

OWNING THE BAD CHOICES WE HAVE MADE IN OUR LIVES

By Robert "Bob" Rogers Chaffin
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'Writer's Corner'

When we moved into our house in town in Carthage, Tennessee, it was a big event for our family. We had never before lived in a house with running water, never had an indoor toilet, never been able to take a bath other than in a galvanized wash tub, never had heated water except on the stove in a tea kettle, never had electricity, other than a few wires running outside the walls, never had central heat, and certainly never had shiny varnished hardwood floors.



The floors in the house were so beautiful. It was 1950 and wall-to-wall carpeting had not yet become the rage. Area rugs were all that was available, or inlaid linoleum for kitchens and bath. I remember that the first time we went to check on the progress of the construction of the house and the floors had been freshly varnished, I was so excited that I ran into a room where the varnish was still wet and it had to be redone next day. Oops!

We had a living room and dining room separated by an archway, and to us it was a palace. As I look at the house at 901 Dogwood now, it is a rather mundane house, in a bad location, but one's view of most things in life is a matter of perspective.

Mama "Chaffin, Maylene Maberry" bought a grey wool area rug for the living room. It left about a foot or two of the hardwood showing around the edges. My sister and I were carefully instructed that we were never to eat or drink in the living room. It was that serious kind of forehead to forehead talk that one would be living dangerously to ignore.

So according to instruction, we abstained from eating or drinking in the living room, but often sat in the archway between it and the dining room with a glass of milk and a cheese sandwich.

For several years I wore the same style of shoes, Buster Browns with a strap that buckled over to the outside of the shoe. I have never been big on change and today have pretty much the same style of shoes and clothes I wore in college – don't fix what works for you - is my motto. Well, my Buster Browns were getting pretty scuffed up on the toes and Mama "Chaffin, Maylene Maberry" had left me instructions to polish them that day. By polish them, she meant go down to the basement, where the polish and rags were and shine and buff the shoes. That location, however, did not fit my particular schedule that day since Howdy Doody, Buffalo Bob Smith, and Princess Summer-fall-winter-spring were about to undertake a great adventure that day, and being a dedicated part of the at home peanut gallery, I felt duty-bound to be present. I decided that if I stayed in the arch

of the dining room and used the old Griffin Scuff Kote liquid polish, I could make this thing work and still fulfill my obligations to Howdy and Buffalo Bob.

The clinker came when, being terribly near sighted, I began to scoot closer and closer to the T. V. and soon was sitting on the edge of the grey, wool rug. As I scooted around, somehow I hit the bottle of scuff kote and it turned over. Now this was before there were rubber tops like on a kids glue bottle and the tope was open and you simply stuck a duber on your shoes. There it was, a huge red-dish brown stain on Mama “Chaffin, Maylene Maberry” beautiful grey rug. I scurried and got some old rags and water, determined to get the stain out before Mama or Adie discovered my sins. But of course, I only succeeded in making it bigger and worse. I was frantic and began to wonder how long it might take me to work out enough money to get Mama a new rug – or better yet flee to Peru. I was desperate. My only hope lay in the fact it was a nice night and my parents might sit outside instead of turning on the T. V. tonight. Surly I would think of something by tomorrow. Maybe if I cut a piece out of another rug...No, thankfully that didn't sound right.

At supper, I had no appetite, Mama “Chaffin, Maylene Maberry's” first clue that something was wrong. I probably also tipped her off by mentioning over and over again what a nice night it was and how good it would be if we could all sit out under the trees tonight. I was the ultimate T. V. junkie and she knew that if I was suggesting other family entertainment, something must be up. Truth be told, by that time I was so nervous, worked up, and sick, I just wanted the agony over. I confessed, trying to lay as much blame on shoe polish makers, rug manufacturers and Howdy himself as I could. She was having none of it.

She went into the living room and heaved a huge sigh ending with shoulders slumped down in that, “I just give up,” position. After a few well-deserved whacks and a “talking to” about doing what you are told, and owning up to things when you do them – she studied the situation and, with Daddy “Chaffin Robert Franklin's” help, rotated the rug 180 degrees, which caused the stain to end up under the big heavy couch. Problem solved, at least in my mind! There the stain stayed for the next decade, hidden from the view of company but always on my mind, and I suspect my Mama “Chaffin, Maylene Maberry's.” One thing for sure, the current furniture arrangement was not about to change.

In the meantime, I had learned a lesson about owning the bad choices we make in life, and about real obedience being in spirit, not just in the letter of the law. I also learned about appealing to a higher authority for help when the mess we have created is beyond our ability to clean up (Which is most of the time.) God's expectation of us is that we obey the principals.

He has laid down which provide us with the abundant life. That we come clean with him when we make bad choices and own the mess we have created. And that we recognize that it is only with His help that we are able to cover the stains we have caused. The

more we stir in the thing alone, or the more we try hide it within, the bigger, more burdensome, and nastier the stain becomes.

Have a blessed day and I hope your bad choices in life is as simple as turning the carpet around.

Author of the books: *Pioneers, Preachers and Patriots: The Chaffins of Roaring River*, Jackson Co., TN and *Ridin' the Blinds*.

*Read more about Robert Rogers Chaffin in the Chaffin files and read more Writer's corner stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>