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Laundry

By David Breitkopf on Apr 13, 2010 in Humor

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I do the laundry in my household and I do it well, I might add. My wife undertook the arduous task of teaching me the finer points of color and fabric separation after I ran a tie-dyed T-shirt all over her favorite silk blouse. Interestingly, I've discovered I have Dacron/Rayon blindness.

I have made great strides in laundry since I first took it up seriously in college. The college was co-ed except for the laundromats, which the women on campus demanded be separate. The men's laundromat had enormous machines, which allowed you to put in an entire semester of dirty laundry. As a sophomore, I cleaned my entire wardrobe twice. The

machines were easy to use: They had one setting — Man.

Over the years, I've learned a number of valuable lessons in successful laundry management, including how to fold a queen-size bed sheet and not have it touch any surface in the laundromat. It has always remained one of the great mysteries and ironies that laundromats are some of the filthiest places on earth. Only the interiors of the machines are actually clean.

I've also learned to never pick up a coin inside a hot dryer. Once I picked up a dime that was so hot the profile of Roosevelt was screaming. The dime bonded with my index finger. I finally pried the thing off by whispering in his ear: Ronald Reagan will be president someday. I've never seen a coin go from screaming to laughing so fast.

But by far the most important lesson I've learned about laundry is never leave the laundromat while your clothes are in the machine. Sure, most of the time you can run errands, but there will inevitably come that day when all your stuff will be stolen.

This was my lot not too many years ago — all my finery was filched except my soiled underwear. On one of the machines was taped a note — a rather polite note I must say — which read, "Forgive me for stealing your clothes, but I like them better than mine, particularly the paisley Nehru jacket. I've been looking in washing machines for years for one, and I finally found it in yours. Thanks. P.S. Please feel free to take any of my clothes in my machine, number 5."

I looked in his machine to see what the guy had, and I immediately felt guilty because here was a man who had a lot less than I. He had, in effect, pulled off a minor French Revolution in the Quick-O-Mat, I reasoned in my most orthodox Marxist analysis. At the time, I was dabbling in left-wing armchair politics.

About two months later, I was strolling around Greenwich Village wearing this guy's red and green plaid polyester leisure suit — feeling very left wing, very much in solidarity with the poorer dressers of the world — when I spotted this fellow coming out of a record store wearing my paisley Nehru jacket, looking, I must say, much sharper than I ever looked in it.

Instantly, I lapsed back into my bourgeois ways and started chasing him through the streets, finally tackling him in Washington Square Park near the chess players. I ripped the jacket off his back. He ripped his leisure suit off mine and had the gall to accuse me of stealing it.

I then tore my black leather pants off him, and he tore his Bermuda shorts off me. By the time the cops arrived, a sizable crowd had gathered around to watch two grown men launching wrestling dives at each other in attempts to pull off each other's underpants.

The cops separated us, which was fine by me because I was leading in points — owing to a spectacular back-flip reversal. They told us to put on our clothes, but we discovered they were all stolen. This time no one left a note. We were handcuffed together, humiliated and poorly dressed.

At the station, this guy was lying through his teeth. He had a large gap in the front, which made it easier. The cops didn't know who to believe, so they let us both go, but not before booking us. The cops, by the way, couldn't get over my screaming Roosevelt fingerprint.

The upshot of the story is this: one day I was browsing in a Salvation Army store and I discovered, hanging between a wedding gown with bloodstains and a tuxedo with teeth marks on the arm (a marriage gone bad in a hurry), that same plaid leisure suit. I purchased it for \$3 and whenever I'm feeling very left wing, I put it on and hang out with the chess players in Washington Square Park.

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About David Breitkopf

David Breitkopf has been a reporter and editor for numerous daily and weekly newspapers. He was also a professional stand-up comic for a number of years back in the '90s. Presently he teaches tennis in New Jersey, and is finishing a novel.

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