

SUNDAY Q&A

A CHAT WITH MR. CLEAN



KEITH MYERS/ The Kansas City Star

It's a dirty job, but Gale Holsman is up to it.

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If it gets dirty in this town, Gale T. Holsman Jr. cleans it.

OK, that's an exaggeration. But not by much. Holsman, 47, of Lee's Summit is Kansas City's cleaning king, and for 20 years he and his company — American Sweeping Inc. — have been cleaning up. He and his crew clean up the parking lots at Wal-Marts, Kmarts and most of the area shopping malls. But his flagship account is the Country Club Plaza.

Recently we asked him to come clean.

**Q. How many employees do you have?**

**A.** We average 100.

**What else do you clean?**

Santa-Cali-Gon Days in Independence, the Renaissance Festival, Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, River Quay area, all of the Home Depots. But the Plaza is our biggest.

**The Plaza gets dirty? Say it isn't so!**

Listen, son, I could tell you stories that would curl your ears. People are messy. They don't take the environment into consideration. You know, generally. Especially the smokers. And I'm a former smoker.

**Clean up a lot of their butts, do you?**

They throw 'em everywhere, man. My boss doesn't want to see butts anywhere. We have a 20-minute rule. If there is a butt anywhere on the Plaza after 20 minutes, then *my butt* is in trouble.

**What's the worst to clean on the Plaza?**

Garages, elevators, sidewalks, alleys, around the compactors where all the Dumpsters are.

**How hard is it to keep the Plaza clean?**

It's not hard. You just have to have a good game plan and enough equipment. If you try to kill a bear with a switch, well, you're going to have to run a long way. If you carry a gun, you're going to drop him right there. The tenants are actually very helpful.

**Ever find anything interesting?**

One time we found \$40,000 worth of tickets to a concert at Kemper Arena.

**Sell 'em on eBay?**

Turned 'em back in.

**Any funny stories?**

Dodging drunks in parking lots is sort of interesting. They come out of clubs, loopy doop, and you've got to be careful or you'll run-over them. We also have to dump the trucks into Dumpsters behind the shopping centers. And every once in a while someone will be sleeping in one.

**Tell us something we wouldn't know about you.**

I date Gail Worth.

**Of Gail's Harley-Davidson?**

Yup. She's really cool. And she's really smart. Of course, the smartest thing she ever did is ask me out. And you can print that, too, and I'll take the heat.

**What else might we not know about you?**

I'm in a rock band called Stagefrite. I play lead and rhythm guitar.