

From the E-mail bag

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be, like in the 1500s.

*Many people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June.

However, they were starting to stink, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide body odor. That's why we have today's custom of the bride carrying a bouquet at her wedding.

*Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water; then all the other sons and men; then the women, and finally the children.

Last of all, the babies were bathed. By then the water was so dirty that you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

*Houses had thatched roofs, thick straw piled high, without wood beneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small creatures (mice, bugs) lived in the roof.

When it rained the roof became slippery, and sometimes the animals would slip off. That's where the expression, "It's raining cats and dogs," came from.

*There wasn't anything to keep items from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom, where bugs and

other droppings could mess up a nice clean bed.

Thus, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came to be.

*Floors were dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. So we got, "Dirt poor."

*The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in wet winter weather, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh, until when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside.

A piece of wood was placed in the entranceway. Hence the term involving a "thresh hold."

*In those old days they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added ingredients. They mostly ate vegetables and did not get much meat.

They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight, and then begin anew the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while.

That brought the rhyme: "Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old."

*Sometimes they would obtain pork, which made them feel special. When visitors arrived, the pork would be hung to show it off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "bring home the bacon."

*A piece would be cut off to share with guests, and all would sit and "chew the fat."

*Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

*Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf; the family got the middle; and guests got the top, or "upper crust."

*Lead cups were used for drinking ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock out the imbibers for a couple of days. Someone walking along a road, who found one of them, would think that they were dead and prepare them for burial.

They were laid out on a kitchen table for a couple of days, and the family would gather 'round, waiting to see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a "wake."

*England is old and small, and sometimes townspeople would run out of places for burials. So they would dig up coffins and take the bones to a bonehouse; then reuse the grave.

When reopening these coffins, one out of 25 was found to have scratch marks on the inside; and it was realized that they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on a wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin

and up through the soil, and tie it to a bell.

Someone would have to sit in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell. Therefore, someone could be "saved by the bell" or was considered a "dead ringer."

And that's the truth. Now, who said that history is boring?



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Also coming soon: handyman in-home services.

For further information please phone Kimberly at G-Dub's Enterprises, 592-2770.

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*On water resources, I would save Savage Rapids Dam and complete Elk Creek Dam.

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