

# Wood heating boom brings back the chimney sweep

BY SALLY DUNMIRE  
Staff Correspondent

LEWISTOWN — If you run across a fella wearing a top hat and tails, chances are he's a professional chimney sweep. According to Randy Dean, of Dean's Chimney Sweep, Lewistown, "the top hat is for luck." He wears his rather battered head gear on every job. His tails, since they are rather snug, are worn for appearances only.

The traditional outfit of chimney sweeps hails from old England. In the heyday of London coal burning, the sweeps were thin, small boys who were lowered into huge chimneys to clean them.

Being quite poor, these little fellows wore the cast off clothing of undertakers. To this day, the distinctive garb is the mark of a professional sweep. In England, the size of the top hat is a sign of

experience. The novice sweep starts out with a small top hat and tails, working his way up to a larger, more elaborate one.

Tradition also holds that good luck and financial stability is reputed for any bride that sees a sweep on her wedding day.

Since the re-kindling of home wood heating, this old skill has seen a revival.

"You can do the job yourself. All you have to do is buy the proper size brushes at any local hardware store. Start small and work up," advised Dean. "You never know when you might run into a bird's nest or two, with a big creosote buildup. Too big a brush and it could get stuck inside the chimney. Then you really have trouble."

"Never use a sack of bricks or chains to clean out a chimney, even though you do read that it can be done this way. One brick can

cause 20 cracks in a chimney liner, all potential escape routes for flames and sparks into your house," warns Dean. "Either buy the brushes or call a sweep."

For those who don't care to tackle the mess themselves, there are the professionals who will clean and inspect your chimney for safety. This should be done at least once a year, before striking the first match of the fall heating season. Think ahead though, September and October are the busiest months of the year for sweeps.

When hiring a professional sweep, it's wise to make sure he is also a certified wood safety inspector. "Many fire insurance companies are beginning to require inspections of wood stove and chimney installations. Fire insurance coverage has been known to be cancelled due to faulty

stove and chimney connections or maintenance," stated Dean.

To reduce the amount of creosote buildup inside your chimney, he suggested that "every day, you should let your stove burn wide open for 15-30 minutes." Also, Dean recommended daily use of a liquid anti-creosote product. "You just spray it on your wood. It really works. I recommend ASC, a catalytic chemical chimney cleaner. It can be a bit expensive to use, but will prevent your chimney's creosote from baking to a hard glaze that no brush can remove. The chemical turns the creosote to easily removed fly ash and flakes. But, this is no substitute for yearly cleaning," he added.

Burning only seasoned hardwood will help reduce creosote. Also, the cleanest, most efficient chimney is a round, smooth, interior chimney, of the shortest length possible for good draft. Anything that slows and cools the rising smoke - such as square corners, rough mortar joints, cracks, thick creosote, or cold chimney walls, will accelerate creosote accumulations.

Finally, installing a catalytic

converter on your stove pipe, or buying a stove with one built in, will greatly decrease dangerous creosote and air pollution from your woodstove.

After inspection, if your flue is found unsafe, there is still hope short of tearing it down and building a new one. According to Dean, "an old unlined chimney or a cracked one, can be revived with either a stainless steel flexible liner or a poured epoxy liner." He recommended pouring the epoxy liner first.

"This will fill any cracks and will last 15-20 years. Later you can install a stainless steel liner that will last just about forever."

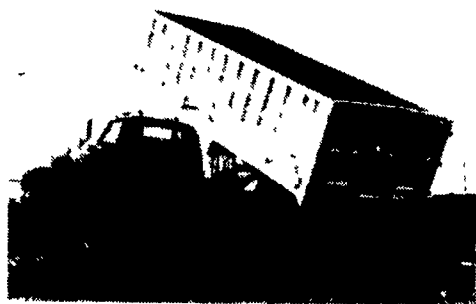
These installations can be tricky, so unless you really know what you are doing, renewing an old flue liner should be left up to professionals.

If safety isn't enough incentive to keep that chimney clean, consider that "one millimeter of creosote in a flue will cut your heating efficiency by 15%," said Dean. That means less heat for more work and wood. For safety & efficiency, clean & inspect your flue at least once a year.

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## USDA eyes regs on peas, grain

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed revising its regulations covering inspection of rice, beans, peas, lentils and processed grain commodities.

Kenneth A. Gilles, administrator of USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service, said the proposal would remove the requirement that all information determined during federal inspection of these commodities be reported on the official inspection certificate. However, the proposal would continue to require that all grade-determining factors be shown on the certificate.

The proposal would also establish provisions for providing a retest service on non-graded

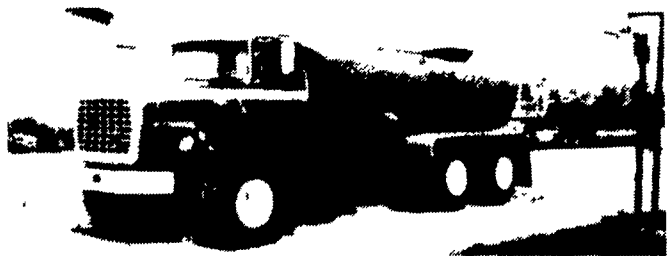
commodities, and would permit appeal inspections on a new sample when insect fragments are found in the original sample during initial inspection.

"The proposed changes would combine and consolidate compatible regulatory requirements, simplify the regulations and bring them into conformity with current marketing practices," said Gilles.

Public comments on the proposal may be submitted until Feb. 24, 1986, to Lewis Lebakken Jr., Information Resources Staff, Federal Grain Inspection Service, Room 0667-S, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250; (202) 382-1738.

This proposal was published in the Federal Register.

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