

# THE DIRTY TRUTH ABOUT YOUR CLEANING LADY



**16 Real Life Stories That Will Prove To You That  
Your Individual Maid Is Bad News!!!**

This ebook is published by Ron Holt, owner of the *Most Customer Friendly Housecleaning Company In The World* - **TWO MAIDS & A MOP**. We currently serve the entire panhandle of Florida through three locations - Panama City, Fort Walton Beach and Pensacola.

This ebook is available for free by visiting <http://www.ineedamaid.com/blog>. Click on the link entitled "ebooks". If you are a maid service customer, hopefully this book will educate you on the potential dangers lurking out there in the cleaning industry. If you are cleaning service owner, feel free to republish the book (without changes). And if you are an individual maid, hopefully this book will provide you with enough reasons to start learning how to become a real business.

In return, all I ask is that you at least consider donating to a wonderful charity called Cleaning For A Reason. The organization provides FREE cleaning services to women undergoing cancer treatment. You can make donations online by visiting <http://www.cleaningforareason.org/donations.html>.



**TwoMaids**  
**TWO MAIDS & A MOP™**

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# SEVEN REASONS TO BECOME AN INDIVIDUAL MAID

**1. Your start-up costs are minimal.** It's really up to you to decide your budget. The truth is that you can start your business with no money at all. Use your customers cleaning products/supplies and find your customers by printing some cheap flyers from your mother's computer. Or you could just post a free ad on Craigslist - somebody's bound to find you if your rates are cheap enough.

**2. You get to create your own work schedule.** Gone are the days when you need to be at work at a certain time. You get to show up when you want to show up now. Sure, the customer may be waiting on you. But who cares, there's another sucker searching on Craigslist right now.

**3. You don't have to pay taxes.** The IRS will never know how much you make because you require cash only. Of course, you'll take a check if your customer will write the check directly to you.

**4. You get to make more than \$15 per hour.** You know what the professional maid service companies are charging their customers. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that you can get away with charging just a little less than them. After all, it's just housecleaning.

**5. You get to quit without any notice.** It's your right to go where the money is. If somebody is willing to pay you more, then you'd be a fool to clean another house for less money. Take the higher bid. Everytime.

**6. You get to call yourself a business.** You do have a business license to prove it after all. Sure, the license only cost about \$25 bucks. But it's an official document. You're a business owner.

**7. You can't be fired.** Sure, you can lose a customer or two. But the truth is there's plenty more where they came from. With your rates, it would take a real idiot to not hire you. So quit worrying about your quality. Quit worrying about your punctuality. And quit worrying about your professionalism. Your customers only care about one thing anyway. Your customers hired you because you're cheap.

There's one out there right now. Lurking through your neighborhood. Looking for their next victim. Starting a cleaning business is easy. It doesn't take a rocket scientist. Anybody can do it. And inevitably, anybody does do it at some point. Keep turning for proof.

# CHAPTER ONE



**No, The Dog Didn't Eat It  
Your Cleaning Lady Stole It!**

## A CONVICTED MURDERER STARTS A CLEANING BUSINESS

**PULASKI, TENNESSEE** -- A woman was apprehended after she escaped from an Indiana prison, where she was serving a life sentence for murdering her husband. She said that she didn't kill the man and that's why she's been on the run for so long.

Linda Darby, 64, previously of Hammond, was apprehended in Pulaski, Tenn., a small town about 75 miles south of Nashville, where she had taken on a new name and was working as a cleaning lady.



In 1972, Darby escaped from the Indiana Women's Prison in Indianapolis by climbing over a barbed-wire fence. For 35 years, she was known as Linda Joe McElroy, a grandmother who baby-sat children and cleaned homes.

"Are y'all sure you have the right lady? It's just hard to believe," said Paula Smith, Darby's neighbor.

Despite her conviction decades ago, Darby denied being involved in her husband's death in 1970 during a jailhouse interview in Tennessee. Authorities said her husband was shot and stuffed into a bag. The house was set on fire to cover up the crime.

"In court, they said he was burned and they said something about Molotov cocktails, and that's something I never even knew how to do," Darby told Nashville TV station WSMV. "I didn't mean to mislead anybody, but I didn't want to pay for someone else's crime. Police credited Darby's arrest to Indiana's recently formed fugitive task force. Even though Darby had no driver's license, authorities tracked her to Tennessee, where she was living a quiet, normal life.

"It's actually quite easy to be absorbed if they cut all ties from their previous life, which appears the case in this situation," said Brad Garrett of the FBI.

## A DRUG LORD TRADES IN HIS NEEDLES FOR MOPS

**GLASGOW, SCOTLAND** -- A drug kingpin who enjoyed a lavish lifestyle built on misery and death is running his own cleaning firm after being released early from prison. Heroin boss James Hamill, 48, is the owner of AAA Sparkle Clean. Hamill was recently released after serving half of an 18-year prison sentence handed to him in 1997. He was released on parole after forfeiting just \$38,000 of his \$4 million drug fortune to authorities.

But the Armani suits of his old life have been replaced with overalls and a high-visibility jacket, and his \$40,000 Mercedes traded for a blue Transit van. The four-bedroom mansion is also gone - home is now a rundown semi-detached with an untidy garden. Hamill is regularly spotted at the wheel of his van as he visits commercial and industrial properties giving quotes for work.



Few potential clients will have any idea he was once the biggest heroin dealer in Scotland. One source said: "Folk won't know who Hamill is. They'll probably remember when told the story but they wouldn't recognize his face or his name. I don't think many people would be willing to give him work if they knew who he was. They certainly wouldn't be keen if they had loved ones hooked on heroin or dead from using it.

"He spends all his time out on jobs for the firm. It's almost as if he's afraid to leave anyone else in charge. He's also paranoid. He still thinks he's being followed by police and is always looking over his shoulder."

Hamill was a high-roller with three luxury houses and bank accounts in Spain and South Africa. He thought nothing of flying to Europe for the evening, just to dine in fine restaurants. At the height of his reign, Hamill flooded Grampian with high-purity heroin. Although based in Glasgow, he ran the entire drugs trade in Aberdeen and its surrounding areas.

Police estimated his gang made \$6 million a year - and were responsible for 60 heroin deaths.

## A REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER CLEANS UP

MESA, ARIZONA -- A registered sex offender was arrested after a Mesa home was robbed during a house cleaning, police said. The home was recently purchased and being cleaned so that the homebuyer could move in over the weekend.

About \$3,700 worth of property was taken from the home.

“It’s pretty scary,” police said of the incident. The cleaners were found by the previous homeowner on the Internet using Craigslist, an internet bulletin board notorious for cheap deals.

Daniel Roman of Phoenix was arrested after he was found to be in the possession of stolen goods from the home. Roman has been convicted numerous times, including rape and armed robbery. The cleaners, which included Roman, his wife and granddaughter, entered the home through the garage using the keypad.



The previous homeowner received a phone call about 5:30 p.m. from the cleaners asking to be paid in cash at a different location, police said. The person was suspicious of the demand and asked police to check on the home.

Authorities found some items that were missing, including two guns and a laptop computer. Police also found items moved outside, including two other guns.

“They were trying to stage a backyard scene”, according to police.

Authorities arrived at the payment location and questioned Roman. Police said he told them he stole the goods and that they were inside his vehicle.

Roman faces three Class 4 felonies, including a theft charge and two charges of misconduct with a weapon.

## HOW TO MAKE \$100,000 IN TWO SHORT MONTHS

**NAPLES, FLORIDA** -- A cleaning woman was arrested over the weekend after deputies say she was caught on tape stealing high-end equipment from a North Naples cell phone store.

Veronica Kollar was arrested and charged with grand theft over \$100,000.



Reports say store officials began noticing boxes of the equipment used to repair and build bases for cell phone towers were missing from the Metro PCS store. Store officials reviewed store security video, which showed Kollar taking the same type of equipment on six different occasions without permission.

The most recent incident was Friday, according to reports. Kollar entered the store around 5 a.m. to perform her daily duties. While inside the business, she removed boxes containing high-end equipment, according to reports.

She was arrested Saturday after deputies pulled her over on a traffic stop for driving a red Toyota Celica with an expired tag. Deputies learned she does not have a valid driver's license.

Deputies also learned that Kollar is in the U.S. on a Hungarian passport and should not be working while here. The company stated that the work was contracted to Elite Cleaning. Reports indicate that Kollar registered a business license under Elite Cleaning just two months ago.

## CLEANING HOUSE FOR A LITTLE METH MONEY

**KIRKSVILLE, IOWA** -- A woman won't be cleaning houses anytime soon after her arrest on felony charges.

According to court documents, 57-year-old Janet Sullivan is charged with felony counts of receiving stolen property and possession of a controlled substance, identified as methamphetamine.



Reports say that the victim had just hired Sullivan for a house cleaning when his wife noticed her wedding ring valued at \$6,000 was missing. Sullivan had just left the home, but there was no way to prove the theft.

Kirksville police then placed \$500 in cash in an envelope at the residence when Sullivan was due to clean again. After she left, officers reported more than one hundred dollars of the money was missing. The marked bills were found in Sullivan's possession after the incident.

Sullivan is being held in the Adair County Jail in lieu of 25-thousand dollars cash-only bond

## **SHE'D BEEN CLEANING HOUSES FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE FOR A LONG TIME**

**PITTSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA --** One elderly woman is dead and two others are injured following an attack at an upscale retirement community.

Deputies charged Barbara Clark, 41, with one count of first-degree murder, two counts of attempted murder, and three counts of assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury with intent to kill.



"I can't believe my daughter would go out and bust somebody's head," said Clark's father. Investigators say Clark had once worked as a housekeeper for two of the women.

"It's a very safe area. That kind of thing doesn't happen in that area," said Chatham County Sheriff Richard Webster.

Clark is believed to have gone over to the apartment to discuss a money matter. An argument ensued and according to the sheriff's office, Clark pepper sprayed the women before beating them with a blunt object.

"It was a very ugly scene," recalled Sheriff Webster.

Investigators found Clark near the crime scene on Wednesday, shortly after the crime happened. They say she provided them with a description of a suspect, but then they noticed inconsistencies in her story.

Clark's description of the suspect turned out to be false. Sheriff Webster added, "As the day went on, details came to the front that started pointing back to her." Court records show Clark had been in trouble with the law before for forgery and larceny.

"She'd been working cleaning houses with elderly people for a long time," said her father.

## THEY DON'T JUST STEAL YOUR MONEY

**ATHERTON, CALIFORNIA** -- Investigators are breaking out the bubbly after arresting a housecleaner and her boyfriend in connection with one of the nation's most brazen wine heists.

According to police records, thieves broke into a posh home and stole 454 bottles of wine worth \$139,000.



The heist – thought to be one of the largest of its kind – was the work of connoisseurs and insiders. The criminals removed few lesser-valued bottles and focused on “cult wines” made in limited numbers, often signed by vintners. They left no sign of forced entry.

Last week, after another dozen bottles of wine worth \$350 each went missing from the same home. So Atherton detective Sgt. Joe Wade installed cameras in the restocked cave and live video feeds went directly to his office.

The maid, 50-year-old Zhi Mua Deng, showed up with her boyfriend, Xiao Yan Xiang. Although Deng was not instructed to clean the cave, the pair entered. Xiang grabbed a bottle – then saw the camera and put it back, Wade said.

Two days later, Wade checked the video feed in his office – and the camera was pointed toward a wall. “We think he was trying to find its source so that he could take the tape and all the evidence,” Wade said of Xiang. “The only problem was that he wasn’t able to do it before I got his face.”

On Thursday, Atherton detectives confronted Xiang in front of his house. With a search warrant, they found some of the stolen bottles and arrested Xiang. They asked Deng to come to the police station, where they arrested her, too.

## **HOW TO AVOID HIRING THE NEXT BONNIE & CLYDE**

It can happen to anyone. You hired the wrong person. And you won't know that you hired the wrong person until it's too late. But there are some ways to ensure that your next hire isn't the next Bonnie & Clyde.



**Step 1. Conduct a nationwide criminal background search. That's how we do it. And here's how we do it..... click the link below**

**[Criminal Record Search](#)**

**Step 2. Ask for references. And not just from their best friend. Make sure that the candidate provides you with at least three previous employers.**

**Step 3. Require that your next maid provide you with a copy of their surety bond policy. And make sure that the bond is current. A surety bond only lasts for twelve months.**

If you haven't figured it out yet, hiring your next housecleaner has very little to do with housecleaning.

# CHAPTER TWO



**I WANT YOU**

***YOU CAN HIDE FROM  
UNCLE SAM***

## IT'S EASY TO RUN A BUSINESS WHEN YOU DON'T PAY YOUR TAXES

**ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA** -- The Minnesota Department of Revenue announced today that a couple faces felony tax charges in Anoka County. William Peter McCann, 65, and Patricia Mary McCann, 63, allegedly filed false individual income tax returns from 2003 through 2005.

During a department investigation, it was discovered that from 2003 through 2005 the defendants allegedly received over \$140,000 of taxable income that was not reported to the State of Minnesota.

According to the complaint, the McCann's owe the state at least \$9,750 in income tax for those years. A full formal audit has not been completed.



William McCann allegedly admitted that he had been doing remodeling jobs since 2002 and had received \$25 an hour, even though he is not a licensed contractor in Minnesota. He admitted to running a lawn sprinkler service for the past four years as well. The income he received from both of these jobs was not reported on the couple's tax returns.

Patricia McCann allegedly acknowledged that she knew her husband was involved in remodeling and construction projects, and that the money was put into their checking accounts, but was not reported on their individual income tax returns. She also admitted to failing to report that she had received \$225 per week for house cleaning services since April 2003.

Each felony count is punishable by a maximum sentence of five years in prison, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

## 26,000 REASONS TO NEVER HIRE AN INDIVIDUAL MAID

**BEAUMONT, TEXAS** -- A housekeeper who tripped over a crack in a driveway while hauling a bag of rubbish to the curb was awarded nearly \$27,000 in damages.

Gloria Landry worked as a housekeeper for R.F. DuBois, Jr. for nearly two decades. She sued him in 2006 after injuring her knee while carrying a large bag of garbage.

For 17 years, Landry managed to avoid tripping over any cracks running through DuBois' concrete driveway until June 8, 2005. In her suit, Landry says her part-time employer was negligent for "failing to maintain his property...and warn her of the dangerous condition."



Jurors agreed, awarding Landry \$12,383.35 in past medical expenses, \$9,620 in past physical pain and mental anguish suffered and \$4,810 in lost wages.

According to Landry's petition, DuBois allowed his driveway to deteriorate. "It is cracked and has moved. These cracks are presently allowing a two-inch height variance in parts of the driveway."

While taking the garbage to the street, Landry tripped on the concrete crack. She fell forward on her face, sustaining bruises both above and below the eye and on her chin, and bruised her leg, the suit said.

"Landry was an employee of DuBois," the suit said. "DuBois controlled the days she worked, her duties, and supplied the tools she used. Landry was injured in the course and scope of her employment with DuBois. DuBois does not carry workers compensation insurance coverage."

## ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ARE ILLEGAL MAIDS

**BACK MOUNTAIN, PENNSYLVANIA** -- Republican 10th District Congressional candidate Chris Hackett fired an illegal immigrant paid to clean his Back Mountain home for the last two years, after discovering this past weekend she could not work legally in the United States.



Hackett said the woman, who he only knew as “Susie,” informed his wife this past weekend she couldn’t legally work in the United States. Hackett’s family hired her two years ago to clean his house about twice a month and paid her by check.

The woman’s wage wasn’t reported to the Internal Revenue Service because it was small enough that he didn’t have to report it, Hackett said. The woman was hired independently by the Hackett family.

“I don’t specifically remember how we got her name, but it was not through a third party source,” Hackett said. “This is my obligation. We hired her. I’m not hiding behind anyone.”

## 15,000 MORE REASONS TO NEVER HIRE AN INDIVIDUAL MAID

**SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA** -- (1995) Governor Pete Wilson disclosed that he had employed three part-time housecleaners whose Social Security taxes he failed to pay.

But the Governor insisted that, as far as could be determined, all the workers were either United States citizens or legal immigrants. He also said that as far as possible, he had made good on the missing Social Security payments by forwarding checks to the Social Security Administration, with back interest and assessed penalties.



"I have never intentionally failed to make necessary Social Security payments," the Governor declared this afternoon in a written statement, accompanied by supporting documents. "But I take full responsibility for these oversights," he went on, "and have satisfied my obligations to Social Security."

**The total in back payments was about \$15,000.**

Initially, Mr. Wilson acknowledged having employed a maid in the late 1970's, while he was Mayor of San Diego, whose Social Security he had not paid. He said that the maid had been hired by his wife and that he knew nothing of the maid's salary arrangements. But in any case, he said, every indication was that she was a legal immigrant. Further, he said, he had made a lump back payment on her Social Security taxes.

"No report of wages was made to the I.R.S. and no payment of Social Security taxes was made," said authorities from the tax office. "Mrs. Wilson believes that in most years Williams only worked 8 or 10 times over the course of a year, and Mr. Wilson didn't realize that was frequent enough to require Social Security payments."

## HIRING A MAID MEANS THAT YOU'RE RUNNING A BUSINESS - WHETHER YOU THINK YOU'RE OPEN OR NOT!

**ATHERTON, CALIFORNIA** -- A woman who spent four years working as a live-in housekeeper and nanny for an Atherton couple filed suit in federal court against her former employers today, charging that they violated labor laws by working her 14 hours a day, six days a week, without overtime pay or breaks.

In her suit, Vilma Serralta charged that she was paid \$1,000 to \$1,300 a month to scrub bathrooms, wash windows, vacuum, mop and dust the 9,000-square foot home, cook, serve meals, hand wash china and silver, launder and iron clothes, and bathe, dress and supervise the couple's young daughter.



Serralta's employers denied the allegations and declined to comment further on the suit.

In an interview, Serralta said she was not familiar with California wage and hour laws, which require overtime pay for work beyond 40 hours a week, and that the family did not inform her of her rights, as required by law. She said she stayed on with the family because she needed the job and became attached to the family's 7-year-old daughter.

**The suit asks for unpaid wages, liquidated damages and penalties, which Serralta's attorney said could approach \$120,000.**

# JUST BECAUSE YOUR MAID CALLS HERSELF A BUSINESS OWNER DOESN'T MEAN SHE KNOWS HOW TO OWN A BUSINESS

**EAGAN, MINNESOTA** -- A man who ran several commercial residential cleaning businesses in the Twin Cities collected payments from his customers over a five-year period, but failed to remit sales taxes to the state. That's just one of 22 felony tax charges that prosecutors have filed against Stephen Edward Matters.

Matters faces a battery of charges that also include failing to pay wage and withholding taxes over a four-year period, making sales after the state revoked his sales tax permit in 2000, and failing to file or pay personal income tax, the complaint said.



According to the criminal complaint, Matters was the owner and operator of "My Maid" and other cleaning services and had sales of at least \$2,413,906 from 1998 to 2005. He did not remit sales taxes in excess of \$150,000 to the state, the complaint said.

An investigation by the Minnesota Department of Revenue found that Matters pocketed nearly \$55,300 that he withheld from employees' paychecks instead of forwarding the money to the state. The employees did not receive credit for Social Security taxes taken from their checks between 2002 and 2006 because the money had not been remitted, the complaint said.

Matters admitted that he collected sales tax from his customers and used the proceeds for personal expenses. He also admitted that he did not file personal income tax for 10 years.

Matters faces three counts of failure to file personal income taxes, five counts of failing to pay sales taxes, five counts of failing to pay wage and withholding taxes, three counts of failing to pay individual income tax, three counts of sales after revocation of permit, and two counts of failing to remit sales taxes.

# HOW TO AVOID LAWSUITS, TAX AUDITS AND JAILTIME - MAID SERVICE ACCOUNTING 101

## **An employee or an independent contractor?**

Lots of issues get raised with household help. The first is whether your hired help is really an employee or just an independent contractor. The IRS uses Form SS-8 to decide. You can [download it here](#) from the IRS.

Form SS-8 details the various criteria that the IRS looks at within the law, and the agency's focus is on control. Here's what to think about:

Someone is an employee if you can control not only what work is done but how the work is done. Whether the worker is part- or full-time doesn't count. Neither does the fact that you hired the worker through an agency (unless you're paying the agency directly), nor whether the worker is paid by the hour, day, week or by the job. Age doesn't count, either.

If you can tell the worker what to do and how and when to do it, then the worker is your employee.

Say you hire your next door neighbors daughter to baby-sit your kids and do light housework for four days a week in your home. You provide the supplies and equipment she needs to do the work. She's your employee, even if she's only 14 years old. And that's despite the fact nobody tells a 14-year-old what to do.

If a worker can control how the work is done, then that worker may be self-employed. A self-employed person provides his or her own tools and offers services to the general public. Think a gardener using his own lawnmower rather than the kid next door using yours.

Someone who performs child-care services for you in her home is also generally an independent contractor.

## **Can the employee work legally?**

If your worker is an independent contractor, your obligations are minimal. The worker gets a gross check, and you don't withhold any taxes. Unless the worker is doing work for your trade or business, you don't have to file *any* federal forms.

If you do have an office at home and pay an independent contractor \$600 or more for services related to your business, then you need to file a 1099 MISC with the IRS.

If your worker is an employee, go to the next step: Can he or she legally work in the United States?

When you hire someone to work for you on a regular basis, you and the employee must complete Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification. (You can access [the form here](#).) By the first day of work, the employee must establish his identity and employment eligibility. You don't file the form with any agency. But you keep it available for review upon notice by an authorized government official.

### **Oh, drat that employee withholding**

Now that you have an employee, you must withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from his wages. You match those withholdings and remit them to the IRS.

Total Social Security and Medicare taxes are 15.3% of cash wages. Your employee pays half, or 7.65%, and your share is the other half. On \$2,000 in wages, that means the total is \$306, and you and the employee each pay \$153.

You're also going to have to pay federal unemployment taxes, as well as any state taxes due. The 2005 federal unemployment tax is usually 6.2% (or 0.8% with a credit of 5.4% if you paid all your state unemployment by April 17, 2006) of cash wages up to \$7,000 per year. This one comes entirely out of your pocket.

Cash wages don't include the value of food, lodging, clothes or other non-cash items you give your household employee.

Income tax withholding isn't required for household help. However, you can do so if the employee requests. You can also make advance payments of the earned income credit where appropriate.

You use Schedule H, filed with your 1040, to report and pay these taxes. The Schedule H and full payment along with your return will all be due on April 17, 2006.

There are some exceptions, and they're important:

- **The baby sitter exception.** Your baby sitter may qualify for exemption from Social Security and Medicare tax if she's under age 18, if she's your employee and if baby-sitting is not her principal occupation. The IRS does consider being a student an occupation. Strangely, you'd be liable for federal unemployment tax if you paid \$1,000 or more in any one quarter. This also applies to the kid who mows your lawn, sweeps out your garage or walks your dog.
- **The income exception.** In 2005, you don't have to pay *any* federal Social Security or Medicare taxes if you pay cash wages of less than \$1,400 to any one household employee. IN 2006, that limit rises to \$1,600. You don't count any wages paid to your spouse or to your child under the age of 21.

- **The unemployment tax exception.** For unemployment taxes, you avoid any payment if the 2005 cash wages are less than \$1,000 in any calendar quarter. And, again, wages paid to a spouse or to your child under the age of 21 don't count.
- **The parental exception.** You don't normally count any wages paid to a parent. (This is, however, subject to exceptions.)

### **What you have to report to the IRS**

If you do have an employee, by January 31, 2006, you'll need to get an employer identification number (EIN) and send your employee a W-2. Use [Form SS-4](#) to get your EIN.

By February 28, 2006, you'll need to file Copy A of Form W-2 with the Social Security Administration. (You'll have to call the IRS at 1-800-829-3676 to get a printed version of [the form](#).)

By April 17, 2006, you'll need to file [Schedule H: Household Employment Taxes](#) with your Form 1040.

**OR IF ALL THIS SOUNDS TOO COMPLICATED - JUST HIRE  
A PROFESSIONAL CLEANING SERVICE. THEY'LL DO ALL  
THE ACCOUNTING WORK FOR YOU. IN FACT, YOU'LL  
NEVER EVEN KNOW THAT TAXES ARE PART OF THE  
EQUATION.**

# CHAPTER THREE



**YOUR MAID SHOULDN'T FEEL LIKE  
SHE'S PART OF YOUR FAMILY**

## WHY YOU CAN'T HUG YOUR MAID

**ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA --**

I love my housekeeper. I don't mean that in the way that people say they love their Treos or their iPods: I greet my housekeeper at the door with a hug and a kiss and we spend the first few minutes of her arrival gossiping and swapping family stories.

I love her because she's kind, trustworthy, funny and thoughtful. She's a lovely friend. I just wish she were a good housekeeper.



I wish she got my floors cleaner, figured out a way to get rid of that nasty water stain in my sink and really scrubbed my shower. I wish she did windows. We hired her after a nearly marriage-ending series of arguments over cleanliness nine years ago. At the time, I had no idea what to expect and was thrilled just to have someone else cleaning up after my husband every other week.

I appreciated that for an extremely reasonable rate, I could have another woman sweep the used dental floss from the bathroom floor. I was relieved that if Hubby refused to wipe down the sink after shaving, someone else would. And I think I actually thanked her in a Christmas card one year for picking up all the socks and shirts Hubby had strewn across our tiny apartment.

Now, though, I think it would be nice to not have to vacuum after one of her visits. But what to do? She's been in my family longer than my dog. Longer than my kid, for that matter. She has a key to my house – a sign of trust I haven't even bestowed upon my mother. So firing her is out of the question.

I've tried telling her directly to do a better job at this or that – a reminder that only works for a short time. I've even passive-aggressively left Ajax in the bathtub before leaving the house. She was nice enough to put the Ajax back, but I'm not sure she used any of it.

I am now officially out of ideas. Stumped.

**DEAR ANNIE - I DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE  
COMPLAINING ABOUT MY HOUSECLEANING TO MY  
HOUSECLEANER. AFTER ALL, SHE'S BEEN MY FRIEND  
FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS!**

**Dear Annie:** I've had the same cleaning lady for over 20 years, with no problems until the last two. Lately, I have been missing jewelry and blouses. My husband couldn't believe "Corinne" was taking anything until one of his expensive gadgets went missing.

We are both in declining health and must have help in the home, as we cannot do it ourselves. I know Corinne is taking advantage of this. She is an excellent worker, but she always carries a large purse and it's easy to walk out with things.

What should I do? I'm afraid if I confront her about these missing items, she will quit. I've hidden my expensive jewelry, but even so, things continue to disappear. Any suggestions? — No Name, No State

**Dear No Name:** It's possible you are mistaken about the stealing, so first approach Corinne and say, "I can't seem to locate my pearl earrings. Can you find them for me?" This gives her notice that you are aware things are missing, and it provides an opportunity for her to "discover" them without making accusations. If she doesn't do so and things continue to disappear, it's time to find a new cleaning person or hire a cleaning service. We know you are accustomed to Corinne, but apparently, she costs more than you intended to pay.

## SHE WOULD NEVER DO THAT - SHE'S SWEET AS PIE

**CANFIELD, NEW JERSEY** -- The woman who foiled a burglary at her home Jan. 30, and later learned that her former cleaning lady was a suspect, says the situation will change the way she hires people in the future.

Darlene DeChellis said she never suspected cleaning lady Joann Douglas of being involved — until after she helped police arrest Douglas' brother-in-law.

“She was as sweet as pie,” DeChellis said of Joann Douglas, adding that she never suspected Douglas of doing anything improper — even after the restaurant she owns with her husband was broken into sometime around New Year's Eve.



Joann Douglas had cleaned at the DeChellis home every other Wednesday for about a year and cleaned at their Italian Cafe every Friday for a couple of months. After burglars took cash from the restaurant, they had the locks changed, but promptly handed Douglas a copy of the new key. “She just never crossed our minds,” Darlene DeChellis said of Joann Douglas.

Darlene DeChellis arrived at her home unexpectedly one evening to the sound of someone stomping around in the upstairs part of her home. The burglar, later identified as John Douglas, realized someone was home and fled out a back door. Police tracked the burglar down and discovered that his name was John Douglas, the brother-in-law of Joanne Douglas. A police detective said that the pair confessed involvement in the restaurant and home burglary.

**Joann Douglas worked for a cleaning company when she first provided cleaning services for the DeChellises' daughter. Later, Douglas began to work for their daughter independently of the cleaning company.** Darlene DeChellis said she that when she is ready to hire another person, she's going to do some background checks.

## START ACTING LIKE A CUSTOMER

If you're going to be a customer, then you need to start acting like a customer. And once you start acting like a customer, then you'll start getting treated like a customer.

Take a peek inside this customer's head for a few seconds. Hearing from a frustrated person is way better than hearing it from me.....

*"I don't like confrontations. I like that my maid feels comfortable with me. I've never shown disapproval and now that we've been together for two years, I find it harder than ever to suddenly be the boss."*

*"Of course I'm more frustrated with myself for not knowing how to fix my relationship with my maid. After she left ("See you Thursday after next, Mr. Mo!") I resigned myself to breaking up with her by leaving her a message canceling her next visit, then never calling back to reschedule. Unhealthy, I know, and nonsensical considering I was so concerned about her feelings."*

If you were a customer, you could just complain. You could complain about anything you wanted to complain about. Because you're the customer. And it's your service provider's job to make you happy. But you're not a customer.

You're a friend. And you can't go back. You can't go back to being a customer. You left the world of customer service a long time ago. Of course, you did hire an individual maid.

She's not a company. No matter what her business card says. She's an individual. And this is what happens when you hire an individual.

When you hire an individual, the world of friendship always overtakes the customer service world. It's called human nature. And it's inevitable.