

Top 5 Reasons to update your holiday lights

Gather the boxes from the basement, scour the attic for your garland and glitter. It's time, once again, to decorate the house for Christmas! Of course, your design scheme wouldn't be complete without lights strung from the eaves and twinkling in the window.

But did you ever think about giving them an update? If you're like many, you string up the same old lights year after year without ever giving much thought to their condition. Here are five ways to know when it's time to retire your holiday lights:

1. Fried and frayed. Some things are wonderful fried — chicken, potatoes, deep-battered delights — but your lights are not one of them. If wires are frayed and discolored, or sparks fly when you plug them in, trash those babies and head straight to the store for a new batch. You don't want to risk a fire or Santa's electrocution!

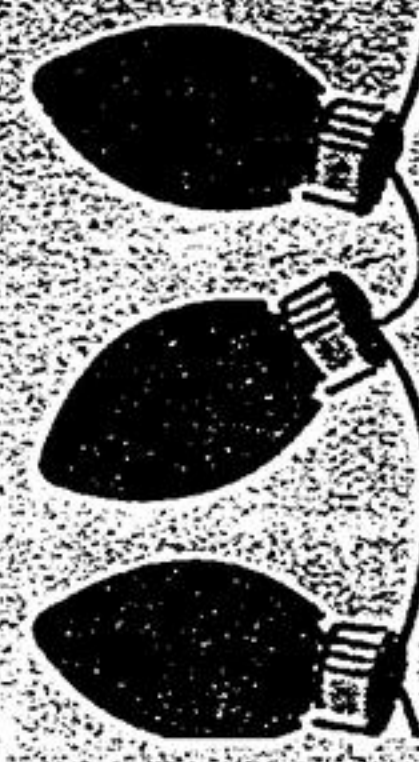
2. Big, bulky bulbs. We've all used them, but those large bulbs, circa 1962, are out. With all of

the new, twinkly lights available (including the popular icicle variety), why drag out your old clunkers? By now the paint on the bulbs is probably chipped — not to mention those old-fashioned bulbs can get mighty hot.

3. Burnt-out bulbs. If more lights are out than working on your string of lights, it's time to trade them in for some new ones. Let's face it, you'll never replace individual bulbs.

4. All knotted up. Many people uncover a knotted mess of lights when they search through the boxes of holiday decorations. Make things easier on yourself, and skip the hassle of unknotting the clump. Buy new lights, and this year, make sure to wrap them up neatly for use next year.

5. Outrageous color. Thought you'd be all the rage with pink and blue lights, huh? Well, perhaps this year you'll succumb to tradition and trade in those "unique" hues for something more Christmasy.



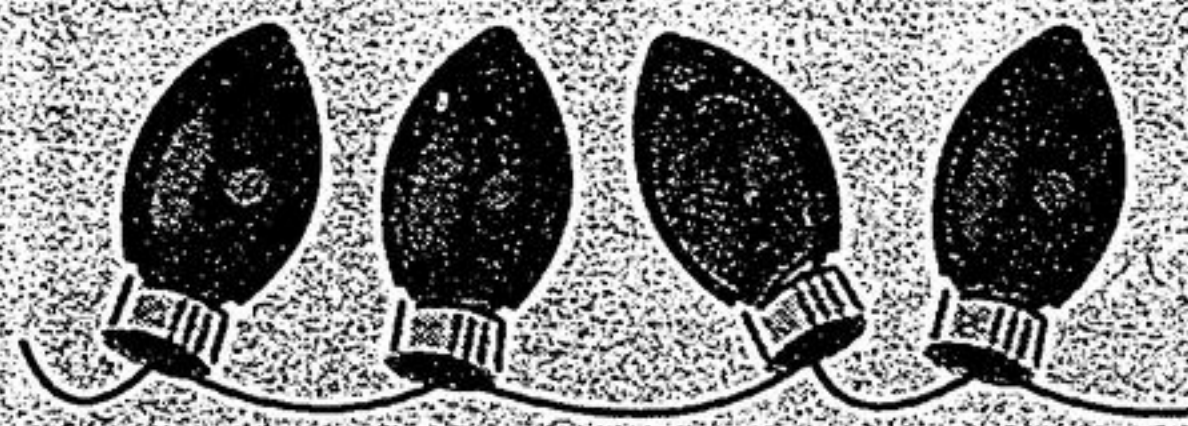
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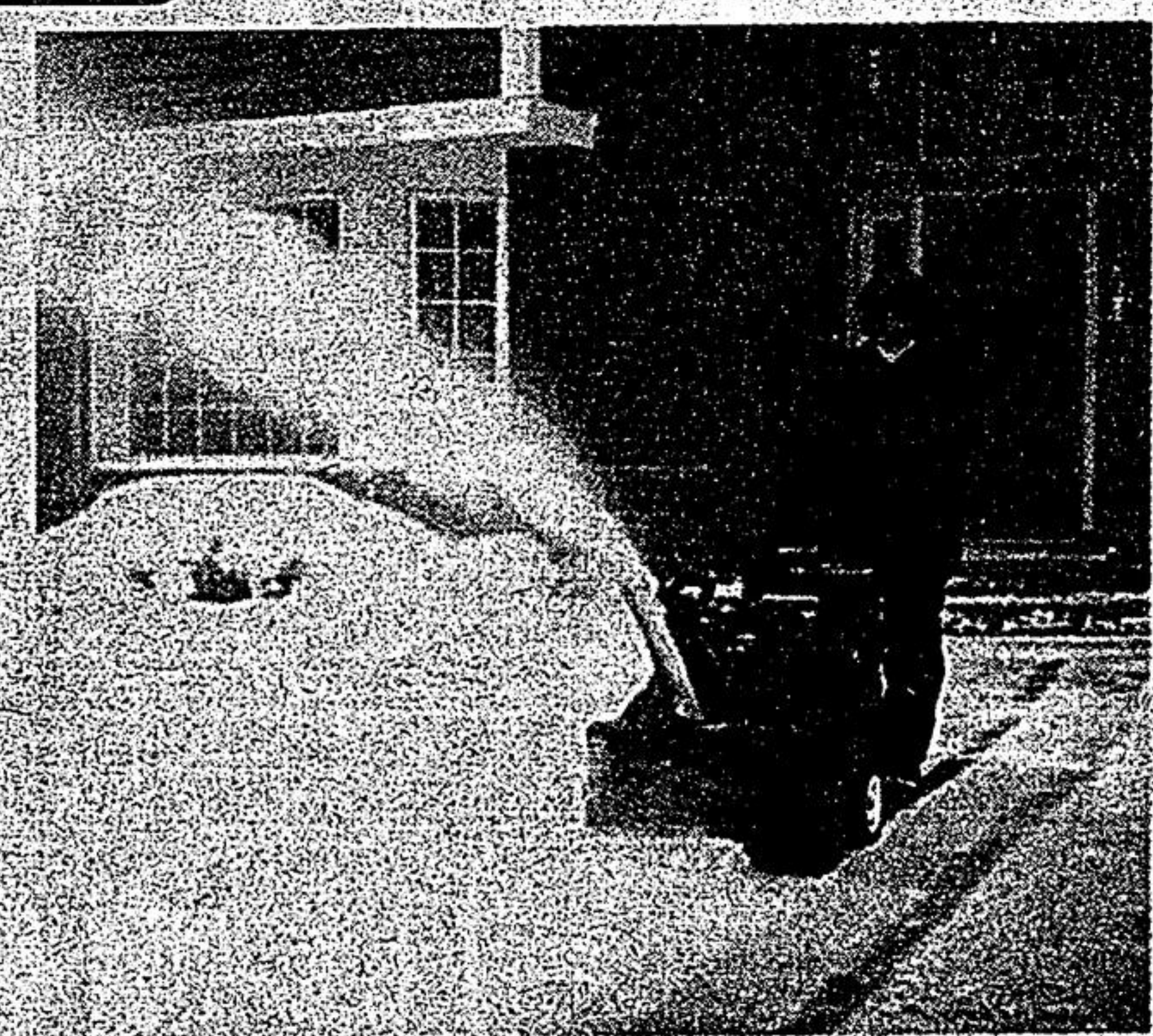
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