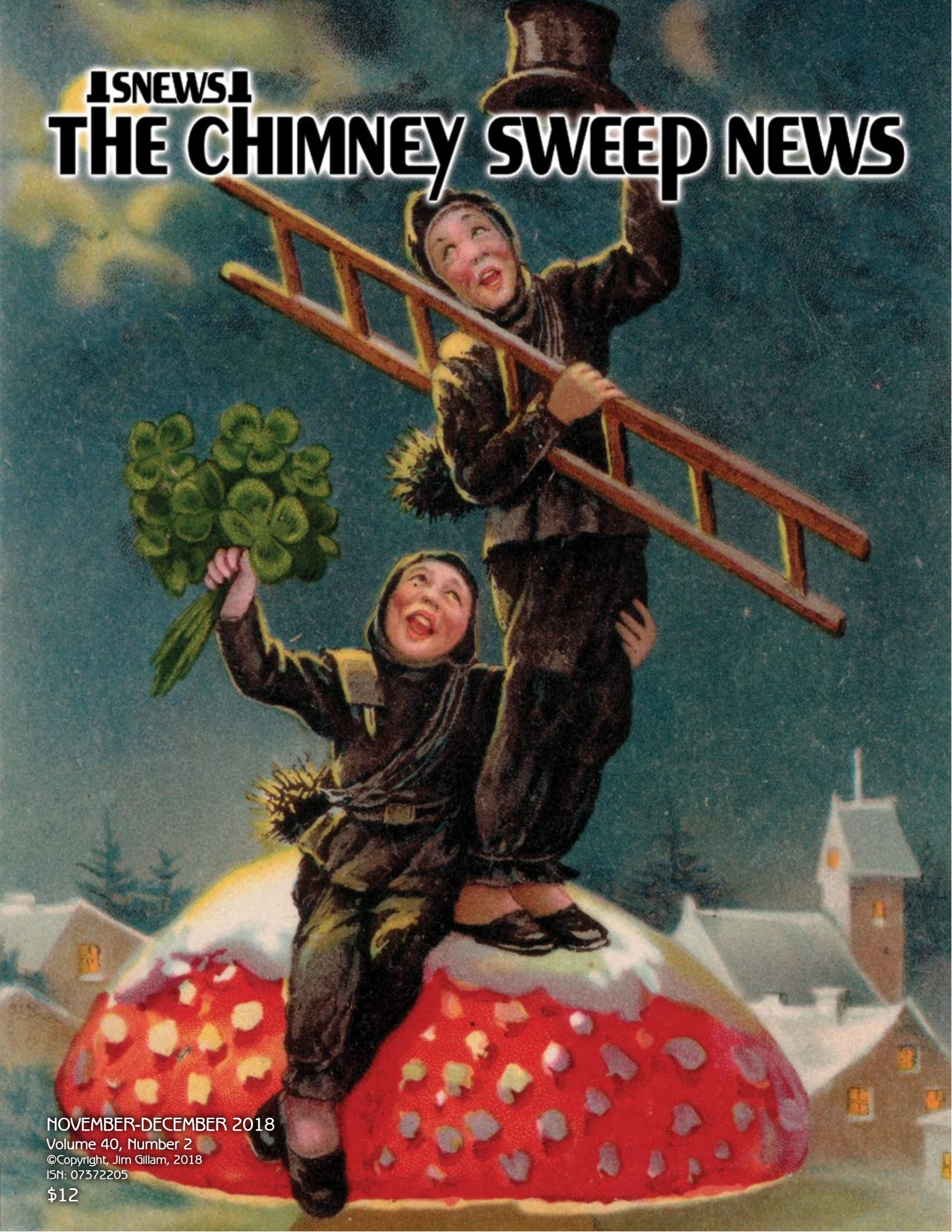


# ISNEWS! THE CHIMNEY SWEEP NEWS



NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018

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# ISNEWS THE CHIMNEY SWEEP NEWS

## Voice of the Sweep since 1979

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ON THE COVER  
Best wishes for the coming year. Postcard from Hungary.  
Courtesy of Steve Snyder.

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# A Bleak View of Future Employment But I Think Chimney Sweeps Do OK in the End

By Dale Howard

Those of us who are parents and grandparents worry about the future for our kids. With automation advancing at the pace it is now, I think there is plenty of reason for concern. One might look at the picture below and say, “Let’s see it climb up a scaffold and rebuild a top.” That would be a trick indeed. But the big point is that lots of stuff people do now is going to be done by robots later.

Self-driving cars, and big rigs too. Huge farms don’t need lots of people — mostly some guys in a control room in front of a computer screen and some field problem solvers. The machines will work all night long if you want them to. I hear robotic nursing assistants are big in Japan. What is the difference between 1000 people watching a video of a teacher (robotic school) and a real robot there? They have been doing that for years but they don’t lower the price any. Drone deliveries are already being done. Factory automation is way beyond increased production now; jobs lost to machines in many cases are gone forever.

Amazingly, it turns out computer-doctors are way better than you would imagine. They produce better diagnoses by percentage than human doctors. Not that I want one, but if the overall results are there and it’s cheaper, who do you think the insurance companies want to “hire”? Dr. HAL. Good luck Dave.

## What Comes Next?

The fast answer to the question of what comes next is, “We’ve been down this road before; machine aids didn’t put us all out of work, just made us more productive and made our lives easier. Plus new jobs crop up to replace the old ones.” I can’t deny any of that, but am not so sure it holds up into the future.

When machines can fix machines, please tell me what those new jobs will be. (Does anyone doubt that will be common 50 years from now? Or even 20?)

There will probably be plenty of civil unrest as we transition to whatever the future looks like. Back in the 1700s, automation came to the textile industry in England and it put plenty of people out of work. To “fix that” the former weavers tried to smash all the machines (the Luddite Revolution) and the military had to put the riots down. In the end, it didn’t change anything, but it does tell you a lot about what people do when backed

into a corner. Times may change, but people don’t.

Routine labor is replaced all the time by machines. I live in Maryland where

crabbing is a sizable industry. People pick crabmeat better than machines but, since a lot of crab pickers got deported lately, mostly we get machine-picked crabmeat now. I doubt those jobs will ever go back to humans.

I have a Roomba (robot vacuum cleaner) and it does a reasonable job. Anyone not have a washing machine? People used to do the wash. Which one of you has no power tools? At what point does increased productivity give way to outright unemployment? Think Detroit.

But with jobs that require education



Dale Howard



Robot bricklayer



## FROM THE EDITOR

### Dear Readers,

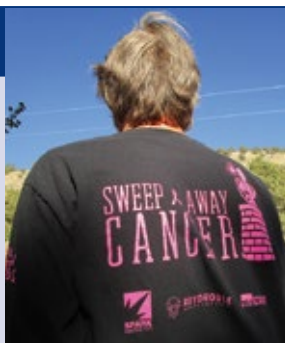
When it comes to the topic of climate change, chimney service professionals can feel good, or at least neutral, about promoting the use of biomass fuels such as wood and pellets. Efficient combustion of biomass is considered a neutral contributor to greenhouse gases since the carbon released is of relatively current origin. However, the carbon released by burning natural gas and petroleum fuels was sequestered by plant life millions of years ago. Burning those products releases ancient carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and is considered the major contributor to climate change.

Chimney professionals and the hearth industry need to rethink their promotion of natural gas. The recent UN report on climate change gives humankind about a dozen years to reorganize society to avert catastrophe. It is past time now to stop promoting the recreational use of natural gas such as decorative fireplaces. Gas and oil should be seen as transitional fuels to get us to non-polluting sources of energy.

We cannot rely on government to do this. Most of us do not welcome government regulation and coercion anyway. We must each choose the responsible course so that we can leave a livable world to our children and future generations.

Thanks to YOU and our loyal advertisers for your support! YOU make this publication possible. We thank Jill Beddoe for her excellent graphic design work on these pages. Thanks to Sutherland Printing for their diligent printing and mailing efforts. I especially thank Manager Extraordinaire Harriet for her love and devotion.

*Chimney Jim*



and/or skill starting to disappear too, it makes you wonder. Even if you manage to do something that a machine probably won't do (which, happily, mostly chimney sweeps do — let's see a machine install a liner) who will hire you? The teacher/doctor/bank teller/grocery store clerk/brick layer/nursing aid/truck-taxi-tractor-delivery driver/factory worker/crab picker/etc. who used to have a job?

## The Work that Will Be in Demand

So what to do? You can go off the grid, but most won't or can't. You can take it as it comes, which most will — though it may not be much fun. My guess is that for the foreseeable future, the ones who serve the machines (i.e. designing, building and fixing) them have the best chance of staying employed.

In my opinion, a lot of the “education” over the past several years was useless from the start and certainly about to be outmoded even if it was useful at one time (I've got a pretty dim view of the education industry). Many colleges have turned into glorified tech schools (which academic people generally disdain, so there is a contradiction for you.) The education industry generally does not have the answer; they still crank out degrees in (and put people in debt for) studies about the sociological importance of football to students taking sociology, sports science, or media studies. Well, that will prepare you for the future!

The long haul I can't begin to guess, but I think the nearer-term decent futures belong to engineer types, problem solvers and the artistic/thinkers.

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Artistic/thinker types have a relatively small niche; and they are mostly born with the talent; skill alone comes up short of spectacular. I have a grandson who is going to school to become a film director. I have another grandson who is a sculptor in wood. Most people can't plan for careers like that and there isn't wide demand. Mostly thinkers are not involved in public service and there is only so much room for thinkers in industry. It is a niche with more supply than demand.

But there will be lots of room for problem solvers — a niche with more demand than supply. Problem solvers include chimney sweeps, plumbers, mechanics, etc. Until everything is built so a robot can plug in and see what is wrong (probably not forever away...) AND manufactured so that it is easily

repaired/replaced by a machine, there will be a place for problem solvers.

For our lifetimes, I imagine robots have one plan: Plan A to replace [whatever]. As a problem solver, you may be able to provide the work all the non-employed people really need.

Robots will probably never be able to fix something by jumping a wire or moving a hole in the wall to the left two inches, etc. Imagination will always have a place.

Interesting that this is a concern at a time when it is hard to find qualified people to do most anything. Yet most available jobs available either don't pay anything (being part-time and on-call at Noodles counts as employed) or they would pay plenty but you can't find people who can do the job. With as close to 100% employment as we get, not many people give this stuff a second thought.

The good news is that all this is not going to happen in the flip of a switch. However, since it is happening right now and the pace will only pick up, it would be a mistake to pretend like it isn't coming. So, I think teaching your kids to be problem solvers and/or guiding them into an education that stands a chance of working with the machines is the medium-term hope. And keep on sweeping!

*Dale Howard currently assists with marketing at New England Chimney Supply, which acquired his former business Regional Chimney Supply in 2017. Dale started sweeping in 1978 and has been an occasional contributor to The Chimney Sweep News for many years.*



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Dave Laverdiere - Owner of Boston Brick & Stone - Pasadena California

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# Take a Clean Deep Breath

*By Toby Brown  
Smoke Stack Services, LLC  
Eastsound, Washington*

Breathing is an important part of life. Dust masks and respirators are the important tools that help keep your lungs happy and healthy on the job.

## Choosing a Respirator

Choosing the right respirator for this important task is the first step in protection. Using the respirator is also vitally important; it doesn't work if you don't wear it. Making sure it works properly is critical.

When purchasing a dust mask or respirator make sure it fits properly, creating a tight seal between the rubber and skin. Beards, piercings and glasses can render respirators useless.

Selecting the right type of filter is critical to ensure proper protection.



Disassemble the respirator and clean each individual piece.

Before you start the job, it is important to know the chemicals and substances to which you are being exposed and which filter will protect you. Manufacturers make filters for almost every type of particle and vapor. Check with the product safety data sheet (SDS, previously MSDS) to determine what



Frank Ayres (Ayres Ashes Away Chimney Service, Chiloquin, OR) tests the fit of a half-face respirator.

chemicals the product contains and how to properly protect your lungs.

When purchasing a new respirator, make sure that the filters are replaceable and that the store carries the type of filter for the job. The fittings on filters match the particular manufacturer's respirator, ensuring that you will



Toby Brown cleaning a respirator.

continue to purchase their filters.

A N95 dust filter will not protect your lungs from organic vapors like benzene or toluene. Dust masks are single use and should be stored in a sealable container. These inexpensive dust-filtering masks should be properly disposed after each use.

## Cleaning Your Respirator

The most neglected aspect of respirators is routine cleaning. The process of cleaning full face and half face filtering respirators is simple and only

*continued on page 8*



## Save when you order directly from the manufacturer



A collection of seven different types of stainless steel mesh screens and filters. The items include: a circular screen with two vertical support arms; a rectangular screen with a flat top and a mesh body; a square screen with a V-shaped top and a mesh body; a circular screen with a flat top and a mesh body; a rectangular screen with a flat top and a mesh body; a square screen with a flat top and a mesh body; and a rectangular screen with a flat top and a mesh body.



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Gaskets in a pan of warm water. Harness in the sink. Face mask ready for washing.

takes a few minutes. Almost all respirators consist of a series of rubber gaskets and rubber valves.

The cleaning process is done best with a large sink with warm water, a dish tub or pan and a clean counter top. I also recommend:

- 2 large lint free towels
- scent free liquid dish soap
- 1 small sealable bag
- 1 large sealable bag.

Place one of the clean towels on the counter as a landing zone for the clean wet parts as they come out of the sink.

The first step is to remove the filters and discard expired filters or heavily used filters. For filters that are reusable, seal the connection ports and put the filters in the small clean sealable bag (photo). Be careful not to lose any gaskets or rings. Remove any large chunky bits (mortar, adhesive, creosote, etc.) from the respirator body.

Fill the dish tub or pan with warm water and a few squirts of dish soap. Remove the harness and strap assembly from the respirator and set it aside in the sink. Remove any exterior gaskets or rings and put them in the warm soapy dish tub. Carefully remove the exhalation port from the respirator body and place in dish tub. Carefully remove the small rubber disk seal and place it in the tub. Look inside the respirator body and locate the inhalation ports. Carefully remove the small rubber disk seals and place them in the dish tub. If the respirator has a remov-

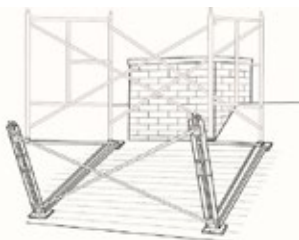


Thin rubber disc seal.

able nose cup, remove it and place it in the dish tub. The goal is to reduce the respirator to its individual parts for cleaning. After everything has been disassembled, proceed to wash each part in the warm soapy dish tub, gently rub each part ensuring every surface is clean. Rinse each part thoroughly and set to drip dry on the clean towel. Wash the harness last, since it typically contains the most oils.

After washing and rinsing all the parts it is time to dry. Use the second clean towel to dry each part. I don't

*continued on page 10*



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Carefully reassemble the respirator.



Respirator parts on a clean towel as they come out of the sink.

recommend letting parts air dry, as it is likely that gremlins will steal the most important part while you are not looking.

With everything dry, it is now time to reassemble. Put the respirator back in reverse order as you took it apart. Start with the respirator body and continue all the way back to the harness. Be gentle and pay attention to the alignment marks most respirators have. Be extra gentle with the round seals and ensure that they seal properly.

Once everything is back together give it a test breath to ensure it is working properly and adjust any parts as needed.



Cover the connection point of the filter after use to keep out contaminants.



Place the clean respirator in a sealable for clean storage.

With cleaning complete, put the clean respirator into the large resealable bag along with the small bag containing the filters. I consider my big clean bag as a sacred space. Nothing dirty goes in the bag, ever.

The cleaning process should take about 15-20 minutes at first but as you become familiar with the process, it should take only about 10-15 minutes. A small investment considering the importance of breathing.

My legal advisors say to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper usage and cleaning.

Tip: use blue painters tape to cover the clean connection point on the filter after use. Sealing the clean side helps prevent debris from contaminating the filter while its being stored.







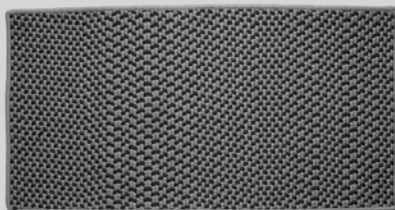
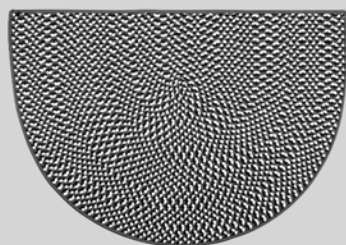
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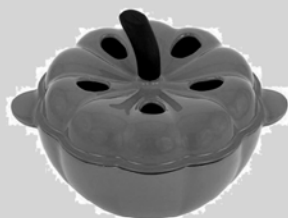
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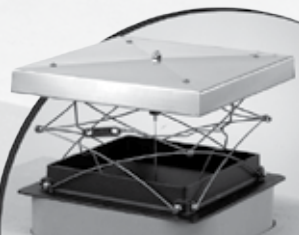
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## **Tip for the Trade: Mask the Brick When Pointing**

*By Frank Ayres  
Ayres Ashes Away Chimney Service  
Chiloquin, Oregon*

We live in an area with lots of older homes, some around 100 years old. This high desert/forest area experiences dramatic temperature fluctuations. The frequent freeze/thaw cycles break the tops of chimneys. Many chimneys are crumbling and need repair.

Some of these homes are in well-maintained neighborhoods. Some of the repairs have stained the bricks for an “obviously repaired” look, which degrades the street appeal of these beautiful older houses.

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# Every Business Needs a Website, Here's Why

*By Taylor Hill and Carter Hawkins  
Spark Marketer*

Some say Google is on a mission to become the new home page for businesses; that they want to provide searchers with everything they need to know about a business, without ever leaving Google.

Sure, the Knowledge Panel provides searchers with a lot of the information they are searching for, like the business phone number, location, hours, and online review scores, but does that mean you no longer need a website? We would argue no, and not just because we happen to build websites.

You want any information that could convert curious searchers into loyal customers readily available, and your website is a great place to provide that. Don't let naysayers convince you your website is insignificant or unnecessary — even the smallest business could benefit from a website. Here is why...

**Your website builds credibility, proves authority, and shows customers you are a real company.**

There is certainly no shortage of scammers in the world, especially in the trades, and especially in the chimney industry. It can be hard for customers to know who is trustworthy and who is going to take their money and run, but

how can you convince those searchers that you are trustworthy if you do not even know they are considering you? Let your website do the work.

According to BrightLocal's 2017 Local Consumer Review Survey, visiting the company website is still the most common next step after reading reviews. With a website, you are able to build authority and earn a degree of trust before meeting a potential customer face to face. Think that is just a nice thought? It's more than that! 34% of consumers believe a "clear & smart" website gives a business more credibility. Just having a website can secure confidence and give your potential customers peace of mind.

Not only that, your website also allows you to showcase your expertise and knowledge, so those searching for your services can confidently pick up the phone and call you, knowing you will take care of their problems and do the job right.

**Your website acts as a hub where potential customers, those who hear you speak, and those you network with can learn more about you.**

One of the greatest advantages to having a website is that it acts as a cen-



**Taylor Hill and Carter Hawkins**

tralized place where you can send people to learn more about you, your services, and your company, 24/7. You spend money on advertising -- like radio ads, TV commercials, AdWords, or other ad campaigns -- but where do people reached go to schedule an appointment or find out more about your business? Whether customers or colleagues have questions during office hours or while they are up nursing at three in the morning, your website is always there. And unlike listing sites and social media profiles, your website provides ample space to introduce your company and educate those wanting to know more.

Having a centralized place where you showcase your services and experience, share information and answers to FAQs, and build authority and trust makes it easy for potential customers to get a good idea of who you are, what you do, and why you are a better choice than your competitors are.



The fact of the matter is, people are doing less research after reading reviews — if it's hard for them to quickly find the additional information they need to confidently pick up that phone, they're going to move on to someone who makes it easy. Websites make it easy. We are willing to bet that at least one of your top competitors has a website that will sell them if you don't have one to sell you.

## **Your website gives you a chance to show up organically and locally when people are searching for your services online.**

As a chimney company, you need those in your service area to be able to find you when they need you — otherwise, the phone will stop ringing. And where are people going when they need help? To Google.

Without a website, you cannot rank organically, and if you can't rank organically, you are less likely to show up in local search results. It does not matter how much better you are than the competition, if potential customers don't know you exist, they certainly will not be calling you.

Your website also acts as the most trusted citation for Google, confirming the information Google needs to know to surface your business with confidence in search results: information like your business name, address, and phone number.

Without a website, Google's confidence decreases. Google is not going to take chances on your business if they are not confident because they care more about surfacing the best results for the searcher than they do about how local businesses will feed their families.

## **Your website is more controllable than your social profiles.**

It seems Facebook is in the news every other day for something — another privacy issue, an algorithm change, etc. Who knows what Facebook's status (pun intended) will be five years from now? However, many business owners think that a Facebook business page can take the place of a website.

While having a Facebook page for your business is a good call, if you are using that as an alternative to a website, you are putting a lot on the line. "Likes" have dramatically lost their value and organic reach on the platform is virtually nil.

If you are solely relying on your Facebook business page to bring you new customers ad-free, don't. Facebook and other social platforms will never provide you with the permanent, controllable online presence that your website will.

## **Your website allows you to track and tweak.**

The key to marketing success is tracking and tweaking. With a website,

you are able to track all the direct and referral traffic that comes in. Knowing who is visiting your website, how they are getting there, what they are looking at, and how long they are staying can give you the knowledge you need to tweak your website and marketing messages and retarget those who have expressed interest in your business.

Without a website, you are missing out on a great deal of helpful knowledge and countless opportunities to convert more leads into customers.

Have questions about what a website can and cannot do for you? We would love to hear from you!

*Taylor Hill and Carter Harkins are the co-founders of Spark Marketer, a Nashville-based digital marketing company that works primarily with service businesses. They're also the co-hosts of the Blue Collar Proud (BCP) Show, the podcast that's all about having and living the blue collar dream, and the co-authors of the book, Blue Collar Proud: 10 Principles for Building a Kickass Business You Love. Both regularly speak at service industry trade shows and conferences across the nation. @sparkmarketer, @bcpsshow, @taylorkhill, @carterharkins, facebook.com/sparkmarketer, facebook.com/bcpshow/, facebook.com/groups/bluecollarproudnation/*





# Heating Safety Tips

Heating is the second leading cause of home fires after cooking. Unfortunately, people frequently overlook some heating hazards. From 2013-2015, an average of 45,900 home heating fires occurred in the United States each year, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. These fires caused an annual average of approximately 205 deaths, 725 injuries and \$506 million in property loss.

Fires that were confined to chimneys, flues or fuel burners accounted for 75 percent of home heating fires. Twenty-nine percent of the nonconfined home heating fires — fires that spread past the object of origin — happened because the heat source (like a space heater or fireplace) was too close to things that can burn.

Here are some heating safety tips for the winter season:

## Fireplaces

- Have flues and chimneys inspected by a certified chimney professional before each heating season for suitability of use and blockage by creosote or debris.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. Never close the damper if the ashes are still warm. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.



- Use a metal or glass fireplace screen to keep sparks from hitting nearby carpets or furniture.
- Keep kindling, paper, and décor away from fireplaces and wood stoves.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid, outside, at least 3 feet from your home.

## Space Heaters – Give Them Space

- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn — including furniture, blankets, curtains, and paper products.
- Place the heater on a stable, level surface. Make sure it will not be knocked over.
- Never place a space heater close to any sleeping person.
- Never power the heater with an extension cord or power strip.
- Do not leave the heater on while you are not there or while you are sleeping.
- Choose space heaters that turn off automatically if they tip over.
- Purchase and use only space heaters that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.

## Furnaces

- Have your furnace and venting system inspected by a qualified professional each year.
- Keep anything that can burn away from the furnace.

## Smoke Alarms

The early warning provided by smoke alarms can save your life.

- Install a smoke alarm on every floor of your home, even the basement.

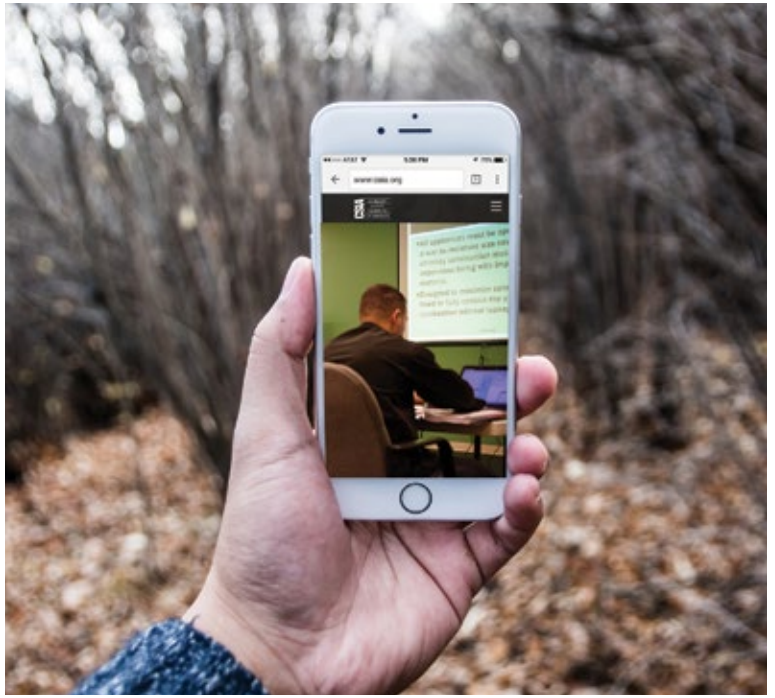
- Install a smoke alarm outside every sleeping area.
- Teach children what your smoke alarm sounds like and what to do if they hear it — get out and crawl low under smoke.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Change the batteries at least once a year — maybe at Daylight Saving Time or on your birthday.
- Replace smoke alarms after 10 years.
- If an alarm sounds, leave your home immediately and call 911.



## Carbon Monoxide – The Invisible Killer

- Seek medical attention immediately if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, lightheaded or nauseous.
- Have your heating system inspected and serviced by a qualified technician every year, including furnaces and chimneys.
- Use portable generators outside your home and place them at least 20 feet away. Never use a generator inside a home, basement, shed or garage. The exhaust from portable generators contains poisonous carbon monoxide, which can kill in minutes.
- Never leave a car running in a garage even with the garage door open.
- Have working CO alarms on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas.





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# Increasing Your Bottom Line

*By Karen Foreman  
Copperfield Chimney Supply*

There are a couple of widely known, proven ways to increase your bottom line. One is to increase sales; another is to reduce expenses. But what about everything in between? In the chimney and hearth industry, there are additional solutions to improve your bottom line – things you can implement right now for a more successful season.

## **Increase Sales**

Are you satisfied with your business income? Would you like to create more sales with each job? The “close” of a sale starts the moment a consumer calls your company, or sees your website, social media, or online rating. Do you frequently monitor your referrals?

Your customer’s experience may be the clincher for increased sales. When you pull up to their house, you are on their territory – their “safe place.” Treat their home better than you would your own.

Introduce yourself and sum up what you understand they want you to do that day. Listen closely. They may share with you a part of their dream or their ideal situation for their home. If they do, summarize what they just told you to confirm for them that you are listening and that you care. Make recommenda-

tions for making their dream a reality.

Your customer must trust you to make their purchases without feeling “sold.” They want to make the decision based on what is going to complete their dream.

In sales, it is crucial to follow up. There is a short window of time to close a sale. The best window is while you are at your customer’s home. The next best time is within 24 hours of your meeting with them.

## **Increase Prices**

When your employee picks up the telephone to make a sales call, when you start your work vehicle, or when your employees punch in – outflow starts. Are you charging enough to meet these demands as well as to make a profit? Make sure your prices are adequate and as demand increases, consider raising your prices.

## **Increase Customer Base**

The hectic autumn season is a hard time to increase your customer base unless you have done your homework. Did you forward schedule last year’s customers and take care of them in the spring/summer? If so, autumn is open for potential new clients.



**Karen Foreman**

Another way to increase your customer base is through your customers’ Facebook shares, online testimonials, and positive ratings – these are all opportunities to grow your business. I know of a local insurance company that gives out \$10 Subway gift certificates for every customer lead that becomes a customer. They report surprisingly good results.

## **Market Your Business**

Marketing includes the actual work. If a job goes south, a customer can create many negative inputs in today’s digital world, which take time and focus to reverse. To keep problems from escalating, take time to listen and take care of the customer before it becomes a damaging problem.

Leverage what works. Positive com-



ments on Facebook? Do similar posts. Before and after pictures are attention getters, but get permission from your customers to use them. Set up an account for Pinterest, a great place to post your quality work.

## Retain Employees

Training employees is a big investment. Not only is training a financial investment, it also involves a time commitment. One of the biggest complaints I hear in this industry is how hard it is to keep and to motivate employees.

Employees do not come to work for you because they don't have anything to do. They come for the "WIIFM" (What's in it for me?). They are there to make money so they can pursue their dreams, take care of their family, purchase a house, pay the rent, etc.

If they see you pull up in your Corvette the first day at work, their thought is likely, "I'm going to have my own someday." The question is, are you going to help them obtain it and keep them as your employees or are you going to give them reasons to leave your business and start their own?

One of the most important things you can do to retain employees is to make sure you have their "buy in," which includes gaining their respect. Driving your Corvette to the office, sitting behind a desk with your feet up, spending long lunches and talking about your toys and weekend home, may not

endear you to your employees. Respect is generally earned, not given – drive your old work truck, get out in the field, handle the difficult customers, listen to your employees, and lead. Be a leader, a respected leader.



Illustration by Laura Eaton Jones

Do you provide bonuses? The industry seems divided on this. I feel it is up to you to implement a strict code of ethics and train your employees in salesmanship. Watch your sales grow ethically.

Your employees are there to make a difference – to grow, to feel needed, and to be praised. They stay at your business to make money and they believe in what they are doing. What are you doing to foster that? Do you have a growth program for them so they will continue to invest their time and skill in your business? Are there future opportunities? Give them reasons to stay and they will bring you sales.

## Work More Efficiently

One of the best ideas I have heard for being efficient comes from one of my customers. She sets up the relining

trucks with a big box of extra components. If her company is out on a job and someone forgot to order a component, they can finish the work using items from the box of extras. When a tech pulls a part from the box, it is quickly replaced. A little planning and implementing can save hundreds of dollars in rescheduled return work.

Scheduling is another way to be more efficient. Are you over scheduling? Are you under scheduling? Do you know how much time it really takes to do a job? If you run your business from one truck, do you have someone who can pick up some slack if a job gets complicated and runs over on time? Scheduling appropriately is a big part of efficiency.

## Eliminate Waste

Waste can be as simple as ordering incorrect product, using too much product, making return trips due to mistakes, scheduling issues, vehicle breakdowns, etc.

Losing your business focus and getting "off plan" can also create waste. During the busy season, it is easy to react to the stressors. Before long, your business is managing you.

It helps to organize a list each day of your goals and create an order of importance. Group them in to 1s, 2s, and 3s. Start with the 1s, which are most critical and work through the list. After a week, you will notice the 3s maybe were not so important. Controlling your time



and your business tasks will keep you in check, and will help you make the most of your time as you conquer the season.

## Manage Your Money

Who is your main “go to” for financial advice? Who manages your books? How does this increase your bottom line? Important questions to consider are, “Who is qualified to make financial decisions for your business?” and “Are these decisions based on true facts or on speculations?”

## Maintain Health and Relationships

Taking care of yourself, your family,

and your employees is the most important thing you can do to save money and make money. Many businesses fail because of health issues. This could include stress and overly long working hours, leading to fatigue and accidents on the job.

Make time for doctor appointments. Take time out for sanity breaks. Plan one day a week for rest. Spend time with family. Investing in yourself, your family, and your employees is the best investment you can make.

By looking outside the box and considering ideas other than “More Sales” and “Saving Money,” my hope for you is that this article has given you some new

perspective and a chance to question your business practices.

I will leave you with a quote from the late Steve Jobs that I feel sums things up: “It’s not the tools that you have faith in – tools are just tools. They work, or they don’t work. It’s people you have faith in or not. Yeah, sure, I’m still optimistic. I mean, I get pessimistic sometimes but not for long.”

Have a great season!

*Karen Foreman, an employee at Copperfield, has been in the industry for 27 years. She is also the author of “Design Ideas for Fireplaces” published by Creative Homeowner Press.*





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# Doing What's Right

By Michael Stone  
Construction Programs and Results

How should you handle a mistake? What if it is a mistake you made over a decade ago?

*"I have purchased your books and read all of your emails weekly. I have been in business for 18 years and have a question concerning work that we did 14 years ago.*

*Scenario: We built a covered patio for a neighbor 14 years ago which I look at every day from my back yard. This year a piece of the trim coil on the lower part of the gable end came off and it exposed rot that was behind it due to water infiltration. We ended up fixing the rot and re-trimmed with trim coil.*

*I am embarrassed to say that the trim coil was originally not installed right by us. My feeling is that I do not charge for the repair. However my cost to repair for two employees 2 days, roll of trim coil and framing materials was approximately \$960, which if I were billing out at our normal rate would be \$2,110.*

*I have a profitable business and a good reputation. I'd like to know what your take would be on this."*

My take: If the original work was not done correctly and I was arbitrating this as a dispute, I would rule that it is the contractor's responsibility to make it right. The time frame would

not be relevant.

Fortunately, that is what this contractor did; he was not comfortable charging for the repairs.

I encouraged him to take it one step further. Do not let a good mistake go to waste. He didn't go to arbitration; instead, he corrected the mistake on his own. So, ask the owner to write a note explaining the problem and how it was fixed. The note needs to include the fact that it has been fourteen years since the original work was done but they still made things right. If needed, offer to write the note to get it started and the owner could edit it as needed.

Let the owner know the letter will be used for marketing. Then take the time to notify others: local newspapers, television and radio stations, magazines, etc. If you are lucky and it is a slow news day, they have some feel-good content to fill space. You might get ignored, but since it is rare to find a company in any industry that would stand behind their work fourteen years later, they might be interested. The letter could also be included in a direct mail piece, starting in the neighborhood right around the client's home.

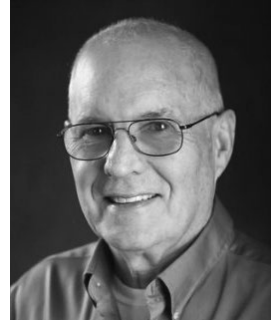
Being in business for more than a few years is an accomplishment. Too many owners hire a contractor for

cheap, only to find out their business has failed a few years later and they don't have recourse if there is a

problem. When you can demonstrate both longevity and integrity, you can give potential clients the peace of mind that you will be there for them down the road.

That's being a good guy, and we like to see the good guys win.

*Michael and Devon Stone operate Construction Programs & Results, 2818 NE 292nd Avenue, Camas, WA 98607. Michael Stone has been involved in the construction trades for over forty years. He is the author of Markup and Profit: A Contractor's Guide Revisited, available at their website, [www.markupandprofit.com](http://www.markupandprofit.com), or by phone at 888-944-0044. He offers coaching and consulting services for general and specialty contractors throughout the U.S., as well as audio and CD programs for business management. He is also available to speak at chimney sweep conventions and workshops.*



Michael Stone





# How to be Successful in a Small Chimney Sweep Business — It's Simple

By Jeff Gitlin  
Nonesuch, Kentucky



Jeff Gitlin

Treat people with respect, honesty, and courtesy. Live your life according to the values you have learned from your parents and the Boy Scouts.

Learn all that you can to become a competent and knowledgeable sweep. Be proud of your occupation and receive satisfaction in knowing that you are helping to make people safer in the comfort of their homes against the dangers of fire and carbon monoxide.

In these days, if you are prompt and neat in doing your work you will never be without work. Be personable and friendly — folks are hungry for the personal connection. Speak from your heart.

Look at the big picture and the long term. Don't count your money by the day — it may lead you to make short-term decisions that do not benefit you or your customer. Never be afraid to tell a customer that a repair is needed but that it can wait until your next visit if it is not a safety hazard (crown repair, spalled bricks, etc.)

Connect with your customers and treat them the way

you would want a contractor to treat your parents. It's really very simple.

*Jeff Gitlin, now retired, ran a successful chimney sweep business for thirty years, serving Lexington, Kentucky and the surrounding area. He was Technical Advisor to The Chimney Sweep News from 1983 until 1999 and now serves as Special Correspondent.*





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# Sweeping with the VIKING SPIRIT

*By Charlie Dunn  
Keeper of the Chimneys  
Livermore, California*

The Vikings, history tells us, were an interesting group of brave seafaring warrior marauders from the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, the Aland Islands and Sweden. They have passed down that Viking spirit of courage and honor to these present day Nordic countries – and their chimney sweeps. I had the pleasure of visiting Swedish chimney sweeps again for the 2018 International Swedish Chimney Sweep Gathering. [See the Sept-Oct and Nov-Dec 2017 issues for Charlie Dunn's previous reports from Sweden.]

Annette Soth Stolz's company sponsored the gathering, held at their location in Hedemora.

The itinerary could have been



Balancing a chimney rod and brush on one foot.

dubbed a Viking Chimney Sweep's Valhalla – including a well-organized “Chimney Sweep Olympics.” It was a pleasant and relaxing social time to meet with old and new friends with an interesting array of beverages, snacks, and meals. A highlight was a Master Chimney Sweep award presentation ceremony – Viking style — held outside in a beautiful park situated between Annette's home and her business center. This was part of a parade route through town, which was televised by one of the local TV stations.

## Chimney Sweep Olympics

The most interesting event was building a fire. Contestants were given a small log, a small hatchet or knife, and a pack of matches. Their challenge was to start a fire from scratch. There was also a tube filled with water, sealed with a cork at the top and propped up on legs. The object was to build a fire, heat the water and build up steam within the tube to



Jorgen Eriksson tosses the ring.

pop the cork in the shortest time. Most of us must have been Boy Scouts because most everyone scored pretty well on this event.

I got down and dirty in the pipe crawl. You started at one end of a 25' culvert and crawled on your hands and knees — or belly slide commando style like I did — to arrive at the other end. Then hammer a ten-penny nail into a 4" X 4" board, and then balance a 4' chimney sweep rod with a brush attached to



Chimney sweep parade through Hedemora, Sweden.

*continued on page 26*





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The fire building competition.

the other end on the toe of your shoe while standing on one foot!

## Anders Hedan Hedstrom — Knoparhedan

Anders Hedan Hedstrom, his wife, Manuela, and family provided us with some authentic Swedish fast food treats and invited us to see their home and “little shop.” Hedan is a bit mysterious; he always keeps his Swedish chimney sweep cap pulled down almost to the point of covering his eyes. I discovered



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that Hedan is a humble chimney sweep and individual. He tends his beautifully landscaped yard around three-bedroom home as a hobby. He told me it relieves the stress and tension of life's daily trials.

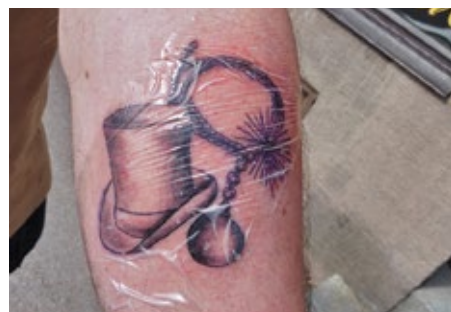
His “little shop” surprised all of us. A number of years ago he and a couple of other sweeps formed a profit sharing corporation. Now they are one of the largest full service chimney sweep operations in Sweden.

The “shop” has an office, warehouse and employee facilities including showers, lockers, sauna, eating area, recreation, laundry and parking area. The company furnishes uniforms, equipment and tools to employees. However, an employee must pay for a tool lost or damaged through negligence.

The large parking area in the rear also serves as a parking area for their multiple service vehicles and for storing truckloads of bagged pellets. They are one of Sweden's largest pellet resale locations and pellet appliance installers. Sweden promotes the use of wood pellets fuel for residential heating and industry.

## Tattoo

A group of us sweeps went with Da Rauss [see “Adventures in German Chimney Sweeping” in the May-June 2009 issue] to watch him get another chimney sweep tattoo – which he had personally designed. This was Annette's (who also



Thaddeus Mussner of Germany shows off his new tattoo.

has some ink) son's tattoo parlor, situated in the center of town and walking distance from our hotel. Da Ruass received his new tattoo with a cheering section while Ronja Sire'n did the artwork on his arm. That was the closest I have ever come to getting ink, except one time in Copenhagen in 1959. (Almost 60 years ago!?)

## The Viking Spirit

Viking spirit is present in Sweden's chimney sweeps whether they are working on a roof on a sweltering hot day in the summer or a brutally cold snowy windy day with two feet of icy snow. A big plus for them is their history of chimney sweeping in Sweden and government intervention that requires safe working conditions for chimney sweeps at commercial and residential locations.



Charlie Dunn

In closing, I truly appreciate my bride, Jennie Lynn, for continuing to be my partner and supporting me when I want to spread my vintage wings and “soar like Odin's ravens.”





# An Old European Tradition

## Wishing You Good Fortune in the New Year

*Postcards from the collections of Steve Snyder and Jeff Gitlin*

The custom of sending postcards to wish good fortune in the coming year flourished throughout Europe in the first forty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The cards were gloriously illustrated with numerous good luck symbols including four-leaf clovers, horseshoes, pink piglets, *amanita muscaria* mushrooms and chimney sweeps.

We wish you health, happiness and prosperity in the New Year!



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# Chimneys of Belize

*Article and photos by Jim Gillam*

Are you looking for a place to retire and maybe sweep a few chimneys on the side? Belize is probably not the place for you. There are not many chimneys in the subtropical Central American nation of Belize, but there are a few.

Belize is a country about the size of Massachusetts, located south of the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico and east of Guatemala. Belize was formerly a British colony and was known previously as British Honduras. Belize achieved political independence in 1981.

About 400,000 people reside there. Belizeans are a diverse group of Latinos, Creoles, Maya, Garifuna, Lebanese, Chi-



We featured this chimney in Hopkins on our August 2010 cover. Due to its exposed location on the beach, I did not expect it to last long. Side by side comparison with recent photo shows some apparent mortar deterioration, but less than I expected. Note that masonry chimneys should be supported by a foundation according to North American building codes.

nese, East Indians and Anglos. English is the official language, while Spanish and Belize Kriol are more widely spoken.

Belize has become increasingly popular as a tourist destination in recent decades. Madonna's visit to Ambergris Caye, the most popular tourist spot in the country, reportedly inspired her 1987 hit song, "La Isla Bonita."

Numerous chimney sweeps have visited Belize. "We love Belize," says Ron Rust (Top Hat Sweepers, Columbia, SC). "We go to Ambergris Caye and have been three times. We took Blume

and Linda Morton (The Merry Sweep, Greenville, SC) and eight others for my 60th birthday and had a great time."

Placencia is the second most popular destination in Belize. Jeff Gitlin (retired, Nonesuch, KY) has been there twice.



Traditional Maya cookstove. The smoke is simply vented out the window and through the roof.



This recently built two-story house in Benque Viejo del Carmen has a Conestoga type chimney cap.





**An older residence in Benque Viejo del Carmen.**

"I first visited in 1982," he recalls. "I arrived from Belize City in a small plane, which landed on a grass strip. A native took me across the lagoon in a dugout canoe. Placencia had just strung its first electric line along the sidewalk through the village. It was powered by a diesel-fueled generator installed at the fishermen's cooperative processing facility to freeze and ship fish. My friend and I fished for what we ate. When I returned in 2010, we drove there on a newly paved road. Belize had been 'discovered' and upscale resorts and vacation homes were popping up all around."

Your editor first visited Belize in 1976 and has returned many times since, most recently in September. The country has modernized dramatically in the past forty years; however, it retains its

unique character.

Belize is a popular retirement destination for North Americans and ex-pats live in all regions of the country. Years ago, Sooty Bob Daniels floated the idea of a hypothetical retirement community called "Sweep City, Arizona." Anyone for Chimney Sweep Village, Belize?

About 15% of Belizean households use firewood for cooking, mainly in rural areas. Cooking fires rarely are vented through chimneys. Smoke typically flows directly into the living space where the cooking fire is located, which may be the house or a separate kitchen structure. I found some examples of



**Houses in this lumber camp in the Mountain Pine Ridge had fireplaces and chimneys for cooking. The kitchen with its exterior chimney were separated from the main living quarters.**

cooking fireplaces with chimneys at a lumber camp. Apparently, a few homeowners enjoy a recreational fireplace.



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## Upcoming Events

*Information subject to change. Please confirm dates and locations of any events!*

### 2019

**Jan 12-13: Mass Guild Winter Extravaganza**, Sturbridge, MA. Publiack House Historic Inn, 277 Main St. For more info, contact David Hannah, davehannah@comcast.net

**Jan 16-17: Olympia Academy All-Star Seminar**, Scranton, PA. 8 speakers, technical and business classes. Register online at [olympiachimney.com](http://olympiachimney.com) or call 570-503-7177.

**Jan 23: CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep Review & Exams**, Oreland, PA. Jamison Home Services, 1429 Ulmer Ave, 19075. Call CSIA at 317-837-5362 or visit [www.csia.org](http://www.csia.org) for more info.

**Jan 23-24: Olympia Academy All-Star Seminar**, Nashville, TN. 8 speakers, technical and business classes. Register online at [olympiachimney.com](http://olympiachimney.com) or call 570-503-7177.

**Jan 23-25: Warrior Leadership Conference**, Shreveport, LA. Hilton Shreveport, 104 Market St, 70111. The ultimate business and motivational experience. Sponsored by National Chimney and Lindemann Chimney Co. \$349 first attendee/\$199 additional attendees per company. Call 800-897-8481 to sign up.

**Jan 30-31: Olympia Academy All-Star Seminar**, Denver, CO. 8 speakers, technical and business classes. Register online at [olympiachimney.com](http://olympiachimney.com) or call 570-503-7177.

**Feb 7-8: CSIA Certified Dryer Exhaust Technician Review & Exam**, Plainfield, IN. CSIA Tech Center, 2155 Commercial Dr, 46168. Call CSIA at 317-837-5362 or visit [www.csia.org](http://www.csia.org) for more info.

**Feb 14-16: Certified Chimney Professionals Chimney Expo**, King of Prussia, PA. Valley Forge Casino & Resort, 1160 1st Ave, 19406. 610-354-8118. Trade show and training. Contact Certified Chimney Professionals, 814-689-1576, for more info.

**Feb 25 – Mar 1: CSIA National Chimney Sweep Training School**, Plainfield, IN. CSIA Tech Center, 2155 Commercial Dr, 46168. Six-day course includes classroom and field instruction. Contact CSIA at [www.csia.org](http://www.csia.org) or call 317-837-5362 for more info.

**March 13-15: Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Expo**, Dallas, TX. Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center. For more info, visit [www.hpbexpo.com](http://www.hpbexpo.com).

**April 17-20: National Chimney Sweep Guild convention**, Norfolk, VA. Waterside Marriott, 235 E Main St, 23510. 757-627-4200. Visit [www.ncsgconvention.org](http://www.ncsgconvention.org) for more info.

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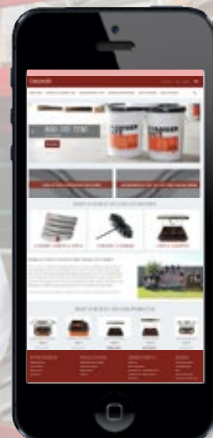
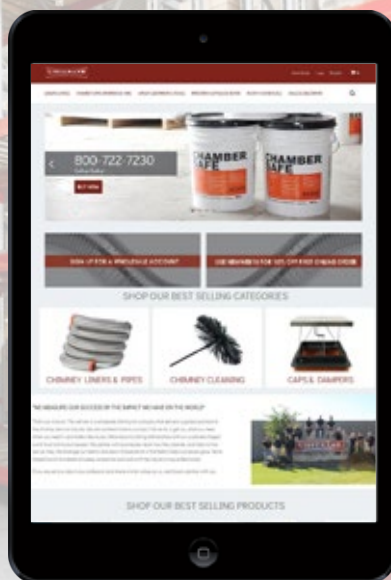


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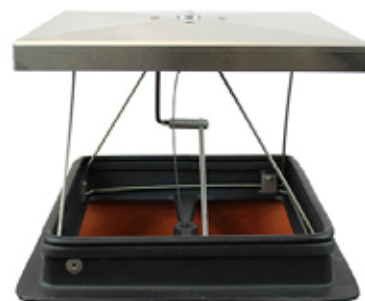
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