

# A SUITABLE WARDROBE

WILL BOEHLKE'S THOUGHTS ON DRESSING WITH STYLE.



Wednesday, March 18, 2009

## **Maintenance: Clothing Cleaners**

There are 34,000 clothing cleaners in the United States. Most of them will quickly destroy bespoke clothing.

Clothes cleaning is a business driven by the desire to turn garments around quickly, and at the lowest possible cost. Unfortunately, those objectives are at odds with quality cleaning of bespoke clothing where, for example, the best way to remove soil from a shirt is to soak it. Soaking and same day service are completely incompatible.

In San Francisco we have a high profile cleaner that for many years was voted best in the Bay area. Prices are very high, and clothing is returned in more packaging than it had when it was new. And yet, shirts are returned with dirt ground into the cuffs and jacket lapels pressed so that the collar no longer sits properly. Fortunately there are alternatives.

Serious clothing requires a serious commitment to clothing care. I've written in the past that San Francisco men once sent their laundry by clipper ship to China to have it hand cleaned and returned. And as recently as twenty years ago the now defunct haberdasher Sulka offered a laundry by mail service for bespoke shirts.

Laundry by mail is still a viable alternative but men in eighteen cities in Australia and North America may not need to go that far. The members of Leading Cleaners Internationale meet the cleaning industry's only rigorous standards for quality. Each of them treats every garment as if it is a museum-quality textile.

And for those of us who don't live in one of those eighteen locations but do live in North America, there is [RAVE FabriCARE's](#) clean by mail service. I have only used the service for shirts but the results were outstanding.

There are 34,000 clothing cleaners in the United States. A few of them actually know how to treat clothing properly.