

## Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech

A Big Stone Gap citizen who follows Folk-Ways in the Bristol Herald Courier has just introduced a new topic for the column—hair receivers or retainers.

The terms bring back vague associations to me of vanity tables, powder bowls and matching comb and brush sets, but somehow I can't picture the article in question.

The reader, however, offers a pretty good description: "Your recent column on hair brought back recollections of women in our community and family who made ornamental bags of linen and silk which they called 'hair receivers.'" "These bags were made by slitting the cloth square in the center each way for an opening, turning back corners and featherstitching edges. The top square with the opening was stitched to a bottom square to form the bag. A handle was attached for hanging up. I've often wondered why they kept their hair—maybe there was a superstitious reason."

Undoubtedly superstition was involved even though the "receiver" user might have been unaware of the implications of the hair-saving

operation. But there were also other reasons for the hair bank, as our Virginia writer indicates.

"In later years I knew a lady who insisted that her pretty pin cushions she made as gifts must contain human hair. I never knew why.

"Also, the nineteenth century families (practically all) placed locks of the hair of their deceased members in their Bibles. Occasionally they were woven into a sort of family hair wreath and displayed.

More of hair receivers in a later column. Meanwhile, friend Alfred E. McThenia of Glade Spring, Va., adds another installment to our fowl (sorry) weather signs. In a recent letter he noted that the preening of birds and chickens is a sign of rain, this process bringing out an oily waterproofing in anticipation of the downfall plus serving as insulation against the cold.

"This oiling served to insulate against the cold air by retaining the body heat of the fowl. My mother raised pure-bred Plymouth Rock (Dominecker) chickens, generally in a flock of approximately fifty laying hens, and

as one of my assigned chores around the house, I tended the chickens. This oiling exercise would not be done at random. It would instead involve the entire flock simultaneously, and I've seen the fences standing full with hens, old roosters, and pullets, each bird preening and oiling its feathers all at the same time. This exercise usually took place in the early or mid-morning and invariably it rained before nightfall of the same day."

Mr. McThenia goes on to describe an experience with another dependable weather prophet, the Screech Owl. "Before moving into our present house (in 1962) we lived 'On the Hill' and in the back yard stood a large maple tree, with the stub of a limb that had been 'hollowed out' for a nesting place by a pair of Flickers (Yallerhammers). In late Autumn, after the Flickers had hatched their brood and left, each year came a Screech Owl to take up his Winter abode in this hollow limb.

"We kept watch and just as certain as this little Owl would come up and thrust its head out from the hole and make his strange (warbling) sound, then, just as surely would we have snow by late afternoon. The little Owl was very punctual, always to appear at or near 7:00 a.m. and never later than 7:30 a.m.

"Ofttimes, the TV weatherman would predict; 'clearing and colder, or snow turning to rain by late afternoon,' but if the Owl had given his warning, we'd have



deep snow."

Readers are invited to send folk material to Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech, Box 376, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina 28608.

## Mayland Tech Offers Secretarial Course

Beginning on January 3, Winter Quarter, Mayland Technical Institute will offer an Evening program in Secretarial Science. These courses will be offered in sequence so that a student beginning Winter Quarter will be able to complete the program by attending evening classes.

Classes are offered Monday through Thursday, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Winter

Quarter courses for beginners include: Beginning and Intermediate Typing, Beginning Shorthand, Business Law, and Office Machines.

For more information, call Kathy Justice, Evening Instructor in Secretarial Science 765-7549 or come by Mayland Technical Institute.



March of Dimes

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765-4261

## Check Trees For Yuletide Safety

No Yuletide would be complete without a tree bedecked with ornaments and twinkling lights, proudly beaming forth the joy and good tidings of the Christmas season.

As you try to make this year's tree the most beautiful ever, the Insurance Information Institute reminds you to make sure it's the SAFEST tree ever by being safety-conscious when purchasing and decorating your tree.

Whether natural or artificial, your tree should be selected with great care. Artificial trees should bear the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) mark of approval. Natural trees should be as fresh as possible, since the dryer a tree is, the more flammable it is.

The Institute offers these tips for selecting the best and safest natural tree:

— Color and scent are important. A pine tree, for instance, should always be deep green in color and give off a strong pine scent.

— Shake the tree a little. If the needles fall off too readily, the tree is too dry to be safe.

— The trunk butt of the tree will probably be covered with sticky sap if it's been recently cut. The fresher it is, the better will be your chances for a safe tree.

— Always place your tree away from any source of heat, particularly a fireplace. Cut trees dry out fast, and heat only serves to increase the potential for fires.

— Use a tree stand which allows you to add sugar water or chemical mixtures to keep the tree greener longer.

— DECORATING YOUR TREE —

When decorating your tree, the Institute says to keep in mind the following:

— Whether for the tree or outside decoration, use only UL-approved lights. Outdoor

lights should be weatherproof, and you should securely fasten them to walls, eaves or trees to prevent wind damage.

— Before plugging in your light strings to test them, check for bad sockets, frayed or bare wire and loose connections — especially if the lights are old and have been in storage. Make sure each light socket has a rubber socket gasket, and replace if needed. Any unsafe strings should be discarded.

— Now test each string, checking for burned-out bulbs. Replace any bad ones. As you arrange the light strings on the tree, be sure you don't overload any electrical circuits. Overloaded wires and wall sockets can heat up suddenly and may start a fire.

— If your tree is metal, never use light strings, since a "short" in the wiring could make the whole tree "live." Always use spotlights on metal trees.

— All Christmas decorations prove quite a strong temptation for inquisitive children, so be sure to keep kids away from all electrical fixtures and connections.

— When leaving home, be sure to turn off all decorative lights.

The Insurance Information Institute wants you to enjoy the holiday season, so remember that adequate safety precautions can help ensure a happy and safe Christmas for your family and friends. (PRN)



One large carrot a day will provide all the vitamin A you need.

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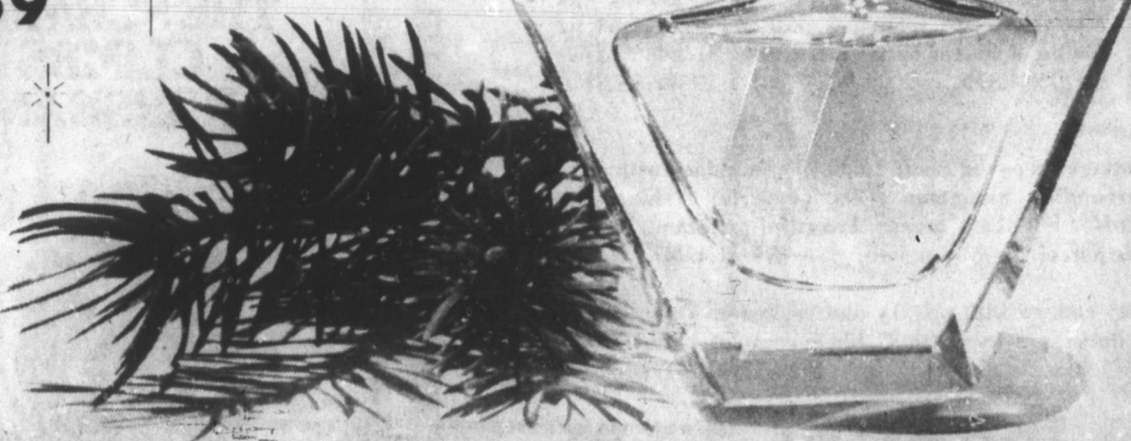
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