



Ask Gail

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

Removing petroleum jelly stains; Books about pioneers of the American Hotel Industry

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Dear Gail:

Our hotel recently came across a room which the previous guest had just checked out. Upon entering the room, the room attendant noticed that the cloth sofa, chair and carpet had numerous stains with petroleum jelly left. What product is best to get this oily stain out, without ruining the fabric? When I state numerous, it is a very enormous amount of splotches left. Thank you.

Gina T.

Dear Gina:

Most people know petroleum jelly by the brand name Vaseline. It is an oil-based gel discovered in 1859 that is manufactured from petroleum distillates (hence the name) and originally promoted as a topical ointment for its healing properties. The jelly appears translucent, is mostly devoid of taste and smell, and is insoluble in water. It is recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as an approved over-the-counter skin protectant and remains widely used in cosmetics and other skin care/skin protection products. It is sold commercially in grocery stores and pharmacies as a first aid ointment, a skin treatment, a lice remedy, and to help heal and prevent chapped lips or dry skin. Because of its use as a skin protectant product, this is how it likely transferred onto the upholstery of the guestroom furniture and carpet. Unfortunately, because of its distillate base it can stain fabrics and other porous materials.

To remove smudges and stains of petroleum jelly from the sofa, chair and carpet, carefully scrape up any excess petroleum jelly using a flat-edged instrument such as a spoon, butter knife, tongue depressor, or Popsicle stick. Scrape using short strokes to capture the excess jelly by working from the outside of the stain towards the center to avoid spreading the jelly. Using a lifting, upward motion will keep from pushing the jelly further into the fibers. Be careful not to damage the fabric.

Next, wet the stain with isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol) and blot the area with a clean white absorbent rag or pad. To avoid reinserting the jelly back onto the surface, remember to use a clean area of the rag or pad each time you blot. You will notice the rubbing alcohol breaking down the oil in the petroleum jelly. Continue this process until no more residue is visible.

Now, mix a solution of one tablespoon dishwashing liquid to one cup of warm water, and apply lightly to the stain with a spray bottle. Avoid saturating the fabric. Wait five minutes for the degreasing agents in the detergent to break down the stain further. Then, blot the stain with a clean white rag or pad to lift any remaining petroleum jelly. Is it imperative to only use a white rag or pad for blotting to prevent color dyes transferring onto the upholstery fabric. And always blot the stain, as rubbing the stained area can break down the fibers of the fabric, making it weak.

One final suggestion for removing oil-based or paraffin stains (such as candle wax and yes, petroleum jelly) from a flat surface such as a carpet is to use unwaxed butcher block paper or brown paper bags and an iron. Place the unbleached paper flat over the carpet stain, set the iron to the lowest heat setting, and slowly iron the stains out of the carpet. Once heated, the brown paper will absorb the distillates or paraffin out of the carpet. Be sure to use a clean section of paper once the existing section is saturated.



Dear Gail:

I aspire to someday buy and operate my own hotel. My parents immigrated to the United States more than thirty years ago and I currently work as a front desk agent in a small hotel in my town. I found a copy of Conrad Hilton's autobiography *Be My Guest* behind the front desk and thoroughly enjoyed it. Are there any inspirational books about America's greatest hoteliers that you can recommend?

José R.
Chula Vista, CA

Dear José:

Congratulations on having a dream of owning your own hotel! Becoming a hotelier can be a very rewarding and fulfilling career. According to the American Hotel & Lodging Association, the more than 49,000 hotels in the United States generated in excess of \$140 billion in sales in 2008. As part of the travel and tourism industry in the United States, hotels employ 1.8 million workers, such as you. The United States has the largest tourism economy in the world and more tourists visit the U.S. than any other country. For more than 100 years the American Lodging Industry has and continues to grow and flourish because of individuals like you who have a dream of entrepreneurship, self-sufficiency, and service to others.

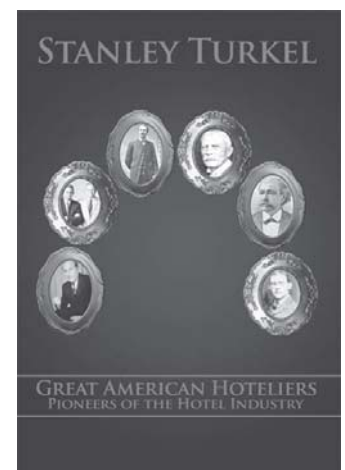
Many of the great American hoteliers have shared their dreams and successes with others in books. While you have already read about Conrad Hilton's successful career, consider reading J. Willard Marriott's story in the novel The Spirit to Serve, co-written by his son, J. Willard Marriott, Jr. This novel tracks the start of the Marriot family's success from their original A&W root beer stand in 1927 up through 1997 and the Fortune 500 company they have become. Another interesting biography about J. Willard Marriott was written by Robert O'Brien and is titled, The J. Willard Marriott Story. This book is no longer in publication, but used copies can be purchased through Amazon.com.

Another biography no longer in publication is Statler, America's Extraordinary Hotelman, which conveys the inspirational life story of Ellworth Milton Statler from his first hotel job at age 13 as a bellman to his death as a multimillionaire in 1928. He is best remembered for establishing the Statler Service Code and for creating the first major hotel chain in the U. S. The philanthropic foundation that he established prior to his death still exists to this day, supporting hotel education programs and students throughout the United States.

Though not an American, three unique books have been written about the innovative European hotelier César Ritz. The first, written by his wife Marie-Louise Ritz entitled César Ritz concentrates primarily on the countless guests, friends, and acquaintances of the Ritz Hotels and their creator. A second book, César Ritz – A Life for the Guest, was written by Dr. Werner Kampfen and details how César Ritz planned, organized, and revolutionized the professional of innkeeping within the European context. Finally, 75 years after the death of César Ritz, his short biography, Cesar Ritz – Life and Work was written by Adalbert Chastonay.

In 2009, drawing on more than 40 years of hotel industry experience including managing some of the largest hotels in New York City, Stanley Turkel released his book Great American Hoteliers – Pioneers of the Hotel Industry. The book takes an upfront and personal view of 16 leaders who shaped the American Hotel Industry in the past century. With Foreword by Stephen Richmore, familiar names such as J. Willard Marriot, Howard Johnson, and Conrad Hilton are mixed with some of the lesser recognized players such as Henry Bradley Plant, Carl Graham Fisher and Henry Morrison Flagler to provide a unique insight into the intricacies of hotel development, operations and investment. Turkel captures the spirit of each of these pioneers and relates their achievements to important lessons that we can all learn from. This is a "must read" for any hotelier who wants to gain a better historical and inspirational perspective about the development of hotels in the past 100 years.

One final book of note was also released in 2009 that captures the American Lodging Industry's rich history and tells the story, through spectacular photographs and colorful anecdotes, of how the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) was developed and came into existence as the leading collective voice of hoteliers in the United States. A Century of Hospitality celebrates the 100 year anniversary of AH&LA. Both this book and Turkel's Great American Hoteliers are available from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute's store website: <http://shop.ahlei.org>. ✧



(Dr. William D. Frye is Executive Editor of The Rooms Chronicle and co-author of the textbook Managing Housekeeping Operations, published by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute. E-mail: wfrye@roomschronicle.com.)