

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp

It was the plastic bag that first got the subject rolling.

Each summer about this time, our major seed corn supplier sends out to each customer a thank-you letter. Along with that note comes a gift of a large, sturdy plastic bag, decorated with brightly-colored advertising for the firm.

Those bags have come in handy

over the years, for everything from carrying in produce from the garden to lugging seashell treasures home from the shore.

"I can remember Mom keeping her sprinkled wash was in these bags, storing it in the refrigerator until the clothes were dampened through," mused the farmer as he examined the most recently

arrived gift bag.

"I used to do the same thing," I recalled. "Do you realize just how long it's been since I sprinkled a basket of wash?"

Fact is, I can't even remember when I last ironed some item of clothing, except maybe for pressing the seams and hem in some new garment hot off the sewing machine.

We are raising a whole generation of people who will never know the joy of standing over a hot iron in mid-August.

Funny, isn't it, how an item that one generation simply could not have existed without is laughable - or maybe collectible - to the next generation down the road.

How about butter churns, horse hames and hog scrapers, all once familiar items to routine rural household living: Or cream separators, shoe button hooks, wool carders, flax breakers, or the crank for starting the car?

And not only household items, but customs and fads constantly change with the marching of time.

For instance, have you ever

heard of "rats?"

Not those dirty, ugly, four-legged, skinny-tailed, grain-thieving beasts that sneak around the barn.

No, this is a kind of "rat" that was once used in milady's hair-do.

Grandma and I were chatting about hair-dos a few Sundays ago, as we tidied up our Sunday School classroom, when she mentioned that she and her teenage friends put "rats" in their hair.

It seems that young ladies in Grandma's day carefully saved those hairs that remain behind on a comb after they were finished styling their tresses. She also says that no one used brushes for their hair then.)

When a sufficient quantity of

those hairs had been accumulated, they were wrapped around a finger into a loose roll. That roll of hair or "rat" was then carefully tucked into a section of tresses which needed support, or fluffing, to look stylish. Sort of an alternate to teasing, I guess.

and, since using rats was considered somewhat vain, they were carefully concealed so that the outside help for the hair-do was not obvious.

After careful consideration, I've decided not to begin collecting those loose strands of hair to be saved toward the future when the fad of "rats" inevitably returns.

My hair looks "ratty" enough sometimes without any outside help.



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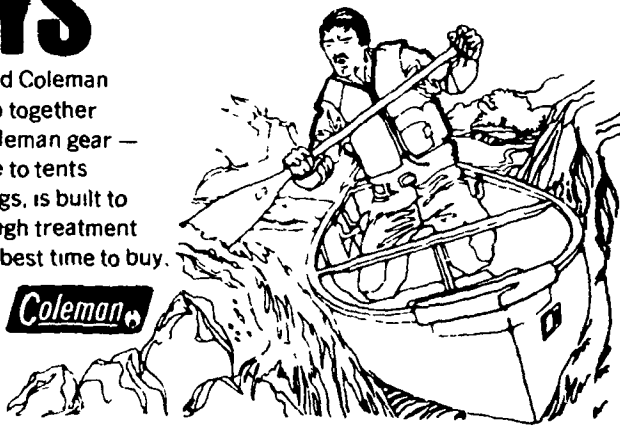
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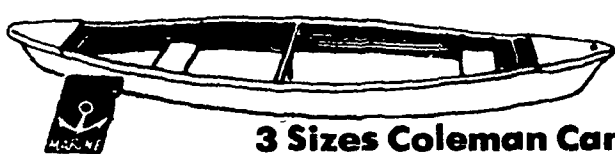
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