

Up Front/Commentary: Spring cleaning sounds like a good idea - or maybe not

By Kathy Hedberg of the Lewiston Tribune

Back when I was a kid homemakers - and these were usually our mothers - held an annual ritual called "spring cleaning."

This was normally done on a sunny weekend when, with the help of all the kids, you'd haul the furniture out on the front lawn, take down the drapes and hose out the house. We'd dust the spider webs from the ceilings and wash things we hadn't seen since the previous year's spring cleaning. We'd go through our closets and fold up the winter woolens and store them in a box in the attic, and out would come the summer clothes.

Dad usually was in charge of the garage and it got swept and cleared just like the rest of the domain. After it was over, the family could move back into a sparkling clean house that required only normal maintenance until fall cleaning came around.

Those major family overhauls left one with a fresh sense of being scrubbed on the outside and morally renewed on the inside. Kind of like going to confession, only with the lingering scent of Lysol to carry you through the next week.

It's been years since I put that much effort into spring cleaning. The spiders in my house have time-share condominium webs they re-use one season to the next. My winter woolens hang in the closet all year long right next to my summer shorts and tank tops. And the only time I hose anything down is when the stove catches on fire.

I'm just not into housecleaning the way my mother and grandmothers were, and while I can justify that by telling myself I have a paying job, it still feels a little slipshod to let some of this stuff go. Balancing homemaking duties with earning an income has always posed a dilemma for women, especially, and unless you make enough to hire a housekeeper the issue remains unresolved.

There is more to life than a clean house, of course. But I think back over my adulthood and I have to admit that there's dust and accumulation not only in my house but in my soul as well. I've acquired some bad habits, made some big mistakes, gotten into trouble, told lies and done other unmentionable things that maybe I wouldn't have done if I'd kept up the good habits of my youth. How would my life be different if I dusted the furniture once a week?

Not long ago, a friend was looking out my kitchen window, and suddenly I saw - and he saw - that the window was all covered with rain spots. It's probably been a year since I've washed it.

I thought about making an excuse - "Geez, I never noticed those spots before. I'm going to have clean them right away."

But I didn't. Not only have I gotten more lax as I've grown older, I'm not even all that embarrassed about it.