By Jim Langham

Several months ago, our washing machine took its final spin before bowing out of service to us. Just prior to that, I had made the decision to start airing out our laundry at a laundromat in Berne, Ind., where I work for the local newspaper several days a week.

The big decision came when I noticed that the steps to our basement decided to start growing and seemed taller each time I carried the clothes up and down the stairs.

So once or twice a week, I tote a garbage bag full of clothes to the car for the 38-mile drive to Berne.

One evening when I arrived home from such a task, Joyce and I decided to go out for supper. Casually, she said to me, “I'll need the laundry because the clothes I want to wear tonight are in there.”

I walked to the car, opened the back door, and saw a heart-sickening sight. There was no bag of clothes in the car. Suddenly it hit me. I had put clothes into the washer, gone to the newspaper office to write a story, returned and put the clothes in the dryer, went back to write another story and then drove the 38-mile trek back to Paulding County for the evening.

The realization that the clothes were still in a dryer in Berne was very disheartening. It was even more difficult trying to explain to Joyce that her “outfit” for the even was still tucked in a laundromat 38 miles away.

Finally, when I came to myself, I called close friends in the area, explained what our clothes looked like and they were very gracious to retrieve them.

But that’s not the end of the laundromat fiasco. A little over a week ago, it was time to repeat the process. Once again I took the clothes for their 45-minute drive. This time when I arrived at the laundromat, I was shocked when I took the “clothes” out of the car. Somehow, on the way to Berne, the clothes had turned into trash!

Then it hit me, I had needed to empty some trash bags from cleaning into a dumpster along the way so that I could have room in my car to move something. This time, it was even more hard to break the grim truth to Joyce that I had accidentally thrown our bag of clothes into a stray dumpster in another city and had mistakenly saved a bag of garbage to be washed at the laundry.

In fact, it wasn't one of the finer days in our 42 years of marriage, but the ability to air our dirty laundry and still have a nice dinner together that evening was a positive sign.

All of this has reminded me of a comedy radio program from my childhood, “Fibber McGee and Molly.” Now, as I approach my 65th birthday, I have gained a keener understanding of Fibber McGee's problems than I had realized at that time.

In fact, one program comes to mind that illustrates the aging problem of twisting our language around. In that particular episode, someone called and asked for Molly.

“Oh, she’s out in the clothesline hanging up the backyard,” he replied.

Or, my version these days, “I’m on the way to the laundromat to wash my garbage.”