body could not be rotated, and she developed severe bed sores. Everything that the doctor and nurses knew could be done was done with no effect until one day Mamma gained enough consciousness to murmur, "Try olive oil."

My sister, Lucy Land, was her nurse. She ran to the pharmacy and came back with a large bottle of olive oil which was soon consecrated by the Chaplain and applied to those horrible sores. Almost immediately they began to heal. So Lucy Marie decided that if consecrated olive oil was good for bed sores, it might also be effective on the open wound on her leg.

The wound on the leg extended from the knee to the ankle. It was not dressed, but lay open, exposing the shattered bone and the rotting flesh. The odor was so terrible that no one came near the room who did not have to be there, and people who had to come to that end of the hall left as quickly as possible. Near the middle of the leg we could see the splintered ends of the bone that now lay, one piece leaning at an angle over the other with no hope of ever fitting together. With the flesh sliced open as it was, there was a kind of trough on either side of the bone from ankle to knee. Into those troughs, nurse Lucy Marie poured

consecrated olive oil.

The next time Dr. Szabados came to check on his patient, he saw mamma wiggle her toes. Shocked that she could do that, he asked sharply, "What's going on here?" Lucy Marie explained how the olive oil had been used to heal the bedsores, so she had put some on the leg. "Here!" he said gruffly. "Let me have some of that stuff!" And he poured copious amounts up and down the troughs beside Mamma's bone. We watched as the slivered bone sloughed away and new bone formed in its stead. Mamma was in the hospital from May until September, but she came away with her leg healed, and she walked on that leg until the day she died, almost a decade later.

Church Attendance:

Grandma took her faith seriously, and so did Grandpa and the family. Preparation began Saturday night. Everyone had a bath. In the winter, the round, galvanized tub was placed as close to the heating stove as possible. A kettle of water was kept heating on the stove so hot water could be added after each bath to take the chill off the water for each occupant of the tub. The younger children were first to be bathed, and when the family had all had their baths, the water was saved and used to scrub floors.

All the Sunday shoes were cleaned, polished and set in a row ready to be donned in a hurry Sunday morning after the chores were done. The cows had to be milked, the hogs slopped, the chickens fed, and the horses harnessed and hitched to the wagon, carriage or buggy, if the family was fortunate enough to have such a conveyance.

Breakfast was simple, if there was breakfast. Fasting was practiced, especially on Communion Sundays. If it was winter, bricks or rocks were often heated on the stove ready to be wrapped in towels and placed between the blankets that covered the hay in the wagon for the children. Grandma and Grandpa rode on the spring seat, if there was a spring seat, or just on the board with cleats that held it in place near the front of the wagon. Their legs were covered or wrapped with heavy robes. On a good day, it was expected that they could make about a mile every 15-20 minutes.

Home again, the horses had to be taken care of while dinner was prepared. More often than not there was company or the family would go to someone else's home for dinner; but there were always chores to do at home before the services in the evening.

The trek was made again on Sunday night after the chores were done and a supper of bread and milk or leftovers from dinner was enjoyed.

Wednesday night the family all hurried to finish chores and get cleaned up as best they could, pile into the wagon and go again. Those night treks were memorable! The stars were often brilliant and with the constellations and cloud formations offered lots of opportunity for imaginative conversation, especially on the part of the children.

Twice a year our family had a special Sunday afternoon chore. When it was time to sell the hogs, they had to be taken to the rail yards on Sunday night to be shipped by train for the Monday morning market. To get them there, the whole

family had to drive the herd. For us it was about a 3 mile trek. A barrel of water was placed on a sled fitted with a single tree, and a horse was hitched to it. The children and hired hands, if there were such, ran ahead of the herd and guided them away from open gates, side roads and the like. Papa drove the horse and urged the hogs forward. The barrel of water was used to make a mud puddle in which any hog that got too hot walking could wallow and cool off. Otherwise the hog was in danger of dying. That, of course, would stop the procession and we all tried to avoid the tragedy by driving the herd slowly. That night, chores that could not be done early, or that Mamma could not get done alone, waited until after church. Mamma came later with the wagon to take us all home or followed close behind our lumbering procession ready to assist if an emergency developed. Of course, we all went to church as soon as the hogs were penned at the rail yards.

Prayer meetings were often in the homes. That was a joyous happening. When it was at the church, it was hard to hear the long prayers that were prayed by earnest petitioners, often kneeling between the rows of seats, their voices muffled by the seats and frequently by their tears. One of my most embarrassing moments was a night when I went to sleep during the service. I awakened undressing, thinking I was at home preparing for bed.

Living was different the way Grandma lived it. I lived it with Grandma. It had wonderful joys that cannot be duplicated in this modern, fast paced world in which we live. But for all that, I am not looking forward to returning to the way we did it then and pray we will be a righteous people who may be permitted to retain all that is good of the changes that have been made.