

Laundry turns out to be a filthy business

By Chris Norred
Of the Emerald

It's not easy being clean.
Nov. 1, 1986: That was the day I last did my laundry.

That day I resolved to do laundry every Saturday so I wouldn't have to carry 50 pounds six blocks to the laundromat and spend three hours doing six loads.

Reporter's notebook

But I woke up today and searched my closet and realized the extra-large yellow boxer shorts that I received as a gag gift one Christmas were the only clean pair left.

Two short-sleeved summer shirts were hanging at the very end of the closet. Neither was very warm, so I wore them both. I picked up my trusty Levi's, which have become a fashion craze for the simple reason that they can be worn all week without being washed. I looked at them and felt almost sorry for such a reliable article of clothing that's been so mistreated.

The poor Levi's just don't look the same after the sixth day of wear. The hip pockets are no longer at your hips, but somewhere closer to your knees.

People begin to stare when you wear them, not because they're dirty (nobody can really tell); people stare at unwashed Levi's because they stretch out with each day's wearing, and after a week passersby give you the look they normally reserve for people born without arms or legs, only they think you were born without an ass.

I'm not sure why it's so hard to get the laundry



Graphic by Lorraine Rath

done. I remember an English literature class I had in which we spent an entire day discussing the social symbolism of laundry and its consequences in the order of things.

It seems some people, you might call them poets, can explain the mysteries of life using the terms of Tide commercials.

The so-called poets announced that there's a whole meaning to laundry, which men can't really understand — it goes way back in history. An argument en-

sued and consumed the remainder of the class period.

An old guy in the back was especially interested. "Both my second and fourth wives divorced me because of laundry," he said.

I don't know if anyone can really understand laundry. It's a vicious little creature that grows every day until it eats your entire house. Or it's the dark little secret that you hide in your closet until it finally drives you insane with paranoia. Or it's that nasty unrespectable habit that only your closest friends know about, and no matter how hard they try to help you, eventually the habit will break your bank account and destroy your life.

But it seems nobody can escape it.

Then there's Sarah's friend who decided to go to school at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash. He wanted to fit in with the hippies, so he didn't wash his jeans for six months. Then for some ungodly reason his mother ran them through the Maytag. He became a contradiction: a hippie with clean jeans.

Laundry, when I lived in the dorms, was an easy undertaking but still a significant subject to be discussed over dinner in the cafeteria.

Dorm laundry is cheap, and it's nearby, and if you leave your clothes in the room long enough, somebody will even fold them for you.

My parents' friends used to tell me about their college days. They made laundry sound romantic. Laundry rooms were full of women just dying to meet men while their whites were on spin-dry.

The only interesting character I ever met in a laundromat was a drunken transient who was trying to rifle the change machine and asked me to help.

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Search for 'Secret Dreams' a nightmare

By Greg Sutherland
Of the Emerald

It seemed like such a simple assignment. All I had to do was dial a telephone answering machine, leave my name and number, and wait for someone to call me back with all the information. Bang! There's my story. What could be easier?

Getting Jimmy Hoffa to call me would have been easier.

Reporter's notebook

I'm still stumped. What was this "Secret Dreams" phone service all about, anyway?

Here's what I knew before I called: "Secret Dreams" is a

phone service with a Eugene telephone number, which allows one to express one's secret fantasies to an answering-machine cassette.

That's it. Those were the cold hard facts. I was curious. What types of fantasies? Who started the whole project and why? How was it funded, and where was the number advertised? Was any other information displayed?

Okay, so it's not Watergate or Al Capone's treasure chest, but I was still curious. I arrived home after class and tapped out the digits into my phone. Four rings later, I heard a click and synthesized psychedelic music, probably from the soundtrack to a bad 60s movie. An emo-

tionless female voice talked over the music in a very short deadpan imploration to the listener:

"You have reached 'Secret Dreams'. Begin after the beep. Talk as long as you like. Please remain anonymous."

I told them my purpose, left my name and number, and hung up quickly; I have an aversion to talking to machines. Now I was really confused. The ambiguity of it struck me as funny. No sexual connotations. No explanations as to what purpose this served. I waited for the call.

And waited. And waited. Oh, I got a few calls, one from my mother, and one for somebody named Mildred, but no "Secret Dreams." I gave them the benefit of the doubt, though. It was Friday, after all. Or maybe they thought what I said was a dream, and that I wasn't really a reporter.

So I called on Saturday and Sunday. Once again, nobody called me back, but maybe they take weekends off.

Monday was the day. They'd have to be there. I left another message early in the afternoon. By the time the football game came on, I was a little upset, and to be frank, I'd become quite obsessed with the whole situation. My message on Tuesday was sincerity personified,

even if it was a machine.

"Listen guys," I said in as friendly of a tone as I could muster. "I'm not Mike Wallace. I just want to talk. We don't even have to publish this if you don't want to. Just call me, and we'll talk. I only want to know what's going on."

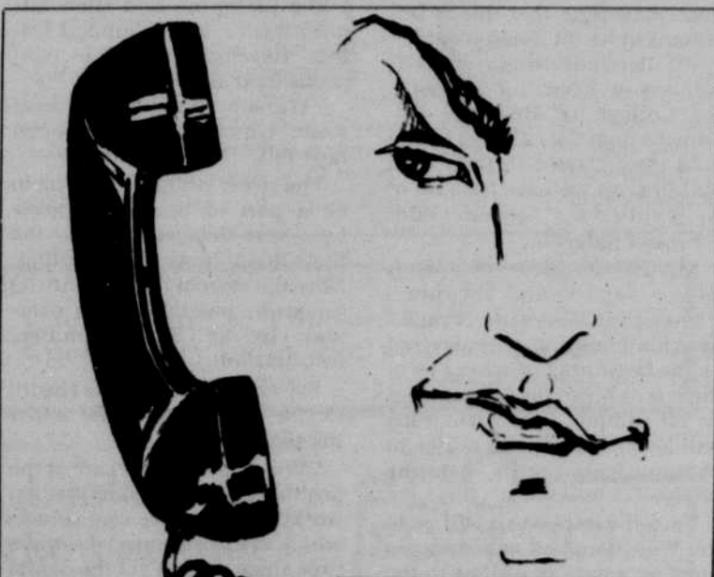
By Wednesday I was in a frenzy. I tried to trace the phone number's address through the operator and directory assistance, but it's now illegal to give out such information. I called Consumer Fraud and then looked through the reverse phone directory. No dice. No one had heard of "Secret Dreams."

One more time, I thought, one more call. I dialed, and after only two rings, a familiar voice turned my dream story into a frustrating nightmare:

"You have reached a number that has been disconnected or is out of service. If you feel you have reached this recording in error—"

I slammed the phone down. What had I done? I chased the service out of business. Was it some psycho who got his jollies out of listening to the dreams? Or was it a psychology student doing a project? I guess we'll never know !!!

But I sure did tell that machine about some pretty weird dreams.



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