

APPLIANCE DOCTOR

Take care of your clothes dryer to make it last



JOE GAGNON

It was many years into the 1900s before man created a mate for the washing machine which had been produced much earlier. While the washer performed to perfection, it still did not dry the clothes to that point. The housewife of the '40s and before had to hang them on a clothes line using clothes pins and stretching exercises. Wash day of yesteryear meant just that. A day spent mostly doing the wash and drying it as well.

It was a tedious chore and one which was displayed with pride when showing how white the whites could be.

I remember my childhood years in northern Canada when I would have to wear those longjohn underwear with the trap door in the back. Those big long ugly woolen things were rather a pain in my relationship with my parents. My father would make a full size rink in our back yard which was supplied with lights and boards and even a face off circle. My mother would hang the clothes on the line which ran about 30 feet perpendicular to the ice surface. Occasionally, when there was no one

around, I would wind up and take a wrist shot at a pair of those most hated long johns. At constant temperatures well below minus 30 degrees you can imagine how hard those things had frozen.

The puck would just bounce off them and back onto the ice rink. I was always quick to ask her if she wanted me to bring the clothes off the line, so she wouldn't see the mark left by the hockey puck. I know she loved me very much because she used to iron those longjohns and she wasn't blind. I miss her today as I write this column and think about the times she would make me smell the sheets as she made the bed. The odor of bed linen dried by hanging in clean fresh air has a fragrance that the world may never know again. She used to tell me, "this is how heaven smells."

Into the 1940s and '50s we go to find the new clothes dryer which does the job in the home. It's easy, you set the dial for so long and walk away. The clothes dryer was built like an army tank and very little service was ever required. There are still many old Hamilton dryers out there in the American home which are between 30 and 40 years old. These dryers are still operating today and who knows how much

longer. We all know the new saying that I use today, "they don't make them like they used to."

The clothes dryer of today has many more features, is more energy efficient, and dries with a much lower temperature than makes of yesteryear. An older dryer may be very hard on your clothes because of the high temperature it puts out, and because the garments of today are not the same as "it used to be."

Today's dryer needs to be taken care of by the consumer in many ways to make it last. The movement of air through the dryer to the outside is of utmost importance to a long lasting dryer. The vent line should be solid aluminum and cleaned at least once a year. The lint filter should be washed with soap and water every month and the dryer taken apart and vacuumed out once every two years. The size or weight of the load you place into your dryer will determine how long it will last or how quickly you will replace parts.

I consider a clothes dryer to be a metal box which you place your clothes into to catch fire, almost. It is a product which starts over 13,000 house fires yearly across this country and a product which you should not turn on when leave the home or go to bed. Be aware and keep an eye on it.

An item such as a tablecloth or dishrag which contains vegetable oil could cause a fire in your home. In a study done by Whirlpool, a cloth with vegetable oil was put through the wash and dried in a clothes dryer. It was then folded and placed in a laundry basket with other clothes. After several hours of sitting in the basket, it created spontaneous combustion and resulted in fire. This should be a caution on what to put into a dryer.

Do not close the laundry room door and open a window when you use your clothes dryer. The dryer uses 200 cubic feet of air per minute while it is operating, so you need to supply it with constant fresh air for good smelling clothes.

When and if your dryer starts to make squeak or rumble noises which were not heard before, I would advise you to stop using your dryer immediately. Not only is this a sign that something is going wrong and you will cause more damage, it can be dangerous and cause a fire hazard inside the product.

Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radio program on WJR-AM.



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