

HINTS FROM HELOISE

To thwart bugs, mold, stack firewood off ground about 6 inches

Dear Readers: By now, many of you have a nice supply of firewood. But make sure you're not inviting problems. Keep the wood dry and free of mold and bugs. That's why piling wood on the ground is a bad idea. You never know what's nesting in



HELOISE

the wood. Stack wood off the ground using a commercial rack, or make your own with galvanized pipe.

Leave at least

6 inches between the bottom of the wood and the soil.

Stack the wood with the bark side up for better protection against water, and keep the stack at least 6 feet away from your foundation.

Keep a supply of dry wood in a plastic garbage can outside your back door, and take logs inside only as you need them.

Dear Heloise: After reading your column about needing two people to check lights and signals on your car, I thought you should know about my accidentally discovered trick.

One day, I pulled into a business park nearby and parked in front of an empty office section with large tinted windows. I noticed my turn signal flashing in the window, so I checked the other one. I then checked my headlights and parking lights. After eating, I turned the car around and watched in the rearview mirror as I checked the rear lights. Since I discovered this trick, I occasionally pull into the parking lot of an empty building and check all my lights.

— D.M., Galloway

Dear Heloise: A pinch of instant coffee will make a pale gravy more appetizing in color.

— James Coon, Hicksville

Dear Heloise: I hate wasting paper towels. When I make fried foods, I no longer drain them on layers of paper towels. I cover several sheets of newspaper with one or two paper towels, then drain my fried item on top of the clean paper towel.

— Diane Piasecki, Fair Oaks, Calif.

Dear Heloise: I make popcorn on event nights for my high-school volunteers. Coffee filters make the best serving bowls, and they are disposable. They work with dry cereal, nuts, trail mix and more at home, too.

— Diane L. Hennessy, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Dear Heloise: In our "empty nest," cleaning products are used up much more slowly than they previously were. If I take advantage of "two-for-one" offers and store the extra items

downstairs, my reminder not to buy another when the first is empty is to put a rubber band around the product that has a replacement downstairs.

— Margery Bolesen, Bellevue, Neb.

Dear Heloise: Here is what I do when I have a smaller load in the dishwasher.

I put in the toothbrush holder (have you looked in the bottom of yours?), soap dishes, canister lids, cookie-jar lids, vases and ceramic decorative objects from throughout the house. I don't put everything in at once — just the things that fit and have a little dust on them or need a good cleaning.

— Kathy Adams, Bakersfield, Calif.

Dear Heloise: There is another reason for people to keep the receipts for gift cards. If the recipient tries to use the card and it doesn't work, you have proof that the card was purchased from that store. I bought a card as a Christmas gift, and, when the person tried to use it, the card had not been activated. So I went back to the store, and the salespeople told me that without the receipt there was nothing they could do. I now give the person the receipt with the card.

— Jo-Dean Greenlee, Huffman, Texas

Dear Heloise: If you use a pressured-water device as part of your dental-hygiene routine, swish it through a mixture of half vinegar and half water occasionally to clean and deodorize the device. Be sure to follow with a cup of plain water before using it again.

— Jeanne McCarthy, Marco Island, Fla.

Dear Heloise: I take old pillowcases, cut slits in the hems and put in drawstrings (or you can buy inexpensive laundry bags at a discount store). We keep several in our suitcases for road trips. Everyone puts his or her dirty clothes in the bag, so, when we return home, all dirty clothes go straight to the laundry room, and we can unpack later, after we rest.

— Barbara Walker, via e-mail

Dear Heloise: I discovered something that made window washing a little easier.

Before I started washing inside, I brushed off the dust on the glass and around the frame with a vacuum. Eliminating the dust drastically cut the amount of newspaper and cleaner I used, and helped reduce the streaking.

— Bonnie Sumner, Mesa Verde, Calif.

Heloise answers letters only in her King Features Syndicate column. Write her at P.O. Box 795000, San Antonio, Texas 78279-5000; or send a fax to 210-HELOISE.



Val Boehm, the owner, surrounded by mementos from the restaurant

WILL SHILLING | PHOTOS FOR THE DISPATCH

FIXTURE

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have time to cook. You can always count on a beer here with the special to go."

The decor is as much of a draw as the \$3.75 baked ham-and-cheese sandwiches and \$5 pizza-sized omelets.

And the family-friendly ambience is for real.

At 10:30 on a recent weekday, a boy no taller than a barstool sipped a man-sized shot glass of milk as his guardians nursed long-neck Buds over chitchat with employees and other customers.

Such customers have filled three versions of the Old Trail.

Boehm moved the original Old Trail Inn — the entire cinder-block building — south across Rt. 40 (Broad Street) in 1968.

In 1984, a new Old Trail — a wooden, one-story stormy-sky-gray rectangle at 72 S. Greener Ave. — was built and packed with antiques.

A sampling: "Lucy," a stained-glass nude; vintage porcelain whiskey decanters; a violin mold, circa 1850s; an antiquated fire extinguisher; oil paintings of Daniel Boone, Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley — and saddles, deer antlers, daggers and bullhorns.

Oh, and guns: The cache includes flintlocks, pistols, shotguns and — the centerpiece — a Browning automatic rifle hanging by chains from a roof beam.

Perched in what resembles a 2-foot snow globe is a stuffed bald eagle, killed by a Plain City resident in 1893.

Despite all the diversions, visitors entering the Old Trail first notice customer eyes being fixed on them.

Then they see a mural, 17 feet wide and 6 feet high, of the National Trail, which eventually became the National Road, or Rt. 40 — which begins in Atlantic City, N.J., and ends in Silver Creek Junction, Utah.



ABOVE: The Old Trail Inn, at 72 S. Greener Ave. since 1984



LEFT: A faded photo of the original inn, which was moved once before settling at its latest home

The best time to strike up a conversation with regulars is happy hour, when \$1.50 beers flow like rush-hour traffic on the nearby interstate.

The morning mood among cigarette-smoking retirees, third-shifters and Old Trail workers tends to be subdued. CNN or ESPN booms from a television the size of a bank-vault door.

Bar sitters, the wait staff and solo eaters are easing into the day — or, for third-shift workers, coming down from it.

Nighttime — when Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, Toby Keith and Randy Travis

sing from the jukebox — is the right time.

On a late Thursday afternoon, Boehm — who spends his days caring for his ailing wife of 65 years, Jennie, or appraising properties (as a licensed real-estate agent) — might enjoy a beer with old friends.

"I don't drink whiskey," he said. "And I don't smoke or curse, and I always go to Mass on Sunday."

In the mornings, Boehm — dapper in slacks, walking shoes and a sweater, polo shirt and cap — greets customers, albeit quickly.

THIEF

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from a movie — a female Cary Grant, smooth and confident.

And she has been very, very successful. No one knows how many times through more than 50 years that she strolled into a jewelry store and strolled out with a ring worth thousands of dollars.

A teenage game

She grew up in Slab Fork, W.Va., where her dad worked in the coal mines and her mother sewed for extra money. She was the youngest of six.

When she was a teenager, the family moved to Cleveland. One day, her mother gave her a few dollars to pay the family's bill at a clothing-and-jewelry store.

"My mom says, if I get good grades this year, she's going to buy me a watch," Payne boasted to the store owner, Bill Benjamin.

Kind and friendly, he showed her some watches. She tried a few on, but then a boisterous white man entered the store. Suddenly it seemed that Mr. Benjamin didn't want to be seen being nice to a black girl.

He rushed her off, and she made it to

the door before she realized she still had a small gold watch on her wrist.

"Oh, Mr. Benjamin," she shouted gleefully, holding up her wrist, "I forgot this watch."

Mr. Benjamin snatched the watch from her arm.

It became a teenage game. Payne would enter a jewelry store and try on watches. She didn't steal. Not yet.

After high school, Payne and her mother lived together, her mother having left her abusive father. Payne was pregnant at 18 with a son and would later have a daughter, too.

Doris wanted her mother to know she had figured out a way to raise money, to take care of her.

"That's stealing," her mother warned. "It's not stealing, because I'm only taking what they give me," Payne said.

When she was about 23, she took a bus to a Pittsburgh fine-jewelry store and easily walked out with a \$20,000 diamond. Then she went to a pawnbroker to sell the ring.

No questions. No ID requested. She got \$7,500 cash.

At first, her longtime boyfriend, a tavern owner, gave her tips. But mostly, Payne was a one-woman gang, with her own patter.

She took her leads from the salesclerks and confused them easily.



Payne, in a Las Vegas courtroom

She had them take rings out all over the store and tried many on, asking about cut, clarity, carats. Usually, jewelry stores show only one expensive item at a time. But when a customer says she has thousands of dollars to

spend, rules are sometimes relaxed.

After a heist, she went straight to the airport to get out of town. Almost as soon as she stole, she sold.

Overseas trips

Payne got most ideas for her thefts from ads and articles in magazines, especially *Town & Country*. She flipped through the pages, spied a ring she liked, then traveled from her base in Bedford to the store that advertised it.

The Jewelers Security Alliance got onto Payne in the 1970s. Bulletins were sent to warn jewelry stores.

What made Payne different was that she was so prolific and so good.

"She pretended and gave all kinds of stories out over the years — of illness, of this and that, of sweet-talking people and making deals," says John Kennedy, the trade group's president.

In the early 1970s, Payne tried her skills overseas: first Paris; then Monte Carlo, where she flew in 1974 and paid a visit to Cartier, coming away with a platinum diamond ring. When she got to the airport in Nice, customs agents stopped her.

During the investigation, Payne says, she was kept in a "fifth-rate motel" by the Mediterranean. One day she asked the woman in charge for nail clippers and for a needle and thread to mend

her dress. She used the clippers to pry the diamond from its setting, sewed the stone into her girdle, then tossed the setting into the sea.

She wore her girdle day and night, even when it was wet from washing. Her room was searched every day, but the diamond remained hidden.

She has been arrested more times than she can remember. She has done time in Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Colorado and Wisconsin.

Still, the arrests are really "just the tip of the iceberg," says supervisory Special Agent Paul G. Graupmann of the FBI.

She is 75 now. The white hair that she fluffed into a perfect coif is combed back in a dull way that is hardly a style. No creamy makeup. No designer purse.

Payne is again behind bars, this time in Las Vegas' Clark County jail on charges that she stole a diamond ring from one of her old haunts — a Neiman Marcus store in Palo Alto, Calif. — and sold it in Las Vegas.

The journey has been long. She had fun dressing up, fun forging this career on her own. It was never about making money or spending it. It was about the game.

"I don't know," she said. "I think the whole thing just got out of hand. It kind of went amok."