

Whippoorwill E-Comment

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SATURDAY NIGHT BATHS

Delores J. Miller

LIVING on the Wisconsin dairy farm during the 1940s, we thought we were modern by having electricity and a bathtub. Granted we had the outhouse, which my Mother scrubbed every Monday morning with the water from the washing machine. It continually smelled of lye soap. Clean and no awful odor. The legendary Sears, Roebuck catalog for toilet paper.

Don't know from whom we inherited the claw footed bathtub, that resided in the cubby hole under the stairs. Perhaps it was a reject from the Kohler Company where several Sheboygan uncles were employed. It boasted a drain, that led the waste water outdoors into the apple orchard and pig pasture. No faucets, we were lucky to have the soft rain water cistern and hand pump, and cold hard water from the well.

No hot water heater, but the wood kitchen range, with it's reservoir of hot water, plus the copper wash boilers heated enough water for us on a Saturday night ritual of bathing.

We were a family of five, my parents and two older brothers. Because they worked in the barn milking cows, I was privileged to be the first one in the tub on Saturday night. All five of us used the same water, but hot water was added with each person. Home made lye soap, we didn't know what Ivory or Life Bouy smelled like until years later.

Because it was mandatory, we all attended the Lutheran Church on Sunday morning, baths were a requisite. One had to scrub and scrub off a week's worth of dirt.

Like I say, we were lucky to have that tub, others less fortunate had to make due with 'sponge baths'. A once over with a small pan of cold water, a rag to scrub, the same lye soap.

Then the clean clothes which had to make due for a whole week until the next Saturday night bath.

In 1950 a bathroom was installed, a heater furnished hot water, septic tank and flush toilet and life was never the same.

During the summer months, my brothers went to the creek for a swim and to get the hay chaff and oats dust off their bodies, especially when they went 'girling', I was never allowed to go along as they swam naked.

Now we take showers, bath tubs are obsolete. Clean clothes every day.

Oh, what a long ways we have come.

On a Trauma of Country Living

I read Delores' article with some interest. Living as we do out here in the wilds of Kentucky, the nearest city sewer lines are at least eight miles distant, so we have a septic system. An *old* septic system. We were told that such systems generally function well for about 35 years, but we were using ours on borrowed time – about 55 years. And then it became necessary to add additional drain lines down into our side yard. In came a back-hoe and in early April our yard looked like this:



Nearly \$5,000 and four months later, we have a restored septic system. You can guess that this was a very traumatic experience for us. If you're in the neighborhood, please feel free to stop and use our bathroom.

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