

How to Wash a Shirt

By Dennis Knight

It is late in the evening after another Sunday of professional football, twelve solid hours, starting at ten this morning. A veritable ironman, you managed to quarterback three straight wins in three different time zones playing three different positions, from upright to full recline. You even once came to your feet to supply body English, hooking an errant field goal through the uprights.

You tuck yourself in to your winter flannel sheets for a good night's rest, contemplating what the new day may bring, and you remember the INTERVIEW TOMORROW MORNING!

You go to the closet for assurance that waiting there is your pin striped, French cuffed, spread collared dress shirt. It's not an Armani, but spiffy enough for a J.C. Penney man. There it is, neat as you once hung it, still with the forgotten wine stain from a forgotten date some forgotten weeks ago. Have you forgotten how sternly you warned yourself not to forget?

You are a bachelor, self-sufficient, resourceful and dyed in the wool. This is an opportunity to prove your mettle, and you would have, but the town's one one-hour laundry just washed out of business. The industry has certainly gone through the wringer since the advent of wash-and-wear. Unfortunately, you don't have a washing machine of your own, and the Laundromat is closed for the night.

You've heard of people washing clothes by hand. It involves a riverbank and a washboard, and you don't have those, either. So you go to the kitchen sink, drop in your shirt, and open the tap. You add a cup of powdered detergent, and because the object involves dried grape wine, you dump in some more. You sink your arms in the sink to your elbows and swish the shirt around. A gallon of water slops out, drenches your pajamas, and makes a soapy puddle on the floor. Then it occurs to you to turn off the faucet.

Grabbing the garment from the shoulders, you lift it out for examination. The stain is still there in its purple glory. You need mechanical help, and you search the top drawers for something handy to get the job done.

You know from sponsors of your day watching football that the secret of laundering is cyclonic action, so you try stirring the sink with a spatula. It causes a tsunami that adds to your flood, but it doesn't generate a whirlpool. The electric mixer might have worked, but the ground fault interrupter interrupted, and saved your lucky butt in the doing.

At any rate, a cyclone proving to be unachievable with utensils at hand, you investigate the bottom drawer for an alternative, and find it in the stainless steel masher. You plunge, tumble and agitate, and the stain soon disappears. You are a genius to have thought of it, and even more so when the potato masher inspires you to mix something extra into the rinse. Mashed potatoes are a starch, you know.