



HOUSE CLEANING AT BILTMORE - The leatherbound books in the library are treated with a lanolin mixture which must be applied by hand. It is left to dry overnight and then polished before each book is put back on the shelf.

Cleaning This House Is A Major Task

How do you keep a house clean that has 250 rooms - many of them filled with priceless antiques and art objects - 43 bathrooms, a bowling alley, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, an indoor gymnasium and has about 1,500 people dropping in for visits almost every day of the year?

If it's the famed Biltmore House, you clean every day and you clean very carefully. Keeping the largest private residence in America clean is not all that difficult from keeping your own house clean, according to Pat Ray, one of 22 people assigned full-time to housekeeping and maintenance duties at the Vanderbilt Estate. In this case, she said, there's just a lot more to clean.

Since the house is closed only on Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, housecleaning is an ongoing job, even during peak visitation periods, said Bruce Maxwell, chief of maintenance and housekeeping. "We save the big jobs until January, February and March," he said, when visitation is at its lowest.

Visitors enjoy watching the cleaning, Mrs. Ray said. "It's a treat for them." Many ask advice on cleaning and many offer advice, she said.

Cleaning the French Renaissance chateau may be similar in some ways to cleaning your own home, but there are distinct differences. Not many private homes have scores of 19th century Persian rugs on the floors, or furniture made of mahogany and walnut, or a chess table once used by Napoleon, or a library that contains 20,000 volumes.

So what secret concoction would you use to dust a Louis XV chair, or a mahogany Chippendale table, or a burl-walnut bedstead?

"A damp cloth," Maxwell said, "that's all. We don't use any kind of furniture polish or oil because it builds up on the wood and attracts more dust."

To clean the wood paneled

walls, however, Maxwell said he uses a bees wax based solution. "It makes the walls shine and doesn't attract dust," he said.

As for dusting some of the more valuable items in the house, such as a Han Dynasty Chinese vase, or a 16th Century porcelain figurine, or a 17th Century music box, "You learn to be very careful," Mrs. Ray said. "You learn how to handle things." Maxwell said there have been very few accidents with valuable items.

Mrs. Ray and her three co-workers handle mostly the light housekeeping chores such as dusting and polishing. Maxwell said one person is assigned full-time to dust mopping floors, another works full-time polishing all the brass and copper fixtures, such as door and cabinet knobs and braziers. The Wedgewood and Spode china have to be washed regularly, the silverware polished every couple of weeks. Glass and windows have to be cleaned as needed. Drapes, sheers and curtains have to be washed, vacuumed or drycleaned.

"About the only thing we don't try to clean are the tapestries," Mrs. Ray said. "They're just too fragile."

Since the carpets are so old and valuable, a screen wire is placed over the rugs before they are vacuumed to keep wear to a minimum.

While the main cleaning chores are concentrated on the 34 upstairs and 18 downstairs rooms open to the public, the non-public areas also have to be regularly cleaned, Mrs. Ray said.

Even the books have to be cleaned and treated periodically, according to Marion McGuinn, estate librarian. About every 4 or 5 years, all the books are taken down and their leather bindings treated with a lanolin and wax mixture, a process that takes about four months.

"Many people think that

George Vanderbilt was a rare book collector," McGuinn said. "Not true. This was a working library and the books reflect Mr. Vanderbilt's interests in the fields of history, art, architecture and landscape gardening."

In keeping with Vanderbilt's intent of having a self-sustained working estate, the 18-person maintenance crew includes carpenters, plumbers, electricians, painters. "About the only things we farm out are tile and copper work and stenciling," Maxwell said.

Underway now is a complete electrical rewiring of the house, a three-year project. Maxwell said it's the first time the house has been rewired since it was completed in 1895.

"We're about two-thirds finished," he said, "and we've used about 50 rolls of wire." The wiring comes in 500-foot rolls which translates to about five miles of wiring so far.

Floors are stripped and refinished every year, Maxwell said, and "we try to repaint two or three rooms a year." Old paint has been stripped off and new paint matched as closely as possible to the original.

Many people who have to clean house every day complain about the boredom. This isn't the case at the Biltmore House, however.

"Every time you clean you pick up something different, something you haven't seen before," Maxwell said. "It's really an interesting job." Biltmore Estate includes Biltmore House and Gardens, Deerpark Restaurant, and Biltmore Estate Winery, which is scheduled to open to the public for tours and tastings on May 15. The estate is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. except for Christmas, Thanksgiving, and New Year's days. Admission is charged.

Cinderella Pageant Applications Taken

Applications are now being accepted for candidate-at-large contestants in the 1985 North Carolina Cinderella Girl Pageant. The pageant will be held July 11-14, 1985 at the beautiful Heritage Grand Hotel, in Heritage Village USA, near Charlotte, N.C.

There are four age divisions: Tot (3-6); Miniature Miss (7-9); Miss (10-12); and Teen (13-17). Competition includes party dress (evening gown for teens), sportswear, and talent (optional).

The Cinderella Pageant is a youth-oriented program and is the third largest pageant

scholarship program in the world. Winners in the state pageant advance to the International Pageant in Miami, Florida where the winner in each division receives over \$15,000 in cash and prizes.

Each candidate-at-large will receive a crown, banner, and trophy to be presented to her at a lovely candle-light dinner.

For further information write N.C. State Director, 1015 Fox Hound Court, Charlotte, N.C. 28212. Telephone (704) 568-5921 or (704) 857-6385.

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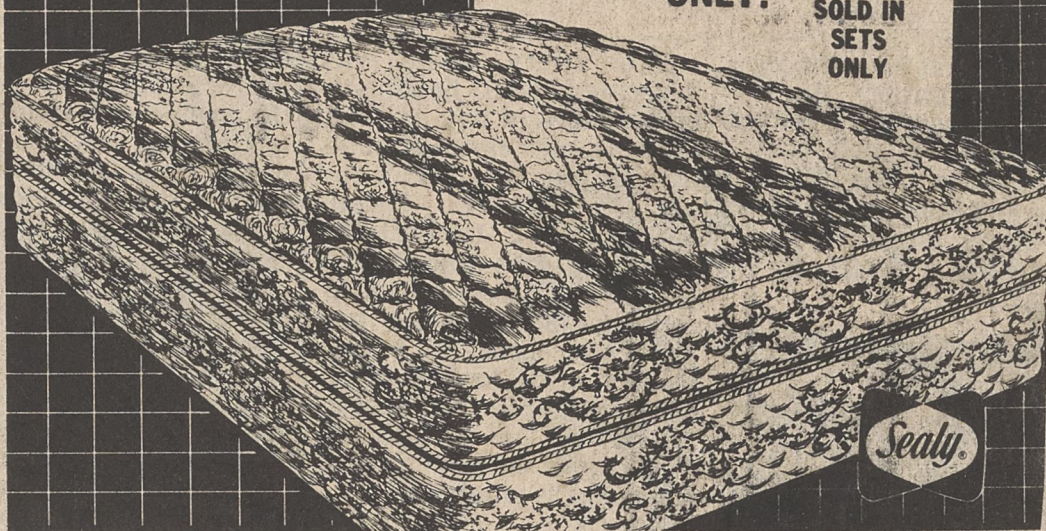
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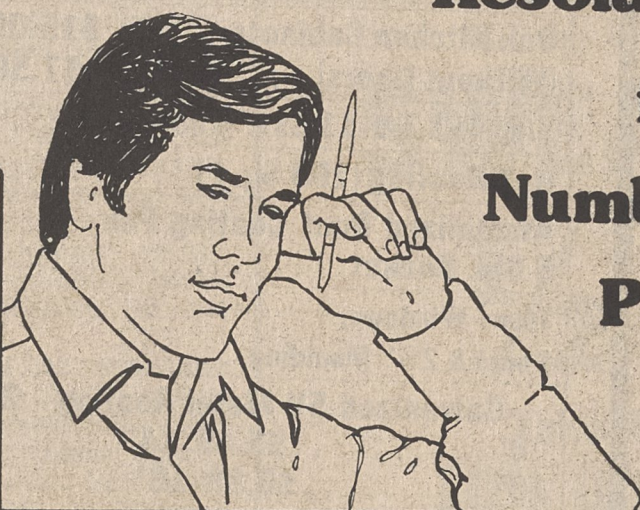
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