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## Clothing the South Dakota Family in Wartime

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# Clothing

*the*

## South Dakota Family

*in*

## Wartime



AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING  
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE ♦ BROOKINGS

# Clothing the South Dakota Family in Wartime

By MRS. ANNA D. WALKER\*

## Introduction

The problems involved in clothing the family in wartime are many and varied. Need for clothing conservation increases as the weeks and months of war go by.

This short one-act play has been planned to help the home extension clubs in the state spread the gospel of clothing conservation.

The reader will note that the following practices are stressed in the conversation between characters in the play:

- ★ Use of glue solution for washing, with emphasis on woolen sweaters and a reference to its use for neckties and other articles of clothing.
- ★ Warning against use of explosive cleaning solvents.
- ★ Storage of winter woolens to protect them from moths.
- ★ Make-overs from men's suits.
- ★ The reweave patch for woolens in connection with make-overs (Method described in Extension Circular Number 394, "Mend and Save for Victory".)
- ★ Hints for increasing wear in stocking toes and heels.
- ★ How to prevent rubber heel marks on floors.
- ★ Clothing outlook for 1945.
- ★ Make-overs for children should look like they belong to them.
- ★ Bright-colored play clothes help prevent traffic accidents.

## Three characters:

**Mrs. Dakota**—A South Dakota homemaker

**Merry**—Her daughter a girl of about 15

**Mrs. South (Jane)**—A neighbor

**Radio Voice**—Can be Merry's voice

**Setting:** A farm kitchen or living room. A table, two chairs, radio, anything else to make scene look homelike. The end of the room in the home where the club meeting is being held will serve nicely as the stage.

\*Extension Clothing Specialist

Scene opens with Mrs. Dakota (*facing audience*) busily working over a table. The table holds two dishpans, a package of dry glue, some turkish towels. As the scene opens, Mrs. Dakota is singing "O Give Me A Home, etc.," and working over table. A rap at the door followed by the entrance of Mrs. South.

**Mrs. South:** Hello! Anybody home?

**Mrs. Dakota:** Oh! come on in Jane and lay off your things. I'll be with you in a minute as soon as I get my hands out of this glue.\* I thought I'd do a bunch of Bill's spun rayon and wool neckties while I was at it. I'm washing winter woolens before I store them for the summer. Best to have them clean before they are sealed up for storage so the moths won't eat them.

**Mrs. South:** (*Mrs. South comes over to the table*) Glue did you say? Guess that's a new one on me! Sure sounds sticky though!

**Mrs. Dakota:** Best idea for washing woolens I've ever tried, if it does sound sticky. But it really isn't. You see you just soak up some of this dry glue in cold water and add it to the water. You can use liquid glue if you'd rather, but it's not as cheap.

**Mrs. South:** What, no soap?

**Mrs. Dakota:** No, no soap. Just glue. I use about a tablespoonful of dry glue to a quart of water, just warm water mind you. Woolens can't stand any hotter temperature than the baby can. See, that sweater over there is soaking in a solution like that now. Stick your hand in it if you want to. See, it doesn't feel a bit sticky does it?

**Mrs. South:** Mm, no, I guess it doesn't. Do you just let it lie there and soak and for how long?

**Mrs. Dakota:** Yes, that's the beauty of it. You don't have to handle the garment and get it all out of shape like you do with ordinary washing. I let it stay in the solution about twenty minutes, and if it has any badly soiled places I take a brush and brush those places. Like this, just in one direction. (*Shows her.*)

**Mrs. South:** Is that all there is to it? Where did you get this idea anyway, and why haven't I heard about it before?

**Mrs. Dakota:** Whoa, one question at a time! No, you take it out after twenty minutes and put it in another solution made from one teaspoonful glue to two quarts of water and let it soak some more. If it's badly soiled it will probably take twenty minutes more. Then you rinse

it a couple of times in the same temperature of water. But Merry will be home soon and when she comes she will take care of this. Let's get some comfortable chairs and get some visiting done. I haven't seen you for ages. (*Go and sit in chairs.*)

**Mrs. South:** But you didn't tell me where you got this idea. I'm so anxious to try it.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Oh, that was in the clothing demonstration on war-time clothing problems we got in our home extension club last year. I wouldn't take a lot for the help it's been to me. I keep telling you that you should join our club! I think you are missing something!

**Mrs. South:** Guess I should! Did you say it's good for neckties? John's ties are in a bad way, and I've been intending to clean them in gas; but I've never gotten around to it.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Oh, don't use gas! I'd hate to hear of you burning your house down. I tell you Jane, if people would stop using gasoline for dry cleaning at home they'd cut down on lots of casualties on the home front!

**Mrs. South:** Suppose that's right, but with dry cleaning so hard to get done, I thought I'd have to do something. Does this glue business work on anything else?

**Mrs. Dakota:** Sure does. I've used it on the boys pants and some snow suits, and Mrs. North up the road here uses it for wool blankets and curtains.

**Mrs. South:** That would take a lot of glue wouldn't it? Isn't it quite expensive?

**Mrs. Dakota:** Not bad, Janey, I buy a pound of dry glue for around thirty cents and that goes a long ways. Makes about twelve gallons of solution I figured out. (*Enters Merry.*) Oh, here's Merry now. Mrs. South, you know our Merry, don't you? (*Mrs. South and Merry exchange greetings.*) Merry, I'm cleaning woolens, and there's a sweater and some ties to take out. Do you mind finishing up for me?

**Merry:** Oh, it's my red sweater! I've been wanting to wear it! Guess I'd better get my pattern. I draw around a sweater when it's new Mrs. South, then when I wash it I can always put it back into the shape it was when it was new. (*Merry goes about business of rinsing sweaters rolling in a towel, gets pattern out of drawer and pats sweater in place, while others sit and watch her. Shows it to Mrs. South.*) See here it is

all ready to dry. I'll take it up to my room and lay it down to dry, and I'm always careful not to have it dry near a stove or radiator. This sweater I have on has been washed half a dozen times and I think it looks as good as new.

**Mrs. South:** My that does look nice, and I don't think you'll need to press it, it's so smooth!

**Mrs. Dakota:** You can take the ties out too Merry, they are ready I think. Just put them out flat on the towel after you rinse them. You might cover them with another towel and roll them with the rolling pin. That will press the moisture out and press the ties at the same time. If you slip in a piece of cardboard cut to fit the tie, there won't be a ridge on the right side. Show her Merry. (*Merry goes about business of getting out ties, and Mrs. South looks on with interest.*)

**Mrs. South:** Well now isn't that something? I won't have to risk blowing my head off with gas any more, now that I know about this method. I brought my mending along. Seems I never do get through mending these days. (*Opens bag and takes out a piece of wool material ripped from man's suit.*) I ripped up these old trousers of John's, and I'm going to cut a jumper for one of the girls from it as soon as I get this patch made. (*Works on a reweave patch.*) When I get it done I can wash it the way you just showed me.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Can't you lay the pattern to cut around that hole. Quite a few patterns nowadays have been designed to cut from old suits and trousers. Did you get one of those?

**Mrs. South:** Yes, I have a pattern showing the lay-out, and I'll need every scrap of it if I get it out. I'm just putting on one of those woven-in patches you showed me how to do last year. It will never show when it's pressed and will be good and strong.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Well, I can't very well sit here idle, while you work; so I may as well get my stockings. I never do seem to get to the bottom of my mending basket when it comes to socks. What's that song about dancing with a dolly with a hole in her stocking? The song's cute, but a hole in a heel is pretty embarrassing to me!

**Mrs. South:** Heels and toes eh? Do you know that you could make those stockings wear about four times as long at the heels and toes if you wax them. It's an old European practice—a good one to revive these days.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Think of that! Four times the wear! How do you do it?

**Mrs. South:** All you have to do is rub a piece of candle wax or paraffin on the heels and toes before you wear the stockings. You don't have to wax them every wearing. Once the wax is applied, enough of it'll stay to make the stockings more durable for several washings and wearings.

**Mrs. Dakota:** But doesn't the wax feel funny?

**Mrs. South:** No, if you put only a thin film of it on, you won't ever know it's there. You can't feel it, and you can hardly see it.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Can you wash the stockings clean with it on?

**Mrs. South:** It doesn't make a bit of difference and it will cut down on the number of mends. Better try it!

**Mrs. Dakota:** I certainly will. While you are talking about wax, I'll tell you one. Maybe you aren't bothered with black marks on your floors and linoleums from these wartime soles and heels like I am.

**Mrs. South:** Who isn't these days, I'd like to know?

**Mrs. Dakota:** Well, I'll tell you what I've been doing about it lately. Just take some floor wax and rub it into the soles and heels real well, and you'd be surprised how much scrubbing it saves. I read the other day that there are going to be some non-marking heels on the market again soon.

**Mrs. South:** For which we all should be duly thankful!

**Mrs. Dakota:** Say, I just happened to remember, there's to be a broadcast about the clothing outlook this afternoon I wanted to hear. I believe if we tune in right now we'll just about get it. Do you mind? (*Goes to the radio and turns the dial.*)

**Radio Voice:** And now we will hear some timely information about the clothing situation in wartime.

**Mrs. South:** We are just in time.

**Radio Voice:** The demands of the armed services for clothing is still heavy. Requirements for woolen and worsted fabrics increased greatly in the past few months due to unexpected developments on the war fronts. Items which are especially needed are uniforms, battle

jackets, overcoats, trousers, shirts, socks, and underwear. All of the wool top, meaning combed wool fibers, produced between December 1944, and May 12, 1945, must be used only to fill military orders. We will be finding less rayon in the stores during 1945. Greater military needs have been reducing the supply available for us civilians. Because of this limited civilian supply, steps have been taken to direct the use of rayon yards toward purposes for which they are best suited. Hosiery and knitted underwear manufacturers will use most of the available viscose rayon. The acetate rayons will be used for the woven fabrics. The demand for cotton duck for tent fabric, munition belts, truck and gun covers, ship hatch covers, and for conveyer belts and belt drives in essential war industry is terrific. We won't see as much Chenille and tufted fabrics in 1945, instead this coarse carded yarn will go into essential war textiles. The children's and infants' cotton knit underwear and sleeping garment situation should be better in 1945. That is if every shopper will reduce her demands by 20 per cent, no shopper should have to go without. Don't go wild when you find some underwear just Mary's size and buy all you can get! Buy only those you need. Remember there are 31 per cent more children wearing sizes 0 to 2 than there were in 1937. They need their share of clothing. There should be more low and medium-priced essential clothing available in 1945 and less over-trimmed higher-priced garments for sale. In 1945 essential needs must be met in low and medium-priced clothing before textiles can be allowed for use in less necessary and higher-priced garments. We hope that on the average this clothing will be of better quality for the price.

**Mrs. Dakota:** (*Turns radio off*) Guess it looks like we'll have to keep on mending and making-over for a while yet. Well, we can do that too, just so our boys and girls in the armed forces are taken care of. It's one way we can help win the war sooner, isn't it?

**Mrs. South:** I'll not complain. I really enjoy making old clothes into new ones, especially children's clothes. It's such fun to make the coat or dress look like it really belongs to the youngster.

**Mrs. Dakota:** That's important, isn't it? Another thing I'm concerned about is to make outer clothes for children bright-colored enough to be easily seen. I've seen small children playing or walking on roadsides and their clothes blended into the landscape so perfectly they could hardly be seen by motorists. I always made sure my children had a bright cap, scarf or something, so they'd be sure to be seen if their coat wasn't bright enough.

**Mrs. South:** That's just one or more way to cut down on casualties on the home front isn't it? I'm going to pass that idea to some young mothers I know.

**Mrs. Dakota:** My, there's lots of things for us mothers to think about when clothing our families in wartime isn't there?

**Mrs. South:** Any time, war or peace, if you ask me; but especially now when materials are scarce and factory space and workers are so badly needed for war production. Here it is four o'clock and the children will be home from school. I'll just have to be going. It's been so nice to have this chat with you.

**Mrs. Dakota:** Time does fly doesn't it. Don't wait so long before you come again, Jane. I don't know when I've enjoyed an afternoon more. (*Mrs. Dakota gets Mrs. South's coat and helps her on with it. Mrs. South starts to leave.*)

**Mrs. South:** Now do come over before too long. Bring your work and spend the afternoon.

**Mrs. Dakota:** (*Calls after her*) I'll be over! Goodbye, Janey.

\*Mend and Save for Victory—Extension Circular No. 394—Directions for Reweave Patch.

\*Make-overs from Coats and Suits—U.S.D.A. Misc. Pub. No. 545.

\*Washing Woolens in Glue Solution—Extension Leaflet No. 98.

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