

## Gent on the Roof

(Continued from Page B2)

of a customer who carried wet wood in from the outside - and stacked it on top of the stove to dry out.

Neither wood, nor any other combustibles, should ever be stored close to the fireplace or stove, but rather at a spot at least several feet away. Clearances are also necessary between stoves and walls to prevent building material from catching on fire.

The first records of chimney sweeps date back to 1611, with the profession beginning in England, where multiple chimneys per house are a familiar sight on the skyline.

Sweeps then performed a menial, dirty, dangerous job, filled generally by poverty-level youngsters.

Since their clothing became so

grimy with chimney dirt, sweeps took to wearing wornout castoffs from undertakers, including the jaunty high-topped hat and long-tailed coat.

Many were apprenticed at age 8 or 10, and often let down through the chimney on ropes to sweep the soot from the insides. By their teen years, they were full-fledged business operators.

But by age 20, often they were dead, victims of related diseases including lung and testicular cancers. Daily bathing, of course, was almost unknown.

Today's sweeps are still prone to some job-related illnesses, such as lung, kidney and liver cancers. Klein regularly wears a respirator to reduce soot inhalation, and his clothing and gloves help cut down skin exposure. Regular checkups are part of his annual health routine.

Numerous do-it-yourself methods of cleaning chimneys have proliferated over the years, some of them with a humorous twist.

One reported method was to tie a rope to the legs of a goose, then let the goose down through the chimney. As the goose frantically flapped its wings, theoretically it dusted away the soot deposits.

Another method was to rattle and clank heavy chains up and down the inside of the chimney, knocking away the deposits. A side effect, however, could be the knocking out of parts of the chimney's interior.

Then there were practitioners of the pine tree system. A pine tree, tied to a rope, was let down through the chimney to sweep out the soot with the jagged branches.

Those with a gambler's spirit sometimes lit the tree to burn out the creosote.

Still another myth, commonly heard today, is that a chimney fire will burn out the deposits and clean



Chimney sweeps really "get into" their work. This is no profession for claustrophobics - or anyone with a bad back.

out the chimney, preventing any need for sweeping.

"Wrong" says Klein. "Chimney fires can make the problem worse."

A printed handout that he gives to customers adds additional warning: "If the first (chimney fire) doesn't burn down your house, try again. The second one might."

Chimney fires may cause the flue to crack and weaken the

chimney to a point where it becomes dangerous.

Chimneys in many old homes are unlined, according to the sweep, and often in violation of city and county housing codes.

In fact, Klein predicts that, in time, insurance companies may require a chimney inspection before issuing fire policies to homeowners.

(Turn to Page B5)

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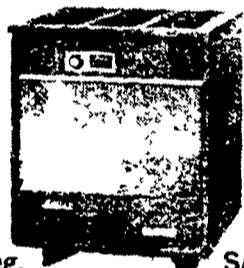
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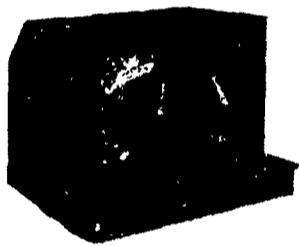
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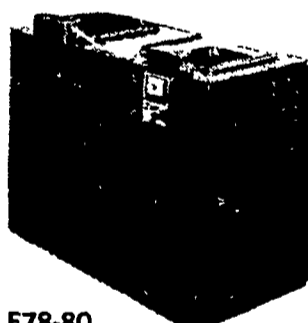
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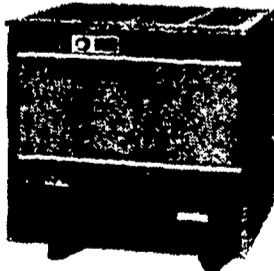
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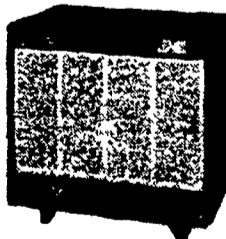
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