



In the swim
Colleen Hadcock modelled swimwear and other seasonal outfits Thursday evening during a fashion show sponsored by the St. Mark Parent's Guild. This costume was supplied by Josephine's Fashions and Petite Collection of Stouffville.
—Chris Shanahan

Sad state of affairs

The housekeeping standards at our place are on a downhill slide. I don't know when they crossed the line between acceptable and "what happened?" I just know they did.

It wasn't always this way. When we were young and childless, our house was my pride and joy. It was always kept in a state of readiness in case the editors of House and Garden stopped by for tea. Furniture was carefully selected and lovingly maintained. I even oiled all the wooden furniture once a month. Really.

We had a yellow shag rug in our living room that I used to crawl around on to make sure I hadn't missed any dirt spots. I never had, because people weren't allowed to walk on it with shoes.

These days, I go into the living room once a week to water the plants, whether they need it or not. I was going to say that I go in there to vacuum, but I try to be honest. Well, the darned place only gets used at Christmas and for major life events, so why overdo it. Right?

Our family room is, as they say in the ads, the hub of family life. And it looks it. There is probably more food in between the sofa cushions than there is in the refrigerator.

Memories are etched into the rug: the glass of orange crush that was flung about in the final minutes of an exciting scrabble game; the ice cream cone that was dumped in a frenzy of shared licking between small dog and small child. Is it fair to expect concentration from children who are so accustomed to using the VCR that they can now master the entire operation with their toes? (Not being a mechanical sort, I have never mastered it at all. You

For What It's Worth

Carol Gardner

feel like a real fool having your movie set up by a nine year old who never has to use his hands.)

Our bedroom is not so bad, except for the magazines and books which are strewn around in the hope that we will get around to reading them before the library cuts up our cards. But our bathroom has strips of wallpaper torn off from the time we didn't let the dog out for the cocktail party. She's a vengeful little cuss.

At least the bathroom tap doesn't leak anymore. As my husband explained it to me, when they built our house, they installed taps that simply couldn't be fixed. When they break, they break, and you simply have to live with it.

That sounded a little fishy to me, but he said it with such a look of sincerity (he was born with that look. It means nothing) that I felt like a cur doubting him. Till I spoke with some of the neighbors who assured me that their taps had, indeed been fixed from time to time. After getting a few affidavits from them and threatening to call the plumber, my husband grudgingly went to the hardware store and returned, prepared to put in a glum hour or so. I left him to it, sensing that he was not in his Louis Jourdan mood.

Half an hour later, with encouraging sounds emanating from the nether regions, I ventured upstairs. He was bending over the sink, the glow of success on his face.

"It works!" he announced.

"It always did," I replied. "It's the tub tap that's leaking." Such are the things that gnaw away at the fabric of a relationship.

I'm not even going to mention the kids' rooms, except to say that I suspect we have more pets than we're aware of.

Meal preparation is another area of our life that is not up to snuff. Once upon a time, company invited to our house could safely anticipate the unexpected: a Greek Easter dinner, a country French picnic, a Chinese Dim Sum brunch. I thought nothing of taking three days to prepare an authentic cassoulet, only to have friends commend me on the excellent "stew". Stew! Now I make stew and call it cassoulet. And try to figure out where I can buy a dessert that will be runny enough that people will be convinced I made it.

What brought about this fall from grace? I wish I knew. Time. Middle age. The onslaught of children and dogs. Urban life. Karate lessons.

One thing I do know. I'm going to reform. As soon as I have a little rest, and get the old body back into shape, and stop drinking coffee. Really.

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