

**Brent
POPE**

The 'March'attan Project

Hints on how to make spring cleaning bearable



Last night, in a dream, a stranger named Mr. Calendar smacked me in the back of the head and said "Wake up, fat boy, it's spring!"

As you can imagine, that really freaked me out. I mean, who the hell is this Mr. Calendar and what's he doing in my apartment? Then I realized that he must be some metaphorical figure sent to remind me of something important.

So then I woke up and looked at my calendar (man, Miss March has some big ...) and I found that today really is the first day of spring. That must mean that it's time for me and every other slob in the world to do our dreaded spring-cleaning.

But hold on there, Captain Cleanaroo, don't start hosing down all your stuff until you've taken a gander at my spring-cleaning checklist:

LIVING ROOM/BEDROOM

First, get rid of all newspapers that are more than a decade old. A quick way to tell is by looking at the photos in the paper. If someone like Boy George or Evil Knievel is on the cover, it's probably old enough to throw away (or you could just check the date at the top of the page, but I like my way better). Also, get rid of any newspaper with more than a dozen rat turds on it. It's disgusting, and besides, rats need a clean place to live, too.

Second, vacuum the floor. But first, do a pre-sucking search for objects too large to be vacuumed (for example: dictionaries, remote controls that you haven't seen since LAST spring, chunks of provolone cheese larger than your head). Oh, and that big black thing behind the couch that makes a strange noise when you poke it, don't vacuum it. It's probably just your cat, or a big hunk of mold; either way, you don't want to get rid of it.

BATHROOM

Thinking about cleaning the old ring in the bathtub? Forget about it! The tub ring is nothing more than a collection of soap and shampoo (some people think it's dirt and old skin, but they're full of crap!). I have a ring around my tub so thick

that I can use it as both a pillow and a footrest when I take a bath.

The ring in the toilet is a whole different beast and should be scrubbed away immediately. I've found the most productive way to do this is to glue on some of those press on nails and scrape that nasty residue right off. I have yet to find a heavy duty cleaner that can even make a dent in those nasty toilet rings.

Now let's look at the litter box. If you peek in there and it appears to be a graveyard for a bunch of dead Baby Ruth bars, you need to change the kitty litter. Take the old contents out to the back yard and dump them over the neighbor's fence. Sure, it's smelly, but the guy next door will appreciate it when his tulips bloom extra bright this year.

THE FRIDGE

SANDWICHES — Throw out all sandwiches so old that they appear to have grown mustard on the bread that wasn't there when you made the sandwich. It may look like mustard and smell like mustard — but brother — it ain't mustard!

FRUITS & VEGGIES — Peaches are supposed to be fuzzy. Most other fruits aren't. Toss out all produce that looks like it needs a good shave.



MATT HANEY/DN

DAIRY — Just a quick tip here: Get rid of all milk and cheese products that you can see through or ones that you can smell without opening the fridge. (You can try to sell them at a garage sale as science projects, but they are no longer fit for human consumption.)

Oh, one last thing. Don't forget to dig deep into those closets and take out those dead pets that passed away during the winter. In Decem-

ber, the ground was too frozen to dig a grave and the toilet was just way too small to flush an adult koala. But now that spring's here, let's start burying those dead smelly family friends (and that meddling Tupperware salesman that knew too much). Can you dig it?

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**Steve
WILLEY**

Home, sweet, what the ...

Antics make one wonder what's in the water

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'Stupid' would be too strong a word to use; 'ever unthinking' would be a more suitable describing phrase for the people of Natchez.”



As I've mentioned (too many times) before in my columns, I grew up in Natchez, Miss., a small, rambunctious town perched high on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River.

Like so many small towns across the South, Natchez takes great pride in its heritage. It flaunts its many gorgeous antebellum homes and revels in the fact that at one time before the Civil War it was home to more millionaires than any other city in America.

Wealthy plantation owners from across the South built homes there while farming the mineral-rich lowlands of Louisiana. To this day, some of the homes remain unfinished. The tools lie exactly where the carpenters dropped them upon learning of the outbreak of the Civil War.

Natchez avoided heavy destruction during the war by surrendering early during bombardment from the Union's navy.

On his way to lay siege on Vicksburg, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant called the nearby town of Port Gibson a "town too beautiful to burn." I can only imagine he felt the same way about Natchez.

But I often wonder if he would have changed his mind about

Natchez if he'd known the type of people the town would produce.

Don't get me wrong; Natchezians are good people. Knock on any given door in town and you'll find out quick. The owners will invite you inside to share a pitcher of sweet tea and lend you any amount of money, as long as you offer a handshake and your word of eventual repayment.

But there must be something in Natchez's drinking water because the people there are anything but typical. Whatever the chemical, it causes normal folks to forget themselves and moreover, their minds. Their only priority is the present and everything else is shoveled to the back burner.

"Stupid" would be too strong a word to use; "ever unthinking" would be a more suitable describing phrase for the people of Natchez.

For as long as I can remember, people in my hometown have acted with little or no thought when it came to the consequences. And a couple of weeks ago, that notion was again affirmed.

Paul Harvey, an ABC radio broadcaster, noted during one of his daily programs that Natchez was again the location of a remarkably idiotic event. According to the

broadcast, two guests staying at a Howard Johnson hotel complained that a maid had stolen some of their property.

When the complaint fell on the ears of an unsympathetic manager, the guests became angry and threatened to call the police unless immediate action was taken. When the manager still refused to budge, the guests dialed 911 and reported that the maid had stolen a substantial amount of their ... marijuana. They were subsequently arrested and received compliments of the Natchez Police department, some "I'm-a dipshit" stickers to wear on their foreheads. But this was no isolated case of Natchezians refusing to think before they act.

A few years ago, because of Natchez, popular country singer/songwriter Joe Diffie told the nation to "forget about climbing water towers." The warning came after a man in Natchez was seriously injured after falling 25 feet from a ladder placed next to a water tower. On the tower, the man had scrawled the words "Billy BoBob Loves Charlene" in green paint.

In Diffie's then-top 10 song "John Deere Green," a boy climbs a water tower and paints the words "Billy Bob Loves Charlene." I happened to be home after the

accident and asked one of the three men who were there that night why the fellow painted "Billy BoBob" instead of "Billy Bob."

The answer: The painter was too liquored up to spell "Bob" correctly. After painting "BoB," he saw the last "B" and spelled "BoB" again.

Something's gotta be in the water, but if you need more proof, take a look at what Terri Tarbor, the Lifestyles editor for the Natchez Democrat, has to say. In a recent column, the six-month resident found more than enough oddities in Natchez — like its four-month-long celebration of Mardi Gras and how it's a "manly thing to do the 'Gator on the dance floor and the wife or date will laugh in adoration."

(The 'Gator, by the way, is a dance in which a male of any age lies on the floor and begins to convulse as if he has just learned that Lorena Bobbitt has been appointed surgeon general. Then, other bold dancers will straddle the man and dance across and around them. The only stipulation, apparently, is that the man doing the 'Gator must have no self-respect.)

The sad thing is, I've only listed the silly or stupid things Natchez people have done. There's plenty of immoral and deranged stuff as well.

For example, a few years ago, Natchez' famous brothel, Nellie's, was firebombed and later burned to the ground. (I say famous because I have met a very learned man here in Nebraska who has "heard" of it.)

A good thing for the town? Nahhh. Numerous local politicians, though never acknowledging that they knew what the business really was, wrote a lengthy letter to the newspaper. People from all walks of life — students, councilmen and laborers — proudly donned their "Follow Me to Nellie's" shirts and paraded throughout the town.

Hell, even I had one. Only the drinking water could cause such a ruckus over a brothel.

But despite all the flaws, Natchez is still my home. Being different is good, and if anyone ever tells you otherwise, grab him by the throat and inform him how misguided he is.

And if that doesn't scare them straight, tell them you've been drinking Natchez water, and things are about to get stupid. Then do the 'Gator.

(P.S. If any of you have some free time, send me a paragraph or two about what the water does to people in your hometown. I haven't been to many Nebraska towns, so maybe Natchez is the normal one. Document it if you can — clips etc. — and if I get enough, I'll do another column about your folks' hometown and the idiots they harbor. -S.W.)

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