

Retirement paradise is just a cat dish away

Contributed by Sheree Zielke

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My husband fetches me the morning paper. I prepare a cup of iced coffee that I blended the night before. I check the TV for the day's weather - sunny and beautiful, the perfect day to tan. Ah, retirement.

That's when I spot an empty cat bowl. And that's when my notions of retirement end.

I sold my gift basket company recently through an ad headlined "Owner Retiring." Sounded good when I wrote it, and it did bring a buyer.

So today I am home, my first real day of retirement. Today I shall enjoy myself. Because after all, as the commercials would have us believe, I "deserve" it.

I open the drawer with the cat food and while spooning food into our feline queen's dish, I notice her water dispenser needs filling and is a little dirty. Oh well, a quick wipe and I'll get on with my day. As I set her newly cleaned water system in place, I notice her cat box. Good grief, how can such a small cat make such mountains? Oh well, a few moments and that will be done.

As I clean out her box - Winnie is her name - I notice a fair number of kitty litter granules scattered about. Oh well, a quick sweeping will take care of that. But as I sweep, I notice the back wall is wearing...fur. Hmm. Cleaning tools? What will I need? Paper towels? Heck, these paper napkins will do just fine. Some sort of chemical now. Which one. Lysol? Mr. Clean? Windex? I am now regretting my decision to tell the maids I didn't need their services. I know, I'll use some personal antibacterial wet wipes. Yea, that will do the trick.

As I wipe a marriage of hair and dust from the wall, I make the mistake of moving the water cooler. Oh dear, this hasn't been done in awhile. Okay, I'll pull it all the way out. What's this? A petrified raisin? I didn't know raisins could look like this. I hope it's a raisin.

Fine, I heave a sigh; I'll move everything and wash the floor. Shake the rugs. Wipe the walls. Which cleaner this time? Found some old-fashioned Pine Sol. Yippee. I recognize this one.

I begin to wipe. Nearly there. Oh heck, wipe the sides of the water cooler, just because. I move the couch that's sitting next to the water cooler. Oh boy. Not smart. Maybe if I squint I won't see the dirt. Sigh again.

That's when I see the back of the couch. Dirty. And here's another petrified raisin. Ah, it's been a long time since I didn't have to go to work every morning.

I go through my list of cleaning chemicals. Which one cleans a couch? Windex wipes? Lysol spray? No, that can't be right...the couch is leather. I know, Armor All. I grab a bottle and peer at the label. Please, please, let it say it cleans leather. Ah ha. I have guessed right. Spray it on.

Now I need something to wipe with. Here's a towel. That will do. Oh right, I used it to wipe up the floor. Ah, a little Pine Sol mixed with Armor All never hurt anybody...I hope.

I grab the cushions off the stool and throw them in the washing machine, then pull up the rest of the small rugs and shake them. I sweep some more.

I am beginning to realize I am hungry. Fine, grab a bag of pre-cooked smokies out of the fridge. Maybe I should take off my rubber gloves first before I handle them. I could just dump a few out of the bag into a bowl and nuke them in the microwave. Or better still, just grab a knife and fork and eat them right here standing at the kitchen counter. Right out of the Ziplock bag. Cold. Now that's the life. I look around my kitchen. It is now thoroughly upended. The product of a woman retired who was going to have a restful day.

I dig into a sausage and then wonder about my iced coffee. I find it somewhere in the rubble; it's now tepid coffee. I suck it back greedily. This is beginning to feel too much like being at the office.

I return to my scrubbing, moving items, sweeping and scrubbing. What diabolical chain reaction have I set off? This is not what I had planned for today. By now I am grabbing anything to use as a cleaning cloth. My gloves are clammy with sweat and my eyes are stinging. I'm into chemical warfare territory with all the handy household chemicals I've used.

I look through the window and see the bright summer sun beckoning to me. I continue to move things, sweep, and to scrub. I grumble something about tanning. And that's when it happens - the epiphany.

Somewhere deep in my mind a thought snuggled cozily in a cloud of gray matter lifts its tiny head. And I smile.

"If I don't want to get up tomorrow morning, I don't have to."

I start singing along with the golden oldie tune on the radio.