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**The controversial bestseller  
that dares to prove that  
parenthood is dangerous!**

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**BY  
ELLEN  
PECK**

# **The Baby Trap**

## ELLEN PECK

Ellen Peck has spent more than three years researching, writing and lecturing on the subject of *The Baby Trap*. This breakthrough book examines the effects of children on the emotional balances of marriage.

The author of numerous articles on marriage, sexuality, ecology, adolescent life (and even on child raising) for such magazines as *Pageant*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Teen* and *Today's Health*, she has also appeared on countless nationwide television shows.

Her syndicated young-adult advice column appears regularly in fifty top U.S. newspapers. Recently Mrs. Peck aided in the founding of NON—the National Organization for Non-Parents—a new movement formed to implement the work of the ZPG, Planned Parenthood, and other concerned population and environment groups.

She and her husband — childless by choice — are representative of a new life style, based on the larger family of the community rather than the nuclear family. They travel extensively, work actively with young people's groups and for political causes and candidates.



# **The Baby Trap**

*by*  
**Ellen Peck**

**PINNACLE BOOKS • NEW YORK CITY**

## THE BABY TRAP

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A Pinnacle Book published by special arrangement with Bernard Geis Associates, Inc.

Cover photograph of Ellen Peck by Jim Cox.

This newly revised and enlarged edition has been completely reset in a type face designed for ease of reading. It was printed from new plates and contains the complete text of the original, high-priced edition.

First printing, May, 1972.

Printed in the United States of America

PINNACLE BOOKS, 116 East 27 Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would really like to thank Dr. and Mrs. Carl Meador of the Center for Studies of the Person, La Jolla, California; Mrs. Virginia Satir, San Francisco; Dr. T. David Jansen, Dr. Joe Bressler, and Mrs. Betty Smith of the American Institute of Family Relations, Los Angeles; Dr. Irvin Cushner and Dr. Sanford Wolf of Baltimore; the Volunteer Welfare Services of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; the Clergy Counseling Services of New York and Los Angeles; Mrs. Helen Gurley Brown and *Cosmopolitan* magazine; Mrs. Bobbie Anker of the California Abortion Counseling Service; the Planned Parenthood offices of New York, Washington, and Baltimore; Mrs. Vivian Washington of Baltimore; Mrs. Oscar Carlson, Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, & Smith, Baltimore; the Child Welfare League of America and the National Council on Illegitimacy, New York; Mr. John R. Rague, Executive Director, Association for Voluntary Sterilization, New York; the Free Clinic of Georgetown; Dr. David Shaw, People's Free Clinic, Baltimore; Mr. Stewart Ogilvy of the Campaign to Check the Population Explosion, New York; Mr. Eugene Coan, Director of Political Activity, Zero Population Growth, Los Altos, California; the Population Crisis Committee, Washington, D.C.; Mr. and Mrs. Lowell Dodge, Washington, D. C.; Drs. Rustum and Della Roy, State College, Pennsylvania; Mr. Dan Thomas and Mr. Mayer Kalichman, Baltimore; Marion Holmes, New York; Pat Clarke, Baltimore; Joyce Jensen, San Francisco; as well as those lawyers and counselors interviewed who preferred to remain unmentioned in this study.

I'd also like to thank the following couples, from among those interviewed, for outstanding help: Jim and Nancy Cox; Neil and Alice Bernstein; Larry and

Ellen Muir; Gail and Paul Blaisdell; Carole Ann and Jack Tucker; Barbara and Tony Robson; Susan and Clayton Root; Joe and Joyce Raffaele; Joe and Dianne Sullivan; Rex and Diane Roupe; Bob and Linda Elkman.

Most especially, thanks to Mr. Jay Allen, Los Angeles; Mr. Nathaniel Branden, Director, Institute of Biocentric Psychology, Los Angeles, and his wife Patrecia; Stephanie Mills and *Earth Times* magazine, San Francisco; Mr. Arnold Zerwitz and Mr. Allen Spector, Baltimore; and Drs. David and Helene Zagier, Hôpital Psychiatrique de Malevoz, Monthey, Switzerland.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *IN THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE, LIVE . . .*

"In the time of your life, live—  
so that in that wondrous time  
you shall not add to the misery and sorrow  
of the world,  
but shall smile to the infinite delight  
and mystery of it."

From *The Time of Your Life* by  
William Saroyan

Near the small French town of Saint-Denis-sur-Loire is a certain château. It is not particularly distinguished—merely one among many of those collections of architectural magnificence that make one imagine that a thousand kings must have lived along the Loire River.

This château was built in the 1100's, "and has been in our family since 1340," explained the elderly countess, who was standing with us, overlooking a moat rich with black fish and green water plants. Beyond the moat, their lands sloped down toward the Loire. A gardener was picking strawberries. It was not too difficult to imagine that this might be, once more or still, a day in the 14th century. Of course, the physical structure of the buildings had changed; the countess was explaining this . . .

I was listening to a retired French Army officer,

General de la Ferte, who was talking about Indochina, his friendship with Charles de Gaulle—and about hunting. He has a collection of hundreds of hunting books, one printed in medieval times and giving instructions for the netting of game birds. They used to net birds rather than aim at them with weapons, he explained. I hadn't known that, I said.

But I was trying to overhear what the countess was telling my husband . . .

There formerly were three drawbridges, not two, she was explaining, and another turret—there. A building to the far left replaced one destroyed during the Napoleonic wars . . .

With each feudal conflict, and with each modern war (the château itself had been occupied and damaged during the Nazi invasion), there had been changes, but only to the buildings. The heritage of this estate was intact, as was the beauty of the lands.

And the experience of talking with the Comtesse de Beaucorps, whom we had met the previous week in Blois, and the chance to meet her other guests, was actually a momentary sharing of that heritage. It was an experience that we shall treasure for a very long time.

Other days were memorable that summer.

We had châteaubriand and champagne at the Tour d'Argent in Paris, then abandoned the Fodor guide in favor of the Peck plus Peugeot Plan—i.e., just driving. We listened to records in a dusty Dijon café and to a folk singer in a park by Lake Geneva. We slept for several nights in a small, out-of-the-way chalet that looked up—and down—at glaciers, mountains, waterfalls the height of mountains.

We picnicked on truffle-spiced ham, fruit, brioches, and ice-cold champagne by a roadside in the south of France. We tasted the black Chambertin wine in a cave of the Burgundy country. We toured the oldest hospital in the world that still receives patients (the nurses still wear medieval dress; though the doctors, I think, use modern methods). We saw the Musée Picasso at Cap d'Antibes, along the French Riviera.

The night of our fifth anniversary we were in

Liechtenstein and the next night in a castle still complete with its Louis Quinze furnishings.

Once, while hiking along a high trail in the Bernese Oberland, we exchanged tentative German words with a shepherd and shared raclettes with him as we watched a sunset so beautiful that it was difficult to find any words to say in any language.

We wandered through the private art galleries of several cities: Lucerne, Paris, Geneva, Barbizon. We climbed two or three mountains. We met Marc Chagall.

And, once we wandered onto a street fair in Berne.

Just down from the mountains of Switzerland, we parked our Peugeot facing the Bernese clock tower. "Clock tower," though, fails completely to describe what we saw. It more resembled the sun, this clock—huge, gold, hypnotic, seeming to sit low, just a story above the street, surrounded by the signs of the stars and the planets. It was not just a clock that told the time of day. It seemed quite as capable of inspiring devotion and superstition as the pale, real sun that was then setting behind the hills behind the town.

Flags were waving along the arcaded street—the Swiss national flag; the bear that is the symbol of Berne; various coats of arms. The street was crowded, but there were few cars. It was easy to sense a certain timelessness about this scene, too. After all, Bill was saying to me, these stone arcades had housed shops for perhaps half of European history.

Groups of young people were approaching the street from all directions from as far away as you could see: a girl in white; a girl in black; a group of boys in sweatshirts; a long-legged blonde in lederhosen; four on motorbikes; an older couple walking along, the boy playing a guitar, the girl singing; a girl with too much make-up; a girl with too few clothes, even for the warm night; two young men with a girl in lavender jumpsuit sitting in a semicircle on the street . . .

We walked with the crowd's movement towards a square facing the cathedral, carved in intricate stone filigree against the sky, as the sounds began. We

passed a girl on a platform; she was singing, in French, "Who has seen the wind?" but her voice was lost because not far away, just facing the lighted cathedral, a larger platform held a group in Mick Jagger sweatshirts and with louder voices. After they finished a French rock song, they blasted into "Honky Tonk Woman," with words this time in German. And Bill went crazy with his camera for a long time.

Then he and I and another couple near us began to dance; and the four of us were laughing as we danced, ending the number with hands on each others' shoulders. As the music dissolved into "Satisfaction," we walked on, losing touch. It had not mattered that we hadn't spoken each others' languages; we had simply shared the music that was now growing louder, drowning out the voice of a girl in black who wandered aimlessly past, carrying something and chanting "je t'aime" to no one in particular. There was more dancing.

We walked on, then walked back. "Ah can't get no sat-is-fac-tion," another group was singing, this time in English. A flat-chested girl with sequined eye make-up and shirt unbuttoned to the waist passed us, trailed by about five rural-looking boys in work shirts. She suddenly turned to one, took his face in her hands, kissed him hard, then turned around again—and the parade continued.

There were food stands: sausages, chickens, bread, mustard, wine. But no one was around them. There seemed to be no need of food, nor of drinking or smoking—except for those three sitting on the street, who may have been on drugs. But there was no need. In this summer air, heavy with flags, the music was enough.

We were back at the cathedral and the clock tower. The street lights had come on, and the waving of the flags in and out of the light, added a visual dimension to the music of another group that had set up under an arcade, a group which was now singing, in French, "The Twelfth of Never," which it was. Although it was the thirteenth of June, or had been that day, it

was the twelfth of Never that night in Berne as a 10th-century cathedral looked down on the 20th-century young of its country on those cobbled, throbbing streets, not quite believing what it saw.

The memory of that night is another that we are glad to have.

And the point is, we *have* those memories.

The point is, we were *there*, Bill and I. That summer of 1970, we were sampling things that were going on in the world that we *might* never have known of.

In the six years we've been married, we have gone not only to different countries but to different parts of our own country and city, because we want to glimpse a little of the world, to see some of the forces that have shaped it, are shaping it.

It is part, I think, of a kind of unspoken theory of marriage that we have. Marriage is not to resign from living, but to begin to live. Marriage should not signal a "settling down," but a waking up. Marriage is rather like a growing plant that should be enriched, fed, with stimulating experiences from outside sources; if it is not, it will shrivel into boredom and routine. We have not been bored.

Yes, you may be saying, all that is fine, but you have money.

Yes.

But probably no more than you have.

The first time we went to Europe, our income just barely hit the five-figure mark. Bill and I are both writers, and writers are seldom rich. We have made, though, several significant decisions about money and about life that allow us to live the way we do. We prefer not to spend money on possessions and status gadgetry, but rather on experiences and sensations.

And we do not have children.

We do not want children.

I think that many couples do not want children. They want *something*; perhaps they define that "something" as a child. But that may not be what is wanted at all. And this fact may become obvious only some time after the decision to have children is made, after the unparalleled complexities of child-raising

(truly, *no* other task is so difficult to do well, in this society at least) begin to make their demands on a couple, to take their toll from a marriage. Many children become "unwanted" long after birth, as their parents begin to resent the requirements of parenthood, to regret lost opportunities for freedom and for time alone. There are wives who live for the summer weeks when the children visit relatives or go to summer camp. There are husbands who seek to escape the realities of fatherhood by avoiding their homes, or who long for the time when their children will be grown. There are motels that advertise "The family that plays apart stays together" and provide separate activities and even separate residences for children and parents. And these motels are usually booked weeks and months in advance.

What most couples really want is to live life as fully and deeply as possible. That is what we want, anyway. And we do not feel that we can do this and still raise a family. A family would provide its own kind of change and experience, true—but not the kind we want. It would be, when you get right down to it, a repetition of experience—a repetition of the childhood experience.

I could never justify it.

I'm grown up, and I want my life now, thank you. My adult life. And I want to live that adult life—directly. I don't care to live a second childhood—vicariously.

I don't want to learn the alphabet again, and learn about creative playthings, toilet training, and playground etiquette again. I went through that once. We all did. Now, I would like some different experiences. I want the Riviera in January. And please give me the Berne street festivals, and anniversaries in Liechtenstein, and the chance to step back six centuries by walking onto the grounds of a castle near Saint-Denis-sur-Loire.

And you cannot count on having those experiences—we couldn't, anyway—with children. Usually, there is a choice to be made. Take your pick. One or the other. Housework and children—or the glamour,

involvement and excitement of a free life.

Now I'm aware that some are exempt from that dichotomy.

Sophia Loren is an obvious example; she has a child, and her life does not lack glamour and freedom. And there's Dr. Helene Zagier, of Monthey, Switzerland, whose son graduated from Oxford (with two degrees) at age sixteen, and whose daughter is equally talented. The Zagiers do not miss much in life. They run a university; they hike across glaciers; and they take, I believe, more vacations than Bill and I do. And there's a very pretty blonde named Pamela who recently married and became pregnant, *after* spending years alone with an African tribe, wandering alone into the South American jungles, exploring the world *par excellence*.

But this doesn't have very much to do with you or me and *our* men.

For most of us, the addition of children means the subtraction of something else from life. If Bill and I had children, we would not have been in Berne, Switzerland, the night of June 13, 1970. I would have been at home, straightening the dining room and changing diapers. Bill would have been picking up the kitchen and loading the dishwasher before leaving for a neighborhood Cub Scout meeting.

You see, for most people (certainly for us) simple resources like time, energy, and money are limited. Bill and I could not be simultaneously involved in projects we believe in, personal plans that delight us, and still raise children. We have chosen to skip the children. And I believe that has been the right decision.

We have been married, and we've been happy, for six years. Any marriage could end, of course; but I don't think ours will. There may be better marriages around; but I haven't seen many. And, in my opinion, the fact that we haven't been burdened with babies has quite a lot to do with this success.

In the course of writing this book, I've talked to women of many ages, with children and without. The girls I've talked to who don't have children are,



almost without exception, prettier, more conversational, more aware, more alive, more exciting, more satisfied. They have, almost without exception, better marriages and happier husbands than those wives who do have children.

The fact that I do not intend to mention the "exceptions"—the married couples with children who are truly happy—is reflective of my personal prejudice. But it is also an attempt to balance the total cultural picture you are given. Looking at the overblown, enticing (and misleading) motherhood images in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and elsewhere in the culture, I feel no overwhelming obligation to be objective. They aren't. Has the *Ladies' Home Journal* ever shown a fat, wrinkled, obviously bitchy mother on their cover? No one will deny such mothers exist, but do they show them?

Well, nobody's denying happy families exist either, but I'm simply not going to show them. There is little point in redundancy. I am, instead, going to emphasize what is not shown in other sources: the problems of having children; and the unique values to the childless marriage.

We who have chosen to be childless all have our own reasons. Mine are somewhat different from those of Karen Kramer in New York, Diane Roupe of Des Moines, Ellen Muir of Seattle, Lila Prager, who lives in Houston, and my friend Gail Blaisdell here in Baltimore. My reasons are almost totally opposite from those of Stephanie Mills of San Francisco.

The two usual reasons for voluntary childlessness are:

- 1) an awareness of ecology and the problem of the population explosion
- 2) a desire for wider personal experiences

Couples usually make their decision for one of those reasons, then use the other as a rationalization. I, for example, always vaguely felt that children would keep me from living the way I want to. Bill was in agreement. It was a matter of simple personal preference for wider living. But more and more I began to draw on the frightening state of the world

and the facts about the population explosion, in order to justify my decision to people.

It worked the other way for Stephanie Mills, a beautiful San Francisco girl whose decision not to have children has become something of a *cause célèbre*. Stephanie's concern, first expressed in her valedictory speech from Mills College, was ecological, planetary. ("What kind of world would my children face?" she asked in that speech; "A world not very clean, not very pretty, not very nice.") Later, she rationalized—or *realized*—"It's very pleasant not to have children. You're free to devote yourself to other things. Your life is far more completely your own."

But whatever our reasons, there are many who approve our point of view. There are many professional people (Eda LeShan, Margaret Mead, Paul Ehrlich, Isaac Asimov, to name a few) who believe that motherhood should be less encouraged.

Isaac Asimov made a very interesting statement. "Babies are the enemies of the human race," he said in 1969, in an interview with *Boston* magazine. He doesn't hate children; it's just that there are too many of them. And they grow up to pollute, despoil, defoliate, and crowd the earth.

The earth's population, in fact, may already be so large (3.5 billion) that even assuming a slowdown in the birth rate, we will have twice as many people in thirty years. The scientific consensus is that that doubling will bring us to a "crash point," beyond which the earth's systems can no longer cleanse themselves.

Think about it. Twice as many people: half as much land to grow food for each of us. Twice as many people: half as many trees per person to put oxygen into the air. Even if life under such circumstances is possible at all, it will not be very pleasant.

Probably you've heard this already. There has been some concern bordering on alarm in recent magazines, for example, and on the 6:30 news. And yet, at some point, you're probably going to want to have a baby.

Why? Because you're a female and the desire to



reproduce is innately feminine? No. That's strictly a myth. In fact, the *more* you want children, the *less* feminine you may be. Compulsiveness can have a point to prove, as in the case of a nymphomaniac who is as incapable of staying out of bed as she is of enjoying being in it.

Some would disagree. Some would insist that the yen for young is, indeed, instinctive, that the mere existence of the means of reproduction creates within the woman the desire for children and even imposes a kind of obligation to bear children, since not to do so would be a denial of a natural function.

But is there such a thing as an inborn desire to bear children? To argue so, since childbearing is the end *result* of sex activity, would be to assume a knowledge of cause-and-effect that probably did not exist in the earliest cultures. There are cultures even today, as Ashley Montagu points out, in which the connection between intercourse and childbearing is not known. And since the one precedes the other, it would seem that the basic human desire operating is sexual rather than reproductive. Reproduction is simply the more or less inevitable result of sexual activity. That the reproductive function was *accepted* universally is certain; that it was *desired* universally is less certain.

Sure, reproduction was "natural," inasmuch as it was universal and inevitable. It was obviously intended by Nature, but by a Nature that never foresaw the extent to which Man would pre-empt Her control over life and death by weapons, medicine, industrialization.

And as our civilizations have advanced, moving farther from Nature on the evolutionary trail from forests into cities, the need for reproduction has certainly lessened. Our society is urban, and it is overpopulated. In overpopulated species other than the human, Nature responds by depressing the mating drive—and the rate of reproduction. But Nature isn't working that way for us. Simple but potent cultural factors that urge reproduction give Nature no such chance.

But for girls who can see beyond these surface cultural lures, civilized society offers life choices other than the option of childbearing. And that is how childbearing *should* be regarded today: as an option—and not a very compelling one.

Childbearing *seems* compelling for reasons that have nothing to do with instinct. The word "instinct" is commonly misused. Two examples out of many: there are Catholics who "instinctively" genuflect when passing an altar, men who "instinctively" rise when a woman enters a room. Both practices are obviously learned behaviors, strongly reinforced—as the desire for offspring is a learned desire, strongly reinforced.

In the human being, desire exists in the mind, as do the general practices of habit. And, as Ashley Montagu demonstrates during the pages of *Man in Process*, the mind is a product of culture.

If the desire to reproduce resulted from an active, operating instinct, no girl would be free from it. (But many are—and the number who are no longer constitutes an insignificant minority.) The desire to bear children results instead from learning. Within our culture, from earliest baby-girlhood, you *learn* that you should want children. And you learn from many teachers.

Aunt Helen teaches you. She gives you a baby doll, saying, "You'll take such good care of her. And someday you'll grow up and have your own baby. You'll be such a good mother." (Does Aunt Helen ever see you playing hopscotch with Johnny, the boy next door, and say, "Oh, you get along so well with boys! Someday you'll be such a good *wife*."?) No; the emphasis is always on the "mother" role.

Meanwhile, is Johnny being similarly told and taught "Someday you'll be such a good father?" No. Thus, far more women than men desire babies. This strongly supports the idea that the desire for offspring is learned; babies play a larger part in a woman's *learned* role.

That cuddly doll is the first bait in the baby trap. Later on, as you begin to read, and as you become a

consumer, there are other lures.

There are the ads: one glorious Clairol mother, many gleaming children; mother in mink cavorting through snow with children; mother skillfully applying band-aid to her six-year-old's knee; mother and daughter doing laundry together with Ivory Snow.

The baby trap is also the picture feature on Mr. and Mrs. Successful New York, with their three or four children. It's the trap of the glossy situation TV series, where the doll-like mother manages home and family with freedom and expertise. It's the trap of the magazines, with their incessant articles on the "motherhood" theme:

*A Former Governor's Wife: My 'Miracle' Pregnancy at 41*

*How Children Can Help Your Marriage*

*Special Beauty Section—the Young Mother*

*Miracle Babies—Beautiful Parents*

I want to tell you about this trap, not because I see babies as the enemies of the human race, really, but because I see babies as the enemies of *you*.

The people who set the "trap" never tell you what's apt to happen to you after that baby is born. They never tell you that many men find themselves less attracted to their wives after the physical changes of pregnancy and childbirth. They never tell you that there may be a correlation between fatherhood and infidelity. They never tell you that, rather than keeping a marriage together, children can often very quickly drive it apart. (In the magazines, I found a dozen or more case histories of marriages "saved" by the birth of a baby. In divorce lawyers' offices in a total of four cities, I found more than *fifty* case histories of husbands who had filed for divorce during their wives' pregnancies or immediately afterwards.) The people who set the trap never tell you that if you're not real careful you'll be cheated out of fifteen years of young life and intense experiences that can never be yours again.

I don't want you to wake up a dozen years from

now and realize that your days are built on routine, that your life consists of living vicariously through your children, that you've lost your zest for new experiences—and quite possibly your husband's interest as well.

And yet, these are just a few consequences of the baby trap.

I know, because I've seen them happen to friends of mine.

And it doesn't always take fifteen years to happen. It can happen in five years.

Or one.

Yes, the media hold up those models of serene and gleaming pregnancy. And you, seeing them, imagine yourself as a pretty, happy mother-to-be, basking in attention and daydreaming of glories to come.

It doesn't always work that way.

It didn't with a friend of mine named Frances. She seemed more withdrawn and distant everytime I dropped by her off-campus apartment between classes at Northwestern. "I feel miserable so much of the time," she said one morning, as we were having coffee on a kitchen table cluttered with shower gifts (toys, terrycloth rompers, blankets, bottle warmers, a little set of "textures" for the baby to touch, colorful mobiles, toddler towels with ducks on them); and there didn't seem to be any reason for this malaise that her obstetrician could find.

As I said, "Well, Fran, it will all be over in another month; you'll forget about these aches and pains once you have the baby," it occurred to me that I wasn't really sure if what I was saying was true at all. You can forget aches and pains, once they're over, *if* they were only aches and pains.

But I thought something else was involved. Fran seemed depressed, not ill. She just seemed a different *person* from the girl who had sat with Bob in the coffee shop every morning, going over his acting assignment with him, teasing him about having to repeat a scene with Miss Krause, chatting about having seen Josh White at the Gate of Horn the night before . . .

(some time later, an obstetrician I interviewed explained, "When pregnant women come to me with severe physical distress, I often do something close to marriage counseling.")

I wasn't quite wise enough to figure out, at that time, that Fran and Bob were having trouble; they had been so in love the year before that that possibility just didn't occur to me. But I did know that something seemed wrong. And I did know I didn't envy Fran, at all.

Nor do I envy what has happened to her marriage since the birth of their child.

I married several years later. And watched not just Fran, but all the girls I'd known in school, one by one, start their families. I went to lots of showers and christenings. And I held a lot of hands as girlfriends started to have husband trouble.

It occurred to me that I wasn't having the problems they complained of. And I wondered why.

I don't think it was because Bill and I were any more in love when we got married than, say, Fran and Bob were. I think just about everybody is equally deeply and totally in love at that point.

And I don't think I'm any cleverer than my girlfriends.

I think it's because I haven't burdened the relationship Bill and I have with third parties who would distract our attention from each other and restrict us from doing, often, what we feel like doing.

That idea got some reinforcement from another girl I know. Lori is a friend of mine who lives in Chicago. For a while, we were single girls together working in the offices of the same insurance company on LaSalle Street.

Lori is kind of a wild girl. She goes to more parties in a month than I did the entire time I was in Chicago. She's not exactly gorgeous—well, yes, she is, come to think of it. She's bright, blonde, and magnetic to the point where the girl who had the desk next to Lori never *would* let her husband (who worked in the same building) come down to see our offices.

Lori is thirty and looks eighteen. She's fickle,

irresponsible, and inclined to fly off to the Azores for weekends, *not*, usually, alone. She dates married men, because most of the men she knows are married.

The last time I saw her I asked if most of the married men who took her out had children. Her answer was immediate.

"Are you *kidding*? All of them. In fact, when they pull out the kids' pictures at a cocktail party, I know they want to get serious for the evening. Lots of times it's an unmistakable signal. Almost code for, 'Look, I'm married, honey, I won't fool you, but it's just because of these kids; my wife means nothing to me.'

"Sure, it's the guys with kids," she continued; "the ones who don't have kids still like their wives."

*The ones who don't have kids still like their wives.*

There are exceptions, I'm sure. But, looking around at our acquaintances in Baltimore, the generalization seems true. Phil, a friend of ours who has three children, doesn't accept our dinner invitations when his wife takes the children to visit her parents on the Eastern Shore. Phil's busy; he needs to catch up on office work while his wife is away.

A girl I know, a buyer for a downtown department store, is part of that "office work."

But there's another husband who practically waits at our house from the time he takes his wife to the airport until it's time to meet her plane back. This couple has been married for six years. They have no children.

And, when I've gone to different cities for TV shows or speaking dates, I've found Lori's little theory about 1000% right.

The men I meet who don't have children talk about their wives.

The men who have kids ask me out.

Well, you probably encourage them," one wife said accusingly.

All right. For the sake of argument I'll accept that charge for a moment. But it's completely beside the point. The world is filled with encouraging females. The point is: how does *your* husband react to them?

One example, out of many I could give: waiting to check into a busy New Orleans hotel a few years back, I remember talking to a group of computer programmers who were checking out. Most were busy comparing notes on the "Lori" they'd dated while they were in town. One man wasn't. This man, whose name was John Emmons as I recall, talked to me instead about his wife. They'd been married ten years ago; she was bright and talented, and he showed me some pictures of her in community theater productions. They had no children. He was eager to get home to her; in fact, it was at his insistence that the group was taking a night flight back to Houston instead of staying over another day. John Emmons hadn't gone to Lucky Pierre's to get a girl to take to Bourbon Street. He'd gone out—to Preservation Hall and a few other places—alone, and called his wife afterwards to tell her about it.

Of course the other men had called home too. One of them was laughing heartily about the fact that he'd had a girl in his room *when* he called home to see how the kids were.

Lots of marriage counselors have stated Lori's idea, in more sophisticated language.

"Sure, infidelity can be provoked by children, insofar as infidelity can be an attempted escape from a marital situation that makes a man feel trapped," Virginia Satir told me. And in *The Mirages of Marriage* by William Lederer and Dr. Don Jackson, I ran across a sweeping, startling statement: "We have never observed a generally constant collaborative union between spouses during the period when they were raising children."

Well, sure, you may say, but they're marriage counselors, aren't they? They only see the unhappy marriages, the ones that fail. (Ditto for Lori: she's a marriage therapist of sorts—dates mainly unhappy husbands.)

And yet, there *are* those husbands; there *are* those marriages.

Maybe your own case wouldn't work that way. Maybe you could go through pregnancy without

getting pained and depressed. Maybe you wouldn't have to deny yourself all the other things in life. Maybe your husband wouldn't lose interest in you if you had children. Maybe he wouldn't try to date Lori at his office or cuddle with me when we happen to be on the same flight to Chicago.

And maybe you could be an exception to the Lederer-Jackson experience and have a harmonious marriage with children.

Maybe.

But I wouldn't guarantee it.

And I think that the way my husband and I are living our life is better. In any case, it's worth pausing to think it over, isn't it—pausing at least long enough to read this book?

## CHAPTER TWO

### BABYSELL:

#### THE MANUFACTURERS' TRAP

"Enfamil mothers are usually smarter."

"A cradleette is *more* than just an infant seat . . ."

"Jolly Jumper will amuse your child for hours . . ."

"Get your baby needs from Baby News!"

Many industries are rooted in the population explosion: utilities, furniture, clothing. And many of these industries see an expanding population as a good thing. We're only beginning to see that there can be *diseconomies* to very large-scale production. We're only beginning to listen to Emerson Foote, chairman of a major New York advertising agency, who quietly insists, "Whatever your cause, it's a lost cause without population control." The way most producers of goods and services still see it, the only profit factor that outweighs even a rising level of prosperity is *an expanding market*, an increasing population.

Thus, businesses and most advertisers cooperate in Babysell: presenting idealized mother-baby images in order to sell their products. The phenomenon is not restricted to toymakers. Baltimore Gas & Electric has used mother-and-baby to push such products as automatic icemakers. One promoter, speaking to businessmen via *Advertising and Sales Promotion* magazine,

offers "thousands of stock baby photos to sell your product." Any product. (Write Douglas Mack in Daly City, California, if you're interested.)

But it is, specifically, the makers of baby food, baby formulas, baby furniture, toys and trucks, float-ees and klatter-balls, lotions and diapers who eagerly scan maternity lists at hospitals, on occasion bribe gynecologists' receptionists to find out who is expecting, and wish to see *you* step into a new role—that of mother—in order to keep their profit margins healthy. The profits of the klatter-ball companies would be gravely threatened if you found something better to do with your life.

"Favorable birth trends" is the way these manufacturers refer to the population explosion. A spec sheet on Gerber products, for example, lists annual revenues of about \$200 million for 1969 and looks for "favorable birth trends" that would cause that figure to rise in the following years. "Sales of baby products should be aided by some advance in the birth rate," reads a similar Standard & Poors' for Johnson & Johnson.

And Associated Baby Services clearly does not care much about the population crush—or about you, either—so long as you reproduce yourself. This enterprising outfit (including Lullaby Diaper Service, Tidy Didy, Nu Dy-Per) had net sales of over \$22 million last year and is looking forward to an even more pregnant profit picture, if you cooperate.

"Associated Baby Services Hails Birth of More Potential Customers," begins an article in an investor's newswire. "Baby births last year increased for the first time since 1960 and a growing number of gals will be arriving at marriage age in the Seventies: This is good news for Associated Baby Services, Inc., which gets 57% of its sales and an even chubbier 80% of pre-tax profits from diaper services."

End of quote.

Sure. Have a baby. They want you to. That would be "good news" for them, and they encourage you through magazine ads 'n articles. They've even got a magazine of their own called *Baby Talk*, in which lots



of makers-of-baby-things advertise. A chattily helpful little magazine. Should help you spend lots more than the \$4.75 weekly you'd have to toss to the Tidy Didy route man.

Let's listen to somebody else talk about you:

"We believe the toy industry offers attraction for growth-minded investors," states another stock release. "Domestic toy revenues at the manufacturing level rose from \$838 million to \$2050 million . . . *more favorable demographics*" (that's you, baby!) "should provide the base for continued growth . . ."

An enterprising group called *Gift-Pax* has an act that's hard to follow. They present contributing manufacturers' products to a new mother immediately after delivery.

"The moment her baby arrives, *Gift-Pax* 'brands' them for you, for years ahead," boasts *Gift-Pax* in an ad to manufacturers. "Then, there's the timing," the ad goes on, "psychologically perfect for making your brand impression."

Now, if I were a new mother and knew about that ad, I would feel exactly like a pawn in some profit game. But then, relatively few copies of *Advertising Age* float through maternity wards. *Baby Talk* is more apt to be spoken there.

Photography gets into the act, too.

"Because young children are the subjects of more than half of all the photographs taken, the projected increase in births has favorable implications for the sale of photographic film," said a stock market analyst, speaking at UCLA. (One article gave the *average* figure of \$76 as what's spent on photos of a family's newborn. A Kodak man said he thought it would run "closer to a hundred.")

And insurance.

Equitable Life Assurance Society, not too long ago, featured a program of insurance "for a family" to meet "projected future needs." And, just to make sure there's no doubt about what *that* means, and as a come-on to help make those projected future needs occur in the *near* future, an Equitable ad shows a gal standing regally, beside a harp (!), one hand protec-

tively over her expanding stomach.

Naturally, Equitable would prefer to insure "families" rather than "couples." Why? Because the premiums are higher.

Cosmetics play a role in the Motherhood Come-On, too. These products, after all, sell youth. And what better way to demonstrate a product's youth potential than by showing a *user* of that product—with children? This was the approach of a certain Clairol commercial. It began with a lyric guitar strain, and a song:

*She walks barefoot through the meadow  
Early in the morning . . . oh, she lets her  
Hair down when the sun comes up . . .*

and the camera shows this white-chiffon-coated cookie with waist-length Clairol hair. Barefoot, yes. Hair down, yes. Floating through the meadow in slow motion, and—oh, yes, to let all the mothers know that they *too* can look this way—she is suddenly surrounded by gleaming children. (The girl, of course, is a model who wouldn't dream of increasing her waistline by drinking more than a half glass of apricot juice at one time, let alone becoming pregnant.)

The point is, you see these things advertised (insurance, cosmetics, cameras, cereal) and you also see *babies* advertised.

And you may be tempted to imagine yourself in those ads. You see yourself standing by that harp in that tasteful apartment, serenely pregnant. You project yourself into the Tang commercial that has a husband bringing his expectant wife breakfast (well, Tang, anyway) in bed. You see the floating Clairol figure as the sort of ethereal and unconfined and joyful mother you would be.

It doesn't always work that way. Take that Clairol commercial, for instance. Now, just how many mothers do you know who go skimming over meadows with a sense of abandon?

You may imagine you and your husband drawn close around a new baby, working together towards a

future for the three of you. It just might not be that way. Because Babysell is so strong, there's apt to be more work, and less future, than you might imagine.

We haven't even begun to point out the things you would, if pregnant, be urged to buy for Baby.

Baby furniture is a big item, for example. "You can't get by for less than five big ones," a salesman smiled warmly at me, holding up five fingers. "You see, just the crib and bureau will run close to \$100. Then there's the bassinet, the bathinette, the layette, the playpen, the stroller . . ."

Yes, I suppose you would need most of that . . .

Magazines and how-to-raise-your-baby books (some of which are partially underwritten by manufacturers) fall right in line. Urging you to be a successful mother, the author of a book by that name describes needed furniture. "Your new baby is tiny," she says, "but his furniture is going to be enormous. Besides, all too soon, he'll need a high chair, a potty chair, a play table . . . and what about the mass of stuff that will accumulate this year and next . . . toy chest? . . . rocking chair? . . . rocking horse? . . . *second* crib? . . . junior bed?"

And here are some suggestions from the Spring, 1970 *Apartment Living*:

"Here are some baby basics to make the going great! The dressing table . . . has a thick foam pad . . . molded plastic drawers, an attached diaper pail, and an added advantage: it slims down to half its size when necessary. Priced at \$29 from Peterson Baby Products. The crib/play yard is another good buy for your newest tenant . . . Then there's a dual-purpose unit: it quickly heats Baby's bottle and shuts off automatically, or it turns into a mini-vaporizer with its vaporizer top. Priced at \$4.25 . . . A cradle is more than another infant seat. This one has a position for rocking, in addition to adjustable positions every ten degrees . . . priced at \$10.00 . . ."

Then there's a "baby dish that heats the food and shuts off automatically. The set, including training cup, cold dish, and two spoons, is priced at \$16 . . ."

These are supposedly baby *basics*, remember.

Now of course babies *can* be raised without all that. Have you ever seen it happen, though? I haven't. I've never seen a home where there's a small child without seeing roomfuls of toys. Whether from Georg Jensen or door-to-door hucksters, the toys are *there*. Pressured by the manufacturers, by relatives and neighbors, by the whole society, really, most people will succumb and buy everything, even against their better judgment, so as not to get a strange look from a neighbor or explain to grandma why Junior is sleeping in a dresser drawer. And, face it. If a wife has identified with the Babysell "image" ads, she's going to respond well to the specific ads, in the first place. She's going to *want* that cradle.

A Chicago stock broker, in urging Bill to buy Mattel stock a few years ago, pointed out that, "Parents would sooner quit the golf club or give up dinner rather than cut back on toys for the kids; you *can't lose* with this stock. Every parent wants his kid to have everything." Of course, there may be another factor involved in all the toy buying: maybe mothers hope that *this* will finally be the toy that keeps junior occupied, quiet, out of her hair! (A popular line of toys includes, "Busy Box," "Busy Bath," "Busy Baby.")

And although we'll be talking later about the effects children can have on husbands, it might be worth pointing out right now that a man can get tired of the economic strain caused by all these Ingenious Essentials the manufacturers dream up for his wife to buy.

I was finding out about all these baby products in magazines, by the way, because, after talking to the baby-furniture salesman in a Baltimore department store, I decided I'd prefer thumbing through magazines to wandering through aisles. That way, I wouldn't have to dash the presumptions of super-eager salespeople. But, in San Francisco some weeks later, on my way to Ghirardelli Square, I passed a

store called Baby News. And I had a notebook in my purse. And I thought, "Oh, why not?"

So I checked it out.

I was feeling happy to the point of volatility, by the way: I'd like to make that very clear. It was early May. My husband was flying in and would meet me at my hotel within a few hours; we had reservations that night at our favorite San Francisco restaurant, the Charles on O'Farrell Street; and I was going to buy something spectacular to wear. I was *open-minded* to the point of thinking, "Well, maybe I'll see some happy parents and kiddies shopping here and blow my theory, who knows? How could anyone conceivably be *unhappy* living in San Francisco on a day like this?"

The first thing I saw in the store was hanging from the ceiling: a metal chain, about six feet long, connecting halfway down to a hard rubber bar, which was attached in turn to a white metal rod, from which were suspended cords, snap-on clamps, and pigtail screws which enclosed a huge doll in a harness. A little girl was being shown this *doll ex machina* by her mother, and the little girl was crying and saying, "Mommy, the baby's hanging, they're hanging the baby," and the mother was saying, "No, that's a Jolly Jumper, and it's just what Annie needs . . . it's going to teach Annie to walk while you and Mommy do the housework. . . ."

Well, I whipped past that little drama to the rack of cheery little tennis dresses (about \$7.50 each, and they *were* cute) but in front of the rack I heard a man asking his wife, "But does she really *need* this, Helen?" and I walked away without hearing the answer, because I did not *want* to hear any husband-wife arguments.

I retreated to the bikini racks. They have bikinis, it looked like, for newborns. Oh well, why not? And there were bathing caps, shorts and short sets, jackets, bibs, rompers, leotards, sandals, desert boots, slipperette stretch slippers, belts, jewelry and harem pajamas. And a display of "Pemay" clothes with the

slogan, "Clothes for Infants and Toddlers Designed Expressly for Adults."

And the couple I'd seen at the tennis dresses were now at *that* display, and the man was saying, "But, Helen . . ." and I backed off from them *again*, to the mobiles of styrofoam animals, and beyond that, to the books, where two mothers, each with a toddler and each pregnant, were talking about *The Big Golden Book of Poetry*. One mother was saying to the other, "It's fun, such fun to read these little poems again. Patty made me read 'The Best Game the Fairies Play' five times last night . . ." (Was this woman's husband looking on indulgently during that time—like in the ads?)

And I kept walking back, to a display of garden tools, where a mother was handing her small son a plastic lawn mower and saying, "Hey, how'd'ya like this, Davey, hmm?" and Davey was starting to fuss, and the mother said, "Oh, Davey, you want to be able to use these when Daddy does the *real* gardening, don't you?" And Davey took the toy mower and ran it straight into a display of toy hoes and then he really started to fuss.

And, leaving that, I found a stairway leading to The Hair Fair. Peanuts characters advertised it on posters lining the stairs—Lucy saying, "Nobody knows but my Hair Fair," and Snoopy suggesting, "Protest against the rising tide of homemade haircuts; visit Hair Fair."

I did. It was cutely canopied, red-and-white striped. Children were sitting on elephants, horses, and fire trucks. Only one child was quiet; she had the same bright red hair and freckles as "Helen" of the couple I'd seen downstairs. I glanced around, surprised at the number of mothers who had their little *boys* here; took in the prices (shampoo and set \$4.50); heard the lady who runs the place say, "Well, Mrs. Gibbs, I'm afraid if he doesn't want to sit on the horse, maybe we shouldn't insist . . ." and went back to the stairway.

The music on the main level was being interrupted



for an announcement. (Do they announce things like this all the time?) "Mrs. So-and-so of Texas," a hearty voice said, "has just had a child. Mother and baby are doing fine. And this is not unusual, except that this is her 24th child. Mr. So-and-so, a street contractor, was not available for comment." No, I imagine not; he must be rather catatonic by now.

And I was in the rear of one aisle, face to face with toilet-training needs. I wouldn't have thought there were so many. A partial list:

Dee's Half Pint Portable Urinal for Small Boys  
Wee Wee Travel Urinal for Both Boys and Girls  
Cosco Baby Toilette  
Pottie Stool  
Training Seat  
Little Toidey  
Musical Potty (!)

Yes, musical potty. When baby "deposits," reward-music plays.

How would David Brinkley handle this, if he were doing one of his wry closeouts on the subject of Baby News? "We are a society," he might say, "that is presently contemplating a supersonic transport plane, the SST. Its sonic boom will damage children before birth, possibly producing heart defects, impaired hearing. But there will be some comforts left to them. They will have their musical potties."

I was feeling less euphoric than when I'd come into this store.

I realized just then that another girl was also taking notes on these toilet-training needs. She was about my age, and we might have looked quite a bit alike—except she was just about nine months' pregnant. Also, she was turning the boxes around and writing down the prices. I considered doing the same thing, then got distracted by another line of thought. I looked at her and wondered what the rest of her life would be like—and mine. Tonight, I would be meeting my husband at the St. Francis. And she? A year from now, would she be in this store again, pricing

different items? A year from now, I will, I thought, probably be standing somewhere with my notebook—but somewhere *else*. I was getting involved in some complicated comparative speculation when a salesman in a red-and-white striped jacket came pushing a cart down the aisle. All the salesmen had red-and-white striped jackets. This cart, as I recall, contained plastic teether rattles filled with edible gelatin. They were electronically sealed, with no rough edges . . .

And the salesman was approached by a distraught-looking man, whom I'd seen wandering around the store for some time, come to think of it. In a barely audible voice, and with nervous glances at the other girl and me, he asked the salesman for a "a . . . a . . . do you have . . . a . . . a breast pump?" His embarrassment had made the last two words shrill. He glanced over his shoulder at us again, then the salesman led him cheerfully down the aisle. The other girl turned back to the toilet needs. I decided I had seen enough of Baby News. Brushing past the Happy Baby this-and-that's, the infant enema syringes, the Orajel and the Hula Coopes and the no-doubt hundreds of other baby delights I had not yet taken notes on, I left the store.

What was wrong? That man's wife had evidently needed a breast pump; he'd gone to buy one for her. What was wrong with that, I asked myself. Well, the fact that *he* had seemed so nervous about it—embarrassed would be more the word—*that* was what was wrong with it. He looked like a twelve-year-old boy looks when his mother sends him to the drugstore for Kotex. And I think Philip Roth has described *that* feeling well.

I wanted to figure this out. Why does a boy or a man feel embarrassed or humiliated at having to buy a woman things like Kotex or a breast pump? I suppose not all men *would* be bothered. And a girl I knew in college regularly picked up her boyfriend's Trojans at the pharmacy. That didn't bother her.

But then that was *Lorraine*. And *nothing* bothered her. Besides, Trojans are directly related to sexual

enjoyment. *Mutual* sexual enjoyment. Kotex and nursing aids are different. They're accoutrements to female reproductive physiology. In asking a man to get them, is there kind of an implicit subjugation involved? Is there?

A psychologist I'd interviewed the day before, Nathaniel Branden, had said, "To the degree that aspects of reproduction are overemphasized, aspects of *sexuality* are de-emphasized." Would that man, that night, see his wife's breasts as, well, alluring or romantic?

There is no way to tell, of course. But it is possible that wife-as-babynurse is not at all the same as wife-mistress.

And the effects of all those other Baby News products might also be negative.

The infant seats, the Strollee playpens, the Busy Boxes, and all the other superstuff is presented by the superstuff-makers as creating a serene and happily playful domestic scene. It doesn't. What actually happens when you have a baby and the inevitable agglomeration of baby things is quite different: you increase your potential for accidents and aggravation; you reduce the probability of keeping living areas in good order; you might limit personal space.

Now, that might seem rather irrelevant, and indeed might *be* irrelevant if people existed solely on a plane of ideas and were not affected by their surroundings. But we *are* affected by our surroundings, or we would vacation as readily in garages as at resorts. And day-to-day surroundings are even more important.

The pattern of stumbling over and falling over a variety of toys, on a day-in, day-out basis, can be rather persistently demoralizing and can be responsible for a *lot* of minor husband-wife fights. (One grad student I know is examining accidents in the home, speculating that stumbling over Junior's toys is, in a sense, deliberate, giving father a chance to "blow off steam" at Junior, but in an indirect and "acceptable" way.)

And just as disordered living conditions can create a sense of mild despair ("Helen, for heaven's sake, isn't

there any place to sit *down* in this room?") and perhaps a strong desire to escape, diminished personal space can be oppressive and can breed emotional retreat.

Perhaps more seriously, when you acquire all those playthings for baby, you shift material emphasis from things that provide direct enjoyment for you and your husband to things that provide only vicarious participation in baby's babyhood. The shift from things man and wife enjoy to baby-centered items is quite clear if we recall a few of the things at Baby News.

Or if we glance at the offerings in a typical *Parents* magazine: a Dresdenite, chinalike finish for baby's precious shoes; "little doodits"; musical toothbrushes; and something called a thermo-spoon. (That's one with a thermometer built into the handle, to tell when the food is just the right temperature.)

All sorts of cutesy things, just the sort that can ultimately demoralize a *man* who walks into roomfuls of the stuff. Interestingly enough, turning the page of that March, 1970 *Parents* magazine from the mentioned slew of ads, we find a column called "Books for Parents."

Three, and only three, books were listed:

- 1) *Compatible Divorce*
- 2) *The Divorced Mother*
- 3) *Explaining Divorce to Children*

You know, I think perhaps *I* could explain some divorces rather simply. Dad may simply have gotten fed up with all those Dresdenite-finished shoes, mini-vaporizers, cradlettes, musical floatees, Busy Boxes and littld doodits, and decided he wanted a dark-beamed oak den, black leather sofa, fake zebra throw, a *bar*, and a *woman*.

Well, that's immature, you say, and that's selfish.

I think it's quite mature behavior. Being mature assumes a certain amount of personal power, and the right to decide in what way that power will be exercised. And selfishness, in the sense of being aware

of, and proud of, the *self*, is certainly a factor in a balanced personality. It's the weak personalities that completely resign themselves to the role of consumer of child-centered gee-gaws who are in trouble. Being aware of one's *own* adult sensuality, personality, and material preferences is good.

And while I'm not a materialist in the extreme sense, I think that a great piece of furniture detracts not one whit from an intelligent conversation. I think that a really fine wine goes very well with good thoughts. Life is after all built on the tangible as well as the intangible—on material things as well as abstract thoughts and feelings. In balance, the material things enrich one's sense of the abstract and play a certain role in defining for a person his concept of himself.

Now, when a man is denied the chance to meet the material things of *his* preference from the vast panorama of material things offered by this material society, he is denied one avenue of expression of self. This is not news, really. Women "express" themselves through decoration of homes, men "express" their personality in their choice of a slick Fiat or sedate Mercedes; all people "express" themselves through their choice of books, films, food, clothing. Besides being an avenue of self-expression, spending can bring direct enjoyment in terms of sensation, esthetics, or status.

What happens if most of the spending money is pre-empted for baby's things? To the extent that this happens, an adult's material experience can become vicarious and unsatisfying.

Much of human experience is vicarious, of course. (When you see a play, you participate vicariously with the characters on stage. Your husband's pleasure in bringing you a gift is partly vicarious; he shares *your* pleasure.) But to experience the things of childhood vicariously might constitute, in a life lacking in alternate interests, a regression. It might not seem, on a conscious level, to be negative or unsatisfying. But it might not be positive experiential growth, either. What can happen to parents who

spend evening after evening watching Junior play with his toys? In ten years, those parents *may* be at a sensitivity-training session, trying to rediscover what they lost, sensually, on the living-room floor, as they gradually taught themselves that their day-to-day enjoyments were available chiefly *through Junior*.

It's all to the benefit of certain manufacturers, of course. Though, since almost no manufacturers are concerned with the effects of their products, we shouldn't expect the toy companies to worry about how their playthings will affect the interpersonal balance of a marriage.

But once in a while responding to Babysell can affect larger balances, too. For example, in the May 1, 1970, *Life* magazine, International Paper Company had a two-page ad. One page showed a closeup of a pink baby. That was on the left.

Seeing that, we were supposed to accept whatever was said in the copy, to the right of the picture. And the copy read something like this:

"Tomorrow's baby . . . everything the baby wears or touches—virtually the entire environment in which he lives—can be disposable. Why do we need a disposable environment? Consider this: in the first five years of his life, a baby will outgrow everything you buy him. He'll outgrow his bed three times, and his clothing up to eight times . . . Take clothes, for example. A baby's wardrobe can start with our Flushabye diapers . . . And that's really just the start. International Paper can be made into just about everything else a baby will touch or wear. Sheets, pillowcases, blankets, shirts, sleepers, training pants . . ."

The ad then mentions that diaper rash may be eliminated, since nothing will ever touch baby's skin twice. Then it goes on:

"The idea of a disposable environment includes furniture, too . . . we plan to make nursery furniture . . ."

And here's the real pitch:

"And by the time baby grows up, there's a good chance he may be moving into an entire paper world. Curtains, carpets, furniture . . ."

And all disposable.

Today the Flushabye diaper. Tomorrow the Flushabye world.

Let's see just what we've accepted, if we've gone along with this disposables-are-good-for-baby reasoning. We have accepted that all of these sheets, sleepers, nursery furniture, et cetera, will be made from paper: that is, trees. Since International Paper intends this stuff to be discarded periodically, we're talking about a *lot* of trees. (Baby never has diaper rash. Of course, he may never see a forest either.)

And meanwhile, we have *all* lost a bit of the world around us, if we accept this particular example of Babysell. We have subjected our adult human possibilities for enjoyment of the world to a baby's supposed need for Flushabye environments.

The International Paper ad ignores that basic truth and glosses over the rather frightening implications of disposable environments with a simplistic "But baby won't have diaper rash" approach. This is a different phase of Babysell. Before a woman becomes pregnant, the images imply, "Wouldn't this be nice?" After she becomes a mother, ads such as the International Paper one imply, "Baby is all that's important," and do not invite her to think beyond that.

When you do think beyond that, though, you see that in giving to baby, you can deprive yourself, perhaps seriously. Of what might you be deprived? I have some rather complicated answers in my notes; one psychologist spoke in terms of "sensory and experiential deprivation" and of its effects. I think a somewhat clearer answer might be found in my casual encounter with a couple named Al and Ginger.

After I left the Baby News store in San Francisco, I went to get a cup of coffee someplace upstairs in the Cannery, a few blocks away. The coffee shop was

crowded, and I finally asked a young couple if I could sit at their table. They moved about a half a ton of packages and said sure.

You just have to ask about that many packages. "Some things for our beach house—like bikinis for Gen," the man, who at second glance was not so young after all, explained.

They talked. I opened my notebook and put question marks and asterisks and stuff all over my Baby News notes. As I was finishing my coffee, I asked them where their beach house was.

"Malibu," the man said, rather expansively, "thanks to her."

"Hey, you made the money, Al, most of it. I just held off from spending anything, that's all."

"We were always saying, even before we got married, that we wanted a beach house. I really thought it was all talk; how were *we* going to—I mean, there are *managers* at the plant where I work who couldn't—but Gen's attitude was that for one year we were going to save everything we made; and if we saved everything, we could afford anything. And after about a year, year and a half, we had, well, a hell of a lot of money. We bought a *little* bit of stock, because I'm not sure I trust it—the market, that is . . ."

"Have you ever asked a stock broker for 5 shares of stock?" Ginger asked.

"Yes," I said, and we laughed.

"So, Al liked Malibu a lot, and we looked around for a couple of summers, found a place we liked . . ."

"Well, we're spending money *now*. Well, actually, not so much at that. Al made most of the furniture—from used wood as a matter of fact—and we re-finished what we had before. These things are just crazy extras: lots of posters, candles, a bean-bag chair, things for the bar, and—hey, you have a picture of the place, don't you, Al?"

Actually, it looked like the sort of place Bill and I want: a simple A-frame, a deck facing the ocean. Our beach, though, is on the other side of the continent, in North Carolina. And so far, when we go there, we sleep in sleeping bags.

"... have to drive all the things down there next weekend and do a lot of work; we're having friends there over Memorial Day. It's a 'bring your own food' deal, though. I don't want Gen to have to do cooking and moving in at the same time."

"Have I told you five times, or ten, I wouldn't mind?"

"Nope. You're spending as little time as possible in that kitchen ..."

She leaned over toward him, laughing. I couldn't hear what she said ...

I pushed the coffee cup away. I was never going to get my shopping done this afternoon; it was 4:30 now. Oh, well, Bill liked the gold knit I had at the hotel.

"How long have you been married?" I asked them. Five years, they said. And, feeling like all the busy-noses who are always asking *me* the same thing, I asked, with some hesitation, "Do you have any children?"

Their "no" was vehement.

All that week, I'd been talking to lawyers and marriage counselors about the weighty burdens of parenthood and conflicts precipitated by children. I somehow felt like reciting it all to them so they'd know how *right* they were. But then, they seemed to know, anyway. So I didn't bother. Instead, I just said, "My husband and I don't either."

Ginger laughed again and said, "Isn't it wonderful? You know, whenever we visit friends with children, I enjoy the children—I really do—but we are *so glad* to leave."

"We're enough for each other," she added.

And I'm sure they were.

And I'm sure there was a difference in the way they felt about each other, in contrast to, say, the way the couples at Baby News felt about each other. For one thing, Al and Ginger were together that afternoon. Most of the toddlers at Baby News had been with one parent (mother), not both. For another thing, Al and Ginger seemed to have a material satisfaction that not everybody who indulges in money-spending *gets*.

They had what they *wanted*; perhaps it's as simple as that. "Lying out there on the deck," Al had said, "listening to that ocean, knowing that part of it's *mine* is the greatest feeling in the world."

How many other men might feel the same way, might prefer a bit of ocean to, say, a camper?

Now, I know that you can take that general argument and turn it into a number of specifics that sound very selfish. Am I saying, for example, that a man would be better off to experience the taste of good Scotch instead of buying baby food? Or that the man who bought the breast pump would have been happier buying a set of golf balls?

There are no answers to these questions, because what's at issue can't be reduced to specifics so easily.

And, I'm aware that I seem to be substituting one brand of materialistic consumption for another, and in effect saying, "If you don't get trapped into buying playpens and tricycles, you can get great modern furniture." That's not quite it. What I'm really trying to say is that without children you have more *choice* about material spending. And this can lead to an assessment of life's possibilities in more total ways. Right now, Al and Ginger are going through a phase of materialism, true. Most couples do. But if they've indulged themselves, they can abandon this phase easily when they feel they want to. A child's material "needs" are continuous, and, believe it or not, a couple can face censure if they don't buy the trainer bike or the Bass Weejuns.

And we should note that, along with their materialism, Al and Ginger are reaching out for new experiences, a new role. They're stepping out of the usual young-blue-collar-worker-and-wife stereotype. They've bought a place that some of Al's supervisors couldn't afford. That's going to lead to some interesting insights into people he knows at work. (Some will, no doubt, cultivate invitations; others will scoff.)

And it's going to lead to expanded acquaintances. Most of those who have weekend places like Al and Ginger's will be different in background. Maybe the affluent couple next door will take one look at Al's



hand-crafter sofa and retreat to their own Vladimir Kagan stuff. (Or maybe they'll expand their idea about furnishings.) And maybe Al and Ginger will find themselves irreconcilably opposed politically to the SDS types who have the cottage down the beach in the *other* direction. And, if so, who knows? Maybe they'll begin to dislike this entire milieu they've put themselves into. (Or maybe they'll change their attitudes—or cause other people to change theirs—and find the changes interesting.)

And that's the real point: whatever happens, Al and Ginger will be free to choose and free to change. And those two freedoms *can* get pretty limited when your life is circumscribed by Busy Boxes and Mattel marvels.

Think about this the next time you see an elaborate ad by a "baby" profiteer. Of course *somebody* is going to be profiting from your money, and mine. But I'd rather it be a travel agent than a talcum-powder magnate; a pre-fab beach house company than an institution specializing in row-house mortgages; a flower-seller than a diaper service. I'd rather hear ocean surf on an A-frame deck than Busy Boxes clattering in a cluttered kitchen.

I suspect that you might, too.

You might consider giving yourself that choice.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MEDIA TRAP

Eddie Albert interviews a typical housewife in a TV commercial. She has one child with her, but explains, "I've got eleven more at home." "That's *wonderful*," Eddie Albert responds.

"I think children are definitely the most fulfilling thing for a woman . . ."

—Actress on the David Frost Show

Both in response to the manufacturers' advertising dollars and due to the deeply encultured ideal of family life, the media have built up a "motherhood" mystique that at times verges on the hysterical.

Motherhood is continually associated with a mystical "fulfillment" (mystical because, since this fulfillment usually does not exist, it must be described in vague ways). And, through ads and commercials, mommies are made to seem not only "fulfilled" but *glamorous*. This can lead, or mislead, many girls who might otherwise have been happy and childless into having children they later realize they did not want and cannot raise.

Now, of course the media build up misleading ideas about *everything*. All the complications of life, love, careers, conflicts, death or disinheritance, find their tie-up at the end of thirty minutes. And, if only by the implications of the models chosen, the settings used, *all* commercials mislead; it's not just the product pushes based on parenthood. We catch on to this,

eventually. We learn that: (a) Bisquick has little to do with a loving atmosphere in the apartment; (b) Salem cigarettes do not create a scene of natural splendor around you; (c) toothpaste will not produce romance; (d) all of these.

But the consequences of identifying with the *maternal* models on TV are so long-lasting! By the time one catches on to the fact that it's impossible to be that slim, witty, alluring girl-mother the Clairol and the Grape Nuts ads *implied* it was possible to be, the trap has closed.

The magazine models are perhaps even worse. On TV, things happen fast. The attractive-mother images are projected visually, subliminally, quickly. But the magazines take their time and spell it out. They make of motherhood a science, or perhaps a religion, with cults and subcults: to breastfeed or not to breastfeed; natural-childbirth, Lamaze method vs. childbirth by hypnosis, et cetera.

Even *The New York Times Magazine* in one issue contemplated the "areola of the lactating breasts" and the "anxiety-milk-loss-failure syndrome" in an article that seemed to have escaped from *McCall's*.

*Redbook*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Family Circle*, *Woman's Day*, *Life*, *Look*, *Time*, and even *Vogue*, all concern themselves at times with the expectant mother's complexion, carriage, nausea, varicose veins, fetal movements, size, weight, and emotion; with the lubricants of the birth passage and the language of cooing. And an evangelistic magazine put out by La Leche League International promotes, in a bi-monthly paper, "Good Mothering Through Breastfeeding the World Over." (Member mothers take their tots and have group breastfeedings.)

The religious aura surrounding the maternal state shows up a lot in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Their February, 1970 story on Helen Meyner's "miracle" pregnancy is adulatory, almost worshipful:

"Here is the moving story of how she risked her health to take an experimental fertility drug . . . For years, against the advice of skeptical doctors

. . . she had taken injections of an experimental and dangerous fertility drug. The treatment had failed. Helen Meyner could have given up. She felt that she had so much of what she wanted in life—wonderful husband, nice home, an interesting newspaper job, a chance to travel, all the comforts. But she wanted to experience the miracle of pregnancy and childbirth so much that she begged her doctor to continue the fertility injections . . . (This despite the fact that the drug she was taking had been known to cause severe or fatal disorders of the ovaries and circulatory system.)

"And now [*Ladies' Home Journal* continued triumphantly] Helen Meyner enters the last month of gestation."

At that point I, a fairly puzzled reader, had a couple of questions: *one*, about the suitability of motherhood for a woman who would become obsessed with questionable medical treatments which had proved fatal; *two*, my God! Couldn't she have adopted instead?

It seemed perverse—obscene—to spend so much time, energy and effort to get one's very own zygote going ("One morning she drove for hours to see the doctor, to ask once more for injections . . .") when the world outside is just crying for that attention. Surely, in 1969 and early 1970, there was a project of the community which could have used her efforts, and might have made the world a bit better for all the babies already living. (Her husband, Robert Meyner, 61 and a former governor, being supposedly concerned for the state of the world, might have approved of that. Characteristically, I'm afraid, the *Ladies' Home Journal* did not seem one bit concerned with *his* reactions to all of Helen's hormonal folderol.)

Helen Meyner, then, was a media model. She didn't just "have a baby," or "become pregnant." She was featured in "The Magazine Women Believe In," and thus became a national example, convincing people by the droves, probably, that pregnancy must be

pretty groovy, since she risked death to get it.

*Redbook* has also presented its versions of *Girls Who Go to Extremes to Get Pregnant*. In an anonymous story, a *Redbook* reader told how she conceived a child by donor insemination:

"The doctor selects a donor, often a medical student or another doctor," Dr. (X) said. His health is carefully checked, and his mental and physical characteristics are matched with the husband's as closely as possible. The donor's identity cannot be traced, and you're protected completely. On the day of ovulation, you receive the semen by injection."

The woman involved kept a basal temperature chart throughout her menstrual cycle, and each day at lunchtime went to the doctor's office to have a culture taken. One day after checking the vaginal smear, Dr. X. announced, "Today's the day," and told her to wait about half an hour for the semen to arrive. A thought that went through her mind, she said, was that while this isn't exactly the way a woman envisions conception (and it sure *isn't!*), if this is what was necessary for her to conceive, well, so be it. In other words, quite apart from pregnancy resulting from an act between her and her husband, and in spite of the fact that the doctor had told her some husbands later ask for divorce on the grounds of donor insemination, she took her husband's word that he didn't think this would bother him, so eager was she for her *own* pregnancy . . .

Lying on the examining table, looking at that "small white jar that looked as though it might contain face cream," the woman's thoughts, according to this self-written article, were centered on "that unknown man who would provide the semen . . ."

Does that seem like a scene that will further future closeness between husband and wife? It is a scene, in fact, that again shows just how anti-sexual reproduction can be—this time in almost a *Brave New World* sense.

"Why are stories like this run?" I asked assistant editors at various magazines. "Meeting reader interest," was the usual reply. Partially, that's nonsense. Any magazine recognizes its power to *create* reader interest in new personalities, new lifestyles, new writers, new directors, new products. *New products*. Interestingly enough, at one magazine I ended up, in pursuing this seemingly editorial question, in the office of someone called an "editorial merchandising specialist."

Yes, editorial and merchandising policy do mix. *Time*, last May, revealed that *Denver Post* reporters were rebelling at being assigned "puff pieces" to support ads in the paper. Their situation is certainly not unique, though it is less pronounced in newspapers than the ladies' magazines. There, such columns as "Occupation: Homemaker" demonstrate the magazines' obsequious attitude toward their advertisers. Here's just one paragraph from that column:

"Manufacturers are always interested in improving their products, adding new features all the time, to make them more convenient or better to use. For example, the cutting-wheel assembly on electric can openers has always been difficult to keep clean. Now, many can openers have a snap-off cutter that can be removed and quickly washed."

Good grief. Are people really *bothered* by things like that, until the magazines and the manufacturers tell them? Do any girls really get upset at that stubborn little cutting-wheel assembly? Couldn't any girl with a tenth of a brain figure out that the most efficient way to open a can is with one of those 29¢ jobs?

What is the *idea* of promoting all that work-producing gadgetry? *That* was my question; and I took it to a person whose magazine runs similar editorial pushes.

The idea was, he said candidly, to keep women busy in the home, busy with homemaking tools.

"Well, if you want to keep women in the home, is it



your idea to promote childbearing as well? Is that what's behind the stories that glorify baby-having?"

"Well, I can't say that," he said, "but figures may have been kept a time or two, on how many women readers get pregnant each year. Some advertisers are impressed by that, since they know these women are *more* apt to stay at home, read the magazine—and the ads—more carefully."

That's what an "editorial merchandising specialist" in Chicago told me, anyway. He also said, "Now, if I talk to you, I want you to conceal very, very carefully the publishing company I work for." So, of course, this was not really in Chicago.

But he did have some other interesting things to say.

"So, inasmuch as we're selling domesticity, I guess we're selling motherhood. The situation is kind of a paradox since no matter how merchandisers try to show that being a mom and a homemaker is fascinating, it's essentially not. Breeding is not chic, it is not fun, it is not glamorous. A psychiatrist, close friend of mine, says housewives' alcoholism is increasing like crazy. That Friedan book\* said the full-time housewife is neurotic. And frankly we've all got indications that they're basically right about that. One of our competitors just had to run an article about 'I'm Just a Housewife Blues,' because there's no denying a problem does exist.

"But the simplest way out of the problem is through spending," he continued, in easy self-justification. "I mean, you *know* the old saw about the wife feeling depressed, buying a new hat, and feeling better. Well, it's true. Spending money is therapeutic. If we can keep her spending, she'll be more satisfied with her role. Now, doesn't that make sense?"

Sure. Consumerism as therapy. Keep women so

\* *The Feminine Mystique*. His one-sentence sum-up of this book is somewhat of an oversimplification, by the way, but not basically inaccurate.

busy spending money that they'll be too busy to question or examine their lives.

Sure.

"Inasmuch as we're promoting domesticity, I guess we're promoting motherhood..."

They do a good job of it. Like Detroit cars, Motherhood is presented in a variety of models, all, of course, idealized. Glancing through a batch of magazines, I found several distinct types:

First, there's the *Pillar of the Community* model. She's married to Somebody: president or pediatrician, copper magnate or Chamber of Commerce bulwark. You'll find lots of articles by and about her, all centering on "How I Raise My Children." She tends to emphasize other things, too, of course: projects of the garden and the ghetto. Typically, she opens her home to the garden club but not the ghetto children; her services to them are restricted to white-glove fund raising. She certainly doesn't adopt any of these truly needy children. Instead, she and her husband are typically genetic narcissists: nothing will do but for them to produce their very *own* straight-haired and blue-eyed youngsters, who are given prestigious names like Moss, Troy, Kerry, Clayman.

For several reasons, it would be unrealistic to identify with her.

In the first place, she has servants. She need never deal with dirty closets, diaper pails, Drano. She does valuable, uplifting things. That's why she looks so radiant, and that's why the kids look glad to see her. She's *special*—like company that just happens to arrive every evening.

For most mothers I've talked to, such a setup doesn't seem reachable. Even if Mom has help for cleaning and leaves Junior and Wendy at a day-care nursery, she has to come home and fuss with cooking the macaroni and cutting meat off that leftover leg of lamb, not to mention fixing Junior's junior vegetables and seeing to Wendy's change of clothes. Sometimes, Dad takes charge of the kids during most of the

dinner-getting process. But then, communications between the living room and the kitchen can snarl, resulting in non-discussions like:

"Bob, what are they doing? Are you keeping an eye on them?"

"Nothing, they're OK."

"Well, watch that Wendy doesn't pull anything off the coffee table."

"Um-hum."

"Bob, are you reading the *paper*!?"

"Just glancing."

"Bob, you've got to watch them. Is the balcony door open? Do keep an eye on Wendy."

"Right."

"Listen, will you see if Wendy's got to go to the bathroom?"

"You want *me* to take her?"

"Well, Bob, either that or you'll have to wash this lettuce while I..."

"I'll take her, I'll take her; hey, when's dinner, anyway?"

"In just a few *minutes*, Bob!"

Naturally, after fifteen minutes of such rattling repartee, both husband and wife sit down to dinner mildly aggravated. Yes, it is difficult to be a "Pillar of the Community" model mother—without servants.

A second disadvantage to this woman, by the way, is that she usually has far too *many* children. She has six. Or eight. Or occasionally more.

There is no justification for this. Of course, she can "afford" it, particularly if her name is Kennedy. But the world cannot. As an American Medical Association publication stated last year,

"Children have long been regarded by parents in economic terms. Can *we* afford to send four children to college? Will *we* find our budget pinched with the extra clothing, food, medical and dental bills? The man who decides that he can have four children in many ways resembles the one who has concluded that he can afford three

automobiles . . . They can afford them; the fact that society cannot is (to them) irrelevant."

That should be obvious. Any couple who produce six or eight or more children during a twenty-year, super-ultra, child-raising binge is being exceedingly selfish, much like the man who blasts away his entire paycheck on drinks while his ailing wife starves. The Kennedys and other dynasties let the world go hungry as they consume all of the dwindling resources the world has left to offer.

While on the surface, there seems to be a rightness to the life of the Pillar of the Community mother, her inner attitudes are very unthinking, and very wrong.

Another media model is the *Professional Mother*. She's not so well-known. Her husband is perhaps a salesman, perhaps an accountant. She lives in Cedar Rapids or Overland Park.

"I always say if you're going to do something, do it *right*; and if you're going to raise children, then stay home and *raise* them," "A woman's place is in the home," and other such pellets of wisdom drop from her lips, in articles about homemaking.

She does not get out of the house.

She plays with the creative playthings and the Busy Boxes, accompanies her tots to hopscotch games and the playground, runs with them to the Good Humor truck. And after a few years of this, she, too, has a mental age of five and a half—and as much sex appeal as Betty Crocker.

Her husband works late on Tuesdays, if he is a salesman, and he looks forward to business trips with a double incentive: the opportunity for expense-account living, plus a bit of expense-account padding to help provide for that brood at home, *and* the chance to get *away* from that brood (and the mother hen).

The *Glamour-Doll* motherhood model is a present, or former, singer, actress, ballerina, movie star.

"With a brood of children ranging from six to sixteen, she is more a mother than a movie star

today," begins a syndicated feature on Ann Blyth. An interview with former ballerina Moira Shearer emphasizes the "great satisfactions" that she has found in motherhood.

And sometimes the glamour mom is a member of nobility. *Vogue* is fond of presenting this type: the Marquesa de Something-or-other with her adorable blonde children. (The fact that she *has* children must be stressed, of course, to make the Marquesa more acceptable to the masses of middle-class American mommies, who will then buy her line of cosmetics which has just hit the U.S. market.)

The Marquesa, as posed by a top photographer, is absolutely vibrant. Oscar de la Renta gown. Flowing hair. Lithe limbs. You can almost sense the smouldering female feelings that lie just behind that calm, chiseled face as she sips champagne with her husband on their château lawns. (Meanwhile, the servants are taking care of the children's suppers.)

Only one thing wrong here: how many of us are living in a hillside castle and married to, like a *marquis*? Let's not delude ourselves that motherhood is like that; let's not identify with her.

In a rather clever poem, Judith Viorst has pointed out the disparity between a Marquesa's life with kids: and what *ours* would be like:

"Oh somewhere there are lovely little boudoirs  
With Porthault sheets and canopies and whips.  
He lion-hunts in Africa on weekends,  
She measures thirty-three around the hips.

"There eyes engage across the brandy snifters.  
He runs his fingers through her Kenneth hair.  
The kids are in the other wing with Nanny;  
The sound of violins is everywhere . . ."

*That's* the candid portrait of a Marquesa.

And here's what it's like for Average American Mommies:

"I bring the children one more glass of water.  
I rub the hormone night cream on my face.  
Then after I complete my isometrics  
I greet my husband with a warm embrace.

A vision in my long-sleeved flannel nightgown,  
And socks (because my feet are always freezing)  
Gulping tranquilizers for my nerve ends,  
And Triaminic tablets for my wheezing.

And now my rollers clink upon the pillow  
And his toenail scrapes against my skin  
He rises to apply a little chapstick  
I ask him to bring back two Bufferin . . ."

That poem, by the way, is called "Sex Is Not So Sexy Anymore," and the message, though delivered humorously, is pretty clear.

But to be frank about it, if you have children, even all the money of a marquesa may not provide the pleasures you might think. I remember an article in last June's *Mademoiselle* magazine. Barbara Gilliam had asked various celebrities where they liked to vacation, and their replies were a complete catalog of the world's delights. Until she got to Joseph Heller.

"Joseph Heller, author of *Catch-22*, gets last place in the vacation sweepstakes," she wrote. "He and his family try a different place each year, because the previous year is always a disaster, he says. They've been to the mountains, the shore, and Europe. 'The kids never stopped complaining the twelve weeks we were in Europe . . .' Heller said, 'I dread the approach of summer . . .'"

Even if you *have* tons of money, identifying with maternity models—even glamorous ones—could be an unsatisfying move. You might no longer be able to enjoy the experiences that all that money could buy.

\* Reprinted by permission of The World Publishing Company from *It's Hard to Be Hip over Thirty . . . & Other Tragedies of Married Life* by Judith Viorst. An NAL book. Copyright © 1968 by Judith Viorst.

An interesting and rather recent addition to the line of motherhood models is the *Out-of-Wedlock Mother*, a popular soap-opera and fan-magazine type.

Mia Farrow is perhaps the best real-life example; certainly there were more articles about her maternity than about Connie Stevens, Joanna Pettet and Vanessa Redgrave combined. Photographed while pregnant in a shiny, sequined envelope that rather flaunted her condition, she may have looked like a brave and rebellious girl defying convention. A closer look shows an almost classic case of pregnancy motivated by insecurity.

Mia Farrow was evidently never too sure of her femininity. A reporter, discussing her adolescence, says in a May, 1969 *Life* magazine:

"About this time, Mia was asking herself a disturbing question: *why don't boys pay any attention to me?* She can remember a teen-age dance in the Beverly Hills Hotel when she and another girl were the classic wallflowers, watching everybody but themselves dancing. 'Then a boy walked toward us,' Mia recalls, 'I brightened up but he reached out and took the other girl onto the dance floor. I was the only one left.'"

She was always intensely bothered by her flat chest. (Her real reason for not posing nude, friends say, is less a matter of principle than of physique.)

Vernon Scott, Hollywood reporter for the UPI, has said that she is seriously introverted. Thomas Thompson, another reporter, described her world as "shapeless . . . a place of surmise . . ." She lived, in effect, a fantasy. Asked by one reporter what she'd have done if she hadn't gone into acting, she replied in male or bisexual terms: "chimney sweep . . ." "cowboy . . ." "stowaway . . ."

Not surprisingly, Mia Farrow retreated in a number of ways from the femininity she was not sure of. She cut her hair into a plucked-chicken bob. ("Mythical suicide," said Salvador Dali. "If not a symbolic suicide, at least a symbolic de-sexing of herself," said

another source.) She entered a convent in London for a while. And, she married a father figure.

It is not any secret, psychologically, that the girl who marries a much older man is avoiding the competition for the more virile males her own age and seeking instead to re-create the pattern of daddy-daughter indulgence of earlier years.

Mia could handle that. Frank Sinatra was nothing if not indulgent. She selected their \$300,000 mansion and was taken to L.A. discothèques to go dancing with "approved" boys her age while "Daddy" watched.

Later, in her relationship with Andre Previn, she seized a chance to project the idea that she *was* feminine, after all. She became pregnant. But the dynamics of that pregnancy look like those of compensation; she was compensating, or making up for, the sense of feminine inadequacy she revealed in several interviews. But that is her business, just as were Helen Meyner's medical minuets; and I am sorry to be criticizing them. No matter how questionable their motives for pregnancy, my real quarrel is with the media (the women's magazines, in the case of Helen Meyner; the Hollywood pulps in Mia's case) for glorifying their "miracle pregnancy" and "love children" and *failing* to give any realistic examination of their motives. Certainly it is irresponsible journalism, given today's population problem, to praise these pregnancies without qualification and without question. If some realistic reportorial questions were raised, it might be seen that not all pregnancies result from healthy or romantic reasons.

And that might be a valuable lesson.

The *Hippie Mother* has a particular sort of appeal. She projects several qualities: an earth-mother kind of sensuality; defiance of convention; bizarre way of dress; nonchalance about responsibility; liberal morals; and, above all, an emphasis on the *natural*, the *real*.

Part of this supposed "reality" is a propensity to reproduce. The fifteen-couple commune profiled by *Life* magazine in July of 1969 sported nearly that

many children. But what happens afterwards? Do the hippie mothers have successful lives, with children?

Having rejected status and social conformity, according to one reporter many of the mothers wryly concede they've been forced to play the same game in the hippie community.

"We came to the East Village to get away from the status thing, but the status thing is here, too," one of these mothers told reporter Jurate Kazickas. "You have to talk about a certain kind of child rearing . . . you just never admit you hit your child. You have to nurse your baby all the time, well past eight months. You have to give your kid a strange name: Arom, Morning Star, Namamanda . . ."

In other words, the same pressures and tensions that beset the straight community hit the hippie mothers, too, though the media models for the hippie lifestyle of motherhood do not indicate this.

Nor is much ever said about the fact that a father who stays with his hippie girlfriend, once she has had a child, is rare. In Ms. Kazickas' interviews, published in various newspapers, the phrase "separated from her husband" occurred over and over again.

What attracts a boy to a girl of the new lifestyle is, after all, a certain sense of freedom, love of experience, and spontaneity. "It's tough to be spontaneous when your chick is eight months gone," is the way one guy put it. He recently returned to northwest Baltimore from new-lifestyle L.A. because, "Christ! It was like we were married; what was the point? I've got more freedom even *here*."

In Jerry Rubin's book, *Do It!*, a revolutionary but classically beautiful young couple is shown with a child. Theirs? "Yes, I think so," Danny Moses, the book's editor, told me by phone.

"Well, how is that working out? Are they happy?"

"Well, they may be individually," he said, "but they're not together. One of them's in Morocco; the other's in Berkeley, with the kid . . ."

Yet each of these models has wide appeal; each appeals to a certain type of female. *Pillar of the Community* and *Professional Mother* find their fol-

lowing in the suburban girls who tend to use lots of Johnson's Wax, chat an hour every time they go to the supermarket, have the bridge club and the Cub Scouts over, and always know what happened on "As the World Turns."

The *Glamour-Doll* model? Well, super-attractive, super-bright girls who've gone to Goucher or Bryn Mawr, know their wines and know who Susan Sontag is, smoke slim cigarettes, and surf . . . these tend to identify with the marquesa. (A drastic change in their super-sleek image typically follows. Oscar de la Renta does not design maternity coordinates nor house dresses.)

Mia appeals to fifteen-year-old illiterates: the Jane Smiths who read the movie magazines in Muskogee, Los Gatos, Kansas City, or Lovelyland Park.

And the *Hippie Mother* turns on the kids who are delighted with any form of rebellion against restraint. Unfortunately, what they rebel themselves right into, with pregnancy, is more restraint than ever: they escape *from* the freedom they had before, in a rather regrettable irony.

But the stories of all these model mamas do have their degree of subtlety. They don't really *promise* that children will make you as happy as these gleeful gals supposedly are. They just kind of say, "Well, here it *is*," leaving you to conclude that this is *the* way to live.

There are some stories, though, that seem designed to show that a baby introduced into a household can work magic on your relationship. Be warned before you read this next bit: if anything screams "Trap!" it's stuff of this sort:

"The head of a social service agency in a large city cites the case of a youthful marriage that was rapidly breaking up. The husband was a graduate student in engineering and his wife worked as a secretary to support both of them. She secretly resented the necessity of supporting a man, and he had profound guilt feelings about depending on a woman. The social worker recognized that their



marital difficulties were based on deep-seated emotional problems, traceable to their own childhoods, and had almost abandoned hope of preventing a divorce. She became even more concerned when one of her field workers reported that the young woman was pregnant. To her surprise, however, the young couple seemed happier than they had ever been when she saw them on their next visit to her office. The wife spoke in glowing terms about her job, boasting about the things they would be able to do for her baby with the money she was now saving with their newly revised budget. The husband, too, was now enthusiastic about his studies . . ."

That's from a book called *The Expectant Father*,\* and a freelance writer I know is currently working it into a ladies' magazine article. But I showed that case history to a practicing marriage counselor here in Baltimore.

"Screwly!" was his opinion. "There are all sort of gaps in that—it's a badly taken history, you understand, not a history at all, really. And there are logic gaps that aren't even psychological. What's this 'newly revised budget' under which they're going to be able to buy so much—when they won't have her salary anymore? And, if that's accurately quoted by the caseworker, with the woman talking of what '*she*' will be able to do for '*her*' baby, that's bad. If she continued to work and save most of the money to pay for the child's expenses, the husband is going to feel ultimately more inadequate and she may insist on making spending decisions—if, you see, her attitude is accurately reflected by that history . . ."

"If that book intends," he continued, "to show that complex marital problems, like role identity, can be solved by the wife becoming pregnant—and that seems to be their implication—then that is so totally misleading that the book shouldn't even be circulat-

ed. So many questionable books are being written, so many couples read and try to understand themselves, when what they really need is a professional third-party perspective, that we've got a lot of corrective work to do when the couple finally does come in for counseling."

Another psychologist agreed, in essence. "I get really annoyed with couples who have a child to save a marriage," she said. "When they come to me, the child is usually about three years old, and by that time they've destroyed not only each other but the *child*."

Nevertheless, "Baby Saves Marriage" is a rather standard fiction formula in the ladies' magazines. The March, 1970, *Good Housekeeping*, for example, tells the tale of a girl who's suddenly thrown uptight in her fourth year of marriage by the reappearance in town of her husband's glamorous former girlfriend. But ". . . the prayed-for, un hoped-for miracle happened: we were going to have a baby."

And the story comes out all right.

*Redbook* presented a similar short-short last October. One morning a young wife (worried because "Dave and I have so little time to ourselves. Too many things get in the way, such as his poker nights and his extracurricular school duties . . .") cries over a TV show and then drives to the doctor's office to learn that she is pregnant. On the way home, she croons things to herself like, "Mother and Father and Baby," and "Mommy and Daddy and Baby." Her happy concluding thought is, "I see that I need a baby to love, a baby around all the time." (Right; because her husband isn't going to be.)

It seems to me unfair that the ladies' magazines project pregnancy and maternity as essentially blissful states, and ignore all indications to the contrary.

Children can cause *serious crises* within a marriage. Children can precipitate *divorce*. Children can make a man feel *trapped*. Children can turn a very nice girl into a frustrated *nag*. (A rather beautiful friend of mine, for instance, has two children. She also has ulcers, colitis, hypertension headaches, a husband

\* By George Schaefer and Milton Zisowitz, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964.

who avoids her, and a hatred of existence in general.)

These are *real possibilities*. But I've never seen any of these real possibilities worked out in a magazine or a television series. The destruction of a marriage due to tensions caused by children? No. These scenes are restricted to reality. *There* they occur with some frequency: in the marriage counselors' offices; in the divorce courts.

On TV, we're shown only cutesy, knee-scraping situations, an eighty-second, half-convincing tirade by Father when bubble gum gets into his tobacco, a doll-mom who rolls her eyes and resolves it all.

On these TV series, children are pandered to. Often, though, the adult lives are fractured. How many shows have featured kids plus *one* parent? Why? Oh, a TV exec carefully explained to me that this was just to perk up a romantic interest on the part of the viewers.

That is *no answer*. Whole, hale, happy couples with kids (*if* that's what's living out there in televisionland) would have no need to identify with scenes of a single person in a parent role. The crux of the matter is that there are lots of fractured families watching that screen: women deserted, physically or emotionally, by their husbands, palliated by the plastic problems in these little TV dreams; husbands living, in fantasy, a freedom from their wives . . .

Yet the TV images continue to glorify children, to try to entrap those of us out here who are still free and if I seem to be emphasizing only the negative side of the picture (and I freely admit that this is the case) it is in an attempt to achieve a certain *perspective* in the face of all the overblown media glorification of maternity. If I am emphasizing only the problems, it is because the media, which should show the problems, do not.

Oh, certain magazines, in columns such as "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" sometimes touch on the destructive influence of children. Unfortunately, they raise the issue only to avoid it. When there is a problem created by children, these columns indicate that either the husband or the wife was not "mature"

enough to meet the "responsibilities" of parenthood. Why do they never admit an obvious possibility: *that the marriage might have been just fine without children?*

It's too bad there are so few stories and profiles of childless couples in the magazines, and on TV. A network policy maker explained why: "We want to make people feel comfortable with, or superior to, that which they watch. We don't want to breed envy. We don't want to show all you people traipsing off to Europe twice a year and going to Bermuda for a weekend—not on a regular basis."

"But you show Onassis traipsing all over the world, and you documented one of Jackie's shopping trips."

"That's not on a regular basis; and that's different. People never expect to do what Onassis does, so it's not frustrating. But to see an ordinary couple like you and your husband with almost the level of freedom you'd expect of an Onassis . . . would make viewers frustrated, angry. We could absolutely not contemplate a series theme about a childless couple, not without some gimmick that removed the situation from reality." (Like making the wife a 600-year-old remnant from Salem country? That was pretty far removed from reality, right? But even that didn't work. Samantha had to become a mother almost immediately, as though there were something too swinging, or even sinful, about her living with her husband as just a girlfriend-wife. We have our own brand of Puritanism today, I guess, Samantha.)

But that's too bad, really. A series about a childless couple might show a man and wife living, within their community, a balanced life of pleasure and achievement. (Of course, it might be a mindless comedy, too; but let me dream.) It might show the unique sharing that begins to occur between a man and a woman after the novelty of courtship and early marriage is over; it might indicate some of the emotional variety that is possible within the man-woman relationship.

It might tell the fascinating story of how a woman keeps a man's interest, emotionally, after he's used to her physically. It might show a woman who's a

sloppy housekeeper but is loved by her husband for her qualities of awareness and involvement. It might show a wife who's a pure-and-simple sex creature and prefers that to a mommie role. It might show a completely hedonistic couple out to savor the world, and a completely altruistic couple out to save it.

There are a lot of stories such a series could tell.

(Are you listening, ABC? Do you read me, CBS and NBC?)

Those are real stories I've just skimmed over—the stories of people I know, who are far more interesting than the consuming maternal types who dwell on Channel 2 and in the *Ladies Home Journal*.

(Are you there, CondéNast?)

At least it would be a change; it would provide some variety. I'm not asking for all of your shows. I'm willing to be reasonable. But I think we, the wives without children, could bring some surprises to a TV or magazine series. Sorry, most of us don't know ninety ways to fix economy meats. But we know how to get our husbands to surprise us with dinner out—and we know how to carry on a conversation during dinner. We know a bit more about art and theatre than about floorwax and tomato sauce (which isn't a good combination, anyway). We read. We can tell one rock group from another. Sometimes we're too busy reading or listening to records to button our sweaters the right way, but we know Laura Nyro from Joni Mitchell and we have time to *listen* to both, with our husbands. We kinda prefer professional baseball to Little League games; and, yeah, we do go to Europe once in a while. Guilty.

In case you haven't guessed, I think the media should be telling a few of our stories.

We do live in an age of options, now. Life as a wife doesn't have to mean drifting into the traditional pattern of breeding-plus-house-care. The media people might like to soft-pedal that fact, because their biggest advertisers make drudgery products. And the same media people throw baby-images at you to give you the idea that this is your proper role in life. And there you are: trapped in a repetitive behavioral

repertoire (change the baby; wash the dishes; feed the baby; wash the diapers; walk the baby; run the errands; change the baby again . . .) that can make you old, dull, and bitter.

It would make some girls old, dull, and bitter anyway, because some girls simply do not thrive on routine, even such a supposedly blessed one as feeding a baby every four hours. If you think you would blossom in such a role, though, it's understandable. As we've been saying, the deck is stacked to make you think that way. But at least think beyond the babyhood of your baby. The media stories show you, typically, the first few years. But there are fifteen or twenty years involved. How old would you be when that phase of your life is over? What profound influence might a child have on those prime years of your life is not even hinted at by the media. If you really feel that you want the challenge and complexity of a family, you have to think through the implications for yourself.

And, I would say, you have to think very carefully.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *THE CULTURAL "BABIES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE" TRAP*

"The commonest assumption among married people is that they should have children. The next most common assumption seems to be that children increase the happiness of a given marriage. There is very little evidence to support these assumptions."

—Albert Ellis

"Sometimes we wait too long before we get around to questioning our assumptions."

—Nathaniel Branden

The media are not manufacturing their maternal mythology. They are only exaggerating and idealizing it. They are reflecting attitudes of the culture as a whole: a culture more concerned with reproducing itself than with improving itself; a culture more involved with promoting its way of life than with examining that way of life; a culture more intent on health than on joy; and possibly more preoccupied with life insurance than with life itself; ("We are the only nation on earth," says comedian Alan King, in a not-so-funny routine, "that teaches you you are

worth more dead than alive,") a culture, in short, with some false assumptions.

The baby trap devolves, ultimately, to something within our culture that is deeper than a magazine article. Babies are conspicuously displayed everywhere. What is the effect of this display? Interference with the emergence of legitimate life-value systems. And distorted perspective as to the world and our place in it. To the extent that babies are emphasized, adults are de-emphasized. To the extent that a woman is regarded as a means to an end (propagating the species) she is not seen as beautiful, vibrant, valuable, in and of herself. To the extent that a man is seen as a mere provider, he may be seen as less of a person.

At first thought, it would probably seem that a man's value as a provider, and his worth as a person, would rise simultaneously. Some would even say there's a correlation between paternity and career success, since so many men would *not* achieve wealth and success if there were no financial pressure to do so. And sometimes, indeed, this is the case. And sometimes, provided the man finds career success within a field he believes in, the total effects can be good. A man, for example, who was rather drifting along in a boring editorial job with a small magazine, suddenly realized, after the birth of his daughter eight years ago, that he *had* to make more money. He took hold—made some brazen editorial suggestions that boldly channeled the magazine into a new direction. He's now chief editor of that magazine and finds the new job stimulating as well as economically rewarding.

But let's look at another case.

A salesman for Roloids antacid tablets and liquid has three children and two mortgages, and does he hustle! He studies product spec sheets religiously and revises his sales pitch relentlessly. He learns to exhibit a compelling belief in his product, becomes adept at the expense-account lunch that will soften a client, follows up by phone between sales calls to suggest new retail marketing strategies that will increase sales further—and becomes sales trainer for his branch

office. And maybe he wouldn't have gotten that promotion, if he hadn't had the kids. But he *did* have the kids; so he *did* push; and he *did* get that promotion.

Terrific.

Or is it?

Maybe without the pressure to raise his achievement—and salary—he'd have gotten a notion to grab his wife one day and say, "Hey! We're going to the Canadian wilderness for a year. What d'you think about *that*?" And they might have. And he might have been happier. He never had that choice, though, to make for himself.

(And neither did the editor.)

And major decisions about what you'll do with your life should be made in terms of your *self*, shouldn't they? If a career goal is worth achieving, it should be worth achieving for the *self*, shouldn't it, in terms of developed abilities and increased self-worth? If, without the pressure of necessity, a man would not achieve that goal, then maybe the goal is better left alone.

In the case of the Roloids salesman, what abilities have really been developed? A Dale Carnegie glibness? A skill at sales manipulation? A finesse with "closing techniques?" Do these abilities really play a role in increasing a man's feelings of self-worth? Or do they just make a man a more efficient wage producer?

We will admit, I think, that harm can be done in the name of wages and profits. For reasons of profits, American automakers make autos that become obsolete in three years; bicycles and furniture change shape just about that often; style changes in clothing are dictated seasonally; and soap corporations race each other to seduce buyers with additional enzymes. (Roloids take care of the acid stomachs produced by all of this, I guess.) Now you *know* the results of all of this, don't you? Have you ever seen an auto graveyard? Or a foamy-sewery river?

Now maybe, just *maybe*, if the original entrepreneurs who founded the soap, furniture, auto and dry goods companies in question hadn't been so com-

pelled to support their children (or empire-build for them) a few of *them* might have taken off to the North Woods, too. Maybe they wouldn't have gotten together to define "conspicuous consumption." Maybe the whole country would be better off.

As it is, though, everybody works for children; everybody accepts that the *purpose* of adults is to serve children, that if something is good for children, we will ask no questions of its effects on us.

In the International Paper Company ad described earlier, for example, we were urged to inhabit a "disposable environment." A disposable environment made from trees. What we'd really be disposing *of* is a large chunk of Nature and the world.

I've said that babies interfere with valid value systems. When that ad ran, a legitimate value system was beginning to show signs of life. A few people, including me, learned the word ecology. *Earth Times* began publishing in San Francisco. Robert Ardrey and others reminded us that man, if he retains any instincts at all, is instinctive in responding to Nature. He is comfortable and at ease when in touch with beaches, surf, meadows. He fills his foyer with plants and must have, if possible, a small replica of a natural lake: a swimming pool.

In the face of this developing awareness of the importance of Nature, though, the International Paper Company showed us a baby and asked us to throw it all away.

Supposedly, we looked at that old-fashioned example of Babysell—we looked at the blue-eyed baby in that ad—and suspended critical judgment. The disposable environment seemed to be an idea that was good for baby. And that was all that mattered.

There are other examples of distorted values built on baby worship, and we see them nearly every time we open a magazine: for even when magazines do present articles relevant to the real world, they know (they know, because they do research and motivation studies on most of us) that we must have a mention of babies to lure us into exposing ourselves to the serious articles.

In a November, 1969 issue of *Look* magazine, for example, the dangers of DDT were discussed; and it was pointed out that most of our water is a dilute solution of chlorine and urine. Other problems of the environment were presented. Finally, the article mentioned the root cause: "Pursuing any of our problems to its source will bring us up against a common problem: population."

But on the cover of that issue is a dirigibilic pregnant woman.

The April 21, 1970, issue of *Look* is no better. Yes, there are articles by Willy Brandt, Paul Ehrlich, Stephanie Mills, Margaret Mead, René Dubos, and Gaylord Nelson.

On the cover is a baby.

And Senator Ed Muskie took time, about two years ago, to write an article for the *Ladies' Home Journal*. His article, "What Women Can Do About Pollution," is not even mentioned on the cover. Instead, "Miracle Pregnancies" gets top billing.

Then, too, there was a curious series of periodicals distributed by the Marshall Cavendish Encyclopedia of Mind and Body. The distribution was thorough (within one week, I saw issues in the San Diego airport, a Chicago drugstore, and at Sherman's news agency here in Baltimore) and the popularity of the series was predictable, since child-raising was stressed, and most covers had pink babies. Almost as an afterthought, the issue I have includes an article about anxiety, indicating children as a major factor in above-normal worry levels. But I doubt that that article was noticed very much; it was not given a prominent position in the magazine.

And even *Look* magazine's examination of the "motherhood myth," encased in the September 22, 1970, issue, was billed by a cover photo of an airy, blonde-goddess mother, with a blonde-princess child.

Now, I will grant that maybe the magazines' reason for emphasizing babies is not to present them as uniquely valuable, but to sugar-coat a serious message. (Maybe, that is, a *Ladies' Home Journal* housewife will buy because of a "Miracle Pregnancy"

headline and then, since she has the magazine, read Senator Muskie's unheralded article on pollution.) But the effect is to further reinforce babies as the *sine qua non* of existence.

Just one more example. There was the issue of *Life* that dealt with the neuroses and insanity that can result from overcrowding. Fine. But then, in the same issue and given twenty times the photographic emphasis, we encounter a hymn of praise to Antonia Fraser, British writer and socialite. And we are treated to marvelous photos of her with her children: Camian, 5; Rebecca, 12; Natasha, 6; Flora, 11; Benjamin, 8; Orlando, 2.

We are given an analysis of her latest pregnancy, and the familiar *Glamour-Doll* mother image. ("Here we are at a lunch with the Count and Countess of Longford,"—that kind of thing) but I believe my gripe here is somewhat different.

With this particular story, we would have had a perfect chance for an alternate emphasis: might it have been refreshing to read about her problems of researching Mary, Queen of Scots? About the ways she tried to resolve conflicting evidence about the Scottish queen?

We are told of Antonia's difficulty reaching the uppermost library shelves while pregnant; we are not told what was in the books she was reaching for. We know, if we finished the article, very little about her as a writer and relatively more about her as a mother.

This isn't simple editorial Babysell. *Life's* and *Look's* ad pages don't show all that many house-and-baby products. And the Marshall Cavendish series had no advertising at all. Whatever the explanation is, it has to go beyond economics and involve more than Babysell.

It gets down to a cultural preoccupation, really. In other cultures, the family was the lifestyle, true. And the women had children, yes. But it was all somewhat matter-of-fact and not such a *fuss* was made about maternity. Here, as the nation advanced, motherhood came to be regarded as sacred.

Why?

America said to Europe, "Give me your tired, your poor . . ." not "Give me your titled and talented;" and those who are tired and poor, throughout history, have usually found solace in the close ties of large families. (This was before industrialization, remember.) The entire American dream for these people, once they got here, was to give a grand purpose to their reproduction. They were to take part in an endlessly expanding society and proudly contribute their strapping sons to the conquest of the frontier.

I do not accept that this was ever a good idea. The frontier got along just fine without all of us for eons and centuries, and I think it's highly doubtful that we've improved anything. But, even if it could be considered justifiable to have populated those empty spaces, we as a society just stopped looking at the reality while it turned itself inside out. The frontier which had seemed to us to be asking for reproduction quietly disappeared. And we went on reproducing. We became an industrialized nation that fragmented people into job functions and made the closeness that had knit the large pioneer family together impossible. And we went on having large families.

After industrialization, though, we didn't really need all those babies, by any stretch of the imagination. So we had no choice but to change the babies' roles.

We began to display them, as an item for show, an accoutrement, a status symbol. We began to think of them as decorative rather than functional, as luxurious creatures to be handled carefully and indulged thoroughly. (Yes, of course I'm generalizing; but there's some truth to this, really.)

The effects of the shift in the role of children is not good. If our own babies are our own accoutrements, if we regard them as extensions of our own desires, we, if we are personally selfish, can be led to consider their comfort paramount and neglect the welfare of the total community.

Rustum and Della Roy, in their book, *Honest Sex*, spoke of:

" . . . the gross selfishness in our culture that encourages the sentiment that charity begins at home, and secures that charity by providing noble phrases such as, 'It's your duty to your children,' and 'The family comes first.' The family ends up as a veritable sponge, sopping up any loving concern which might reach the world outside . . ."

And Martha Weinman Lear, in *The Child Worshipers*, gives a specific example:

"From Brooklyn, word comes of a courageous loner who quit the PTA because the girls refused to broaden their horizons . . . 'I told them we couldn't help ourselves unless we helped others,' she said. 'I told them, we need a new school. Ten blocks away they need a new school, too. Now why don't we think about this and examine our needs and theirs and see where it is really needed more? And they jumped on me and yelled, '*What do you mean, needed more? Our children come first!*'"

And on the NBC news August 6, 1970, there was a story. A group of white citizens had blocked an integration plan in Detroit. They were happy. "We've won a victory for our children," one said.

Do you know any people who think that way—who think, "Well, as long as my children can grow up in a nice suburb, the inner city can hang?" Or, "As long as my kids have a summer place with clean air, I won't worry if my plants pollute downstate?" Extreme examples, yes. (And hopefully outnumbered by those who see, along with that loner from Brooklyn, that we can't help ourselves unless we help others, too.) But babies and children, especially our own, *can* make us lose sight of the community as a whole.

They can also obviate our own self-value; they can make us lose sight of our own worth as adult men and women. I have an article on my desk right now; it's from the May, 1970 *Redbook*, I think.

The first sentence of the article reads, "Seldom do

people other than saints, doctors, and mothers get to participate in a miracle." A man wrote that, a man who evidently regards childbirth as the only miracle around. I think that man must be wearing emotional blinders. There are lots of miracles a woman can experience because she's a *woman*, not because she becomes a mother. There are miracles that men who are not obstetricians can be a part of. What about lovemaking? Doesn't that count? What about other human relationships? Don't they count?

Seemingly not. We're shown in many other ways, too, that only *children* (nothing else, certainly not us) are special. That's the idea of the calendars my laundry sends out: babies on every page. That's the idea of a bank billboard outside Pittsburgh; urging you to save, "For Life's Special Moments," it shows a newborn baby. And there's a book about the years of early childhood, *The Magic Years*, it's called. By implication, no other years hold any magic. By implication, we as adults become special or valuable only by associating ourselves with breeding and children.

The emphasis on childbearing is so pervasive—and yet, as Nathaniel Branden points out, so anti-sexual—that it's almost as though there's something anti-sexual about our culture.

Though much has been written about the sexual revolution, it seems that from the very first, our culture looks forward to driving a wedge between a satisfied man and woman, or boy and girl, through children. From the very first, girls are told, "Here, help with the baby." And boys are told, "Be careful. Stay away. You'll hurt the baby." Thus, once that little boy and girl grow up and their own baby is born, male and female roles are sure to separate. And communication, sex, and love between the two will dim. We can see how this has happened by a casual glance\*at some of the patterns of marriage in the last generation:

- 1) The man and woman married, had children. The husband left. This pattern is common in the

inner city; and it's not a happy one. The men on "Tally's Corner" who have left their families are probably not happy. They are, at best, freed of being reminded that they have fathered children they cannot support. The women develop a "Men's nothing but trouble: better off without them" attitude. And they have enough to do to keep them busy, keep them from thinking. But you have to wonder. Do they know where their men are? Would they like to know what they are doing? Did they feel anything was *lost* when the man left? Surely there was a loss. And I am not thinking of what the children lost, though of course this is a valid concern, but of what the woman lost.

- 2) The man and woman married, had children. The husband came home only to sleep. The woman raised the children. And where are *these* man—the factory workers and their cronies? With other women? At the games, the races, the bowling alleys, the bars? And why? And are these women angered or hurt by the continual absence of their husbands? "Well, I keep company with the other women around here, you know. We've all got enough to talk about. We've got the kids to talk about, you know . . ."

- 3) The man and woman married, had children. The husband took business trips and had affairs; the woman raised the children. Occasionally, the affairs ripened, and there were divorces. The husband got a romantic re-lease on life when he married his girlfriend. The former wife continued with the task of raising the children and may or may not have remarried.

- 4) The man and woman married, had children. They stayed together. They were faithful, but they were obviously unhappy. To the wife, the days were drudgery. Resenting this, she became sexually unresponsive. Because of this, her husband began to criticize: the way she kept the house, the way she raised the children. Their quarrels became more frequent and more bitter



but finally gave way to an uncaring silence.

5) The man and woman married, had children, stayed together, were faithful, seemed happy. The two went to PTA meetings together and to church together with the children. There were occasional evenings out, vacations alone. At family reunions, the father played "My son—your son" games with the other men as they drank. He and his wife did not fight often. Neighbors said, "Such a lovely couple; such a happy family." And it seemed so.

The first three patterns are well documented by social agencies and the divorce courts. The fourth and fifth are familiar, too. Visiting the homes of friends, we saw both types.

That fifth pattern is the most subtle and it is the predominant one—the one selected by the media for magnification, anyway—the one that has become our cultural ideal. And there seems nothing wrong. The parents of this type did not divorce, did not have outside affairs. They smiled and seemed to take a lot of pride in their offspring. They seemed content. They were parents, and they showed no indication of wanting more than that.

They raised their children to become what they wished they had been, occupationally, and to become exactly what they *were*, in life style. They assumed that their children would marry and have their own families. The fact that this was assumed—that no options were examined—might suggest either that the idea was very natural or that it was very *weak*.

A career psychologist now with Johns Hopkins University told me, "The more avidly a man wants his son to repeat his own profession, the more apt the man is to have failed at that profession, at least on his own terms. If he had considered himself a success, on the other hand, he'd have no need to relive his own rise through the profession vicariously. He'd be more apt to leave the career decision pretty much to his son's preference."

A rather interesting thought. If you fail, you want

to see someone else (an extension of yourself) succeed where you failed.

Two psychologists (Lois Hoffman, Frederick Wyatt) have a theory that is close to this one. Parents who have failed to raise their first-born well, they say, will have more children, as they try to soothe their guilt about not doing a good job with the *first* child by trying to do a better job with *later* children.

If you haven't made something work, try it again.

If the *entire family structure* did not seem satisfying, let the kids try it. Maybe next time around *they'll* make it work.

There is, throughout the patterns of marriage outlined, a *suggestion of male retreat from the family*, and yet mother and father are anxious for their children to repeat the pattern. Might there be an element of defensive self-justification involved? Who finds it easy to admit even a small mistake? How much more difficult it would be to admit that one's entire life may have been a disappointment, a failure, a retreat from rich possibilities into routine. Who could admit to his own children that he might have wished for more spontaneity, change, and variety than his life had held? Who could tell his own children that he wishes his children had not come so soon; that he wishes he had had fewer children; that he wonders what life would have been like without family responsibilities at all?

"If I had it to do over again," is men's room talk. It is a rare statement for one generation to make to another. We, that next generation, *can* do it over again, in the place of our parents, and we can do it *differently*. And parents, in some cases, may be slightly envious of that fact. Or, still feeling the need to guide us (because their whole life has been spent in that attempt) but not knowing what else to guide us *to*, they come back to the "Live as we did" idea. The pose is maintained. We raised a family and were happy; we want you to do the same.

*Were* they happy? This is the question. The fact that they stayed together is no proof of that. Look at



the men who stay at jobs they don't like, who live in cities that they hate. They stay, because change requires courage and involves risk.

Though these couples seemed satisfied, they may have simply lived without asking what they were living for, without wondering if it would make any difference whether they *had* lived or died. They lived in patterns: birthdays, anniversaries, religious holidays, get the paycheck, errands, vacations, pay the bills, retirement, disintegration.

These are the values we inherit. But, like hand-me-down clothes from an older sibling, they may not suit us. We as men and women today are more restive, more demanding of satisfaction, more given to impulse, *less* likely by far to react well to the restrictions of family life, *more* attuned to spontaneity, excitement, breakthrough. If we do not recognize these things about our emotional nature, we may find the 1970's passing us by, as we live in our suburbs in a pale imitation of the 1940's *McCall's*-togetherness lifestyle. We have no obligation to do that; we do not *have* to live the life of the previous generation over again. We can find our own way.

But there is more to our cultural heritage than just the previous generation. There is the role of religion. The marriage manuals, particularly the Catholic ones, tell us, "You *should* want children," and continue with such a hard-sell approach about the sanctity of the family and the ultimate value and joy of raising souls for God . . . that one wonders: are they afraid that without such strong pleas, their couples might wise up and have no children?

Religious and parental expectations have added up to many an unhappy young Catholic wife. For her, particularly, there was never any *question*. Over and over I was told, "I just always thought when I grew up I'd have children. It just never occurred to me that I wouldn't."

Our tax and welfare laws also play their part. A \$650 tax exemption certainly underscores society's general attitude about the desirability of children. And while an increased Aid to Dependent Children

allowance seems the poorest of reasons for producing children, it is reason enough for many women.

There are proposed changes. As Paul Ehrlich sees it, \$600 should be *added* to a family's taxable income for each of the first two children, and \$1200 added for every child beyond two. There is also an idea that the government should pay women \$500 for each year that they do not have children, and I intend to go out and campaign for that as soon as I finish writing this book.

But these are ideas of the future. Meanwhile, the outmoded structure continues to wield its influence. "Somebody sure must want me to have kids," a social worker reports a woman on welfare as saying. "They keep payin' me to have 'em."

At other levels of society, too, it seems like the government wants women to "have 'em." Housing and Urban Development gives money to people who want to buy homes. The larger the family, the larger the subsidy. There are some restrictions, but basically that's the way it works. That plan not only forces taxpayers to contribute money to bail irresponsible baby-breeders out of their partially self-created financial difficulties; it also encourages those who receive money from H.U.D. to remain poor. There's a provision that if a recipient begins to earn above a certain level, the family loses some or all of the subsidy. What are we doing by offering such a plan? (Do we think there's still a frontier out there?) On the one hand, we're encouraging a poor man to have a large family, in spite of a small income. On the other hand, we're discouraging any of his efforts to help himself by raising his income.

And one wife, whose husband works for the Civil Service Commission, complains that they discriminate against childless couples. The health insurance policies offered, it seems, have a fixed charge for families, no matter what the family size. Small families thus pay more than their share of the cost of the insurance. "Why?" this woman asked Edward G. Borchers, a civil servant at the CSC.

"If the plan were tailored to individuals insured,"

he explained, "the premium, for some, would necessarily be so high as to preclude many people from any insurance." In other words, the only way *large* families can afford insurance is by having *small* families help pay for it, right?

Does *that* make sense? Obviously, these are examples of outmoded and wrong policies, but potent ones.

But perhaps the most potent cultural force leading to childbearing is the mere fact that most *other* people have children, and so constitute the norm. Friends who have children can produce a lot of pressure, simply because they seem to talk about little else. One girl, eight months pregnant, said, "It just seemed simpler. Sooner or later, the conversation would get back to grasping, toddling, and cooing. And I was isolated. When I finally got pregnant last fall, I was one of the bunch. But I'll admit I'm apprehensive. I don't think I wanted this, and this isn't going to be the end. There's an entire status thing here, with the women who've had two children lording it over those who have one. And the women who've had more than two have their own special clique. It's a real trap . . ."

One might well be apprehensive about children, especially in large quantities. According to Ted J. Rakstis, writing for the American Medical Association in a *Today's Health* article last year, "big" and "happy" are easily *contradictory* terms when used to describe family size. The authors of *The Mirages of Marriage* concur. They call the ideal of the large "poor, shoeless and smiling" happy family a *myth*. "Recent research suggests that the parents of five or more children who so proudly point to their huge brood may be putting on an act," the authors flatly state. And a psychiatrist for the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. James Lieberman, has found that mental illness increases in proportion to the number of children in a family. (He also found out some other scary things: like child-beating and other such traits occur very frequently in large families.)

And yet, some absolutely goofy literature succeed-

ed in promoting that large-family image as classic Americana.

*Cheaper by the Dozen* is as good an example as any. "The hilarious adventures of twelve wonderful red-headed rascals," is how most people got the message. The film *Yours, Mine, and Ours* combined two broken marriages and hordes of children, to which were added *more*: "Ours."

And then there's *Never Too Late*, a charming play which furthers the myth that links fatherhood and masculinity. "There's life in the old boy yet," goes one line in, I think, Act III.

Actually, the desire of an older man to have a child is usually an attempt to cover up for the *failing* of his sexual powers; it is far from a real expression of sexual power. And no professional person would pretend that *Cheaper by the Dozen* makes any sense, psychologically. Reproduction on that scale is closer to a state of *pathology* than a state of health, according to more than one psychiatrist. In other words, it's sick. Yet there the book was, for years, existing as a kind of classic, and as a most unfortunate cultural model.

There have been plays and novels that have some recognized psychological validity; but they are generally lesser known. *The Pumpkin Eater*, by Penelope Mortimer, is one. In the play, three characters—Jake, his wife, and the wife's psychiatrist—discuss her recurring pregnancies in the following scenes:

JAKE: (to his wife) About *me*? You don't give a damn about me, and you know it . . . You don't care about *me*, all you care about is the bills being paid and the bloody children, that great bloody army of children that I'm supposed to support and work my guts out for, so I can't even take a bath in peace, I can't eat a bloody meal without them whining and slobbering all over the table, I can't even go to bed with you without one of them comes barging in the middle. If you cared about me, you'd try to understand this . . .

In a later scene, the psychiatrist tries to help the wife:

DOCTOR: Do you think it would be wrong not to like children?

WIFE: I don't know. Yes, yes I think so.

DOCTOR: Why?

WIFE: Because children don't do you any harm.

DOCTOR: Not directly perhaps, but indirectly . . .

And you have . . . a remarkable number. You seem upset that your husband doesn't want more.

This hardly sounds like someone who likes children . . . It sounds more of . . . an obsession . . .

Children can do harm, emotionally. But this is only pointed out in obscure corners of the culture.

How many women, after all, read medical studies in the *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* that link parenthood and mental illness?

How many women read the *Ladies' Home Journal* articles?

How many people read *The Pumpkin Eater*?

How many people read *Cheaper by the Dozen*?

And children can do harm, ecologically. The realization of this is new, however; changes in our thinking are made slowly. Trying to see what future attitudes should be, by looking ahead through the window, we can be caught instead by what is reflected in the rear-view mirror. There, again, are all the cultural expectations of the past, following us and affecting our present attitudes.

There is what Mrs. Jutta Hagner of the University of Maryland calls a pioneer or "cowboy complex," a persisting attitude that we can produce children endlessly since there is endless land "out West." Many ecologists speak regretfully of this pioneer view of Nature as something to be conquered and subdued by producing an increasing population. For a long time we have listened to this myth that says "Conquer! Produce!" And we have conquered and destroyed the land. But what we really need to conquer lies un-

touched within ourselves. And we do breed; we do in that sense, produce. But what we really should produce are ways to view life, our *own* life, and achieve some sense of joy within it.

Our thinking must change, since we have reached the end of our war with Nature and the end of the land's resources. Dr. Eugene Odum, as quoted in Gene Marine's book, *America the Raped*, states simply, "The War is over. We've won. We know that nature is defeated now before the advance of man . . .

"But," he continues, "when we defeat an adversary in battle, do we simply go on killing and slaughtering? Of course not."

And, when the battle is won, do we still call up more troops to aid in the killing? Of course not. As with a defeated nation, left with few of her resources, we should help Nature, realizing that we must live with her, and that we need her to live. And we must call off the fresh ranks of despoiling troops.

We must.

And yet incredible and threatening images from the rearview mirror persist. (The Family of the Year has nine children; the Mother of the Year has five.) "The Mother of the Year," pleads Paul Ehrlich, "should be a sterilized woman with two adopted children." (A cowboy politician says, "The U.S. could conceivably support twice as many people as we've got.")

Incredible.

Even assuming that cowboy's statement to be true (it isn't; we haven't got the resources), if something isn't done, we're going to *have* twice as many people in thirty years. *What then?* What happens after we have dumped a Manhattan into Arizona and unleashed our bulldozers to bury the few as yet unspoiled areas of this once-beautiful country? *What then?* Not only will there be, finally, no more land; there will just as finally be no water suitable for drinking, no air that can be breathed.

Children, in the aggregate as well as in the specific, can harm, can destroy: because they grow up to be us, and there are too many of us.

Still, the cultural forces roll jollily on, unchecked ("Mayor Proudly Points to Rising Birth Rate") spewing their mythological messages like pollutants into the air: Conquer! *Produce!*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *THE TRAP OF*

### *YOUR OWN FEELINGS*

"Since in our culture, motherhood is widely believed to be the ultimate fulfillment, an unhappy girl is driven in that direction."

—Wenda W. Morrone,  
March, 1970 *Glamour* magazine

As that quote hints, I'm going to be examining some little-examined motives for motherhood in this chapter; unhappiness is one. And I'm going to do something that is, at least partly, patently biased and unfair. I'm going to impugn a *lot* of girls' motives for having children; and I'm going to aim wide and very probably hit some innocent targets. But that, after all, is what society has been doing for decades to girls who *haven't* had children. Writers, doctors, priests, society in general have viewed with suspicion the girl who didn't want to go through the birth bit. They've viewed her as though there were something selfish, immoral, or wrong about her choice to remain childless.

Now, you're not going to like this approach. *I don't like it either.* But at least, by putting the shoe on the other foot (yours?) we'll both know how it feels.

First, let's talk about some common feelings that are *assumed* to lead to childbearing:

- 1) Girls want babies because it is "natural" to want them.
- 2) Girls have babies because they like children.
- 3) Girls have babies because they want to fulfill a marriage.

None of those statements is fully true. In a highly complex, artificial, industrial, and urban society, little is "natural" (we wear shoes; we dial telephones), and this includes feelings, interpersonal behavior, and emotions, as Desmond Morris has pointed out in *The Human Zoo*.

Besides, attitudes about sex and babies vary so much from country to country, and from one century to another, that it seems more likely these attitudes come from culture, not Nature.

That our attitude toward motherhood here, in this century, has become adulatory to an unprecedented degree—and that this attitude seems to be changing as more women forego maternity—may in itself argue that the desire for motherhood cannot be all that "innate."

Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*; Ashley Montagu's *Man in Process*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, and many of Margaret Mead's works have emphasized imprinting, early learning through language or cultural tradition in the learning of sex roles. Their conclusions seem to be that sex roles are learned and not the result of instinct.

Now, motherhood differs from other sex roles in that a girl does not have to "learn" to bear a child, as she learns to care for children or to please a man. Yet there are aspects of the sex role involved in motherhood: child-raising and maternal-conduct codes, for example, as well as the propriety of childbearing at certain times, at a certain age. And it is *part* of our culture's *learned* feminine sex role to want a child. And I don't think this fact can be discounted. The cultural code could conceivably reinforce an instinctive desire for childbearing, certainly. *But*, if an instinct is such, then it must be universal; and the desire for parenthood just is not. There are those who

reject the parental role; and, just as significantly, there are those who are *ambivalent* toward it. If you are one of those with strong positive feelings about maternity, do not simply attribute your attitude to "nature."

In a paper called, "A Paradigm for the Analysis of Childbearing Motivations," Mark Flapan, Ph.D., Columbia University, wrote, "... childbearing motivations involve a constellation of *socially defined* and idiosyncratic meanings, some of which may not be recognized by the individual ..." (Emphasis mine.)

Further, he states, "No quasibiological entity which may be hypothesized as existing within the individual, such as a maternal instinct or drive, can account for motivations for childbearing."

If the desire to reproduce does not result from instinct, does it at least result from love? When a woman wants a baby, is it because she loves her husband or wants to fulfill her marriage?

Well, I know that's the idea we've always accepted: you love a man; you want to create a being that embodies that love. But when an ideal love situation exists, is a baby necessary? Perhaps not. A couple truly in love may need no child to embody that love: *they themselves embody it*.

As Lila, a friend of mine from Houston, explains, "My biggest objection to our having children is that there's no one in the world who will deny that the husband-wife relationship is changed when there are children. I happen to cherish my relationship with Tom more than anything else in the world; so why should we change it?"

Why indeed? If you are greatly in love with a man, you can just plain *live* your love together, every day and every night, and you do not feel the need to change or improve the situation (the euphemism is "fulfill") by having a baby. Change can, of course, represent a desire for growth in a positive sense. It can *also* be compensatory in nature, implying dissatisfaction with what exists.

A baby, therefore, can't be assumed to symbolize a perfect love between man and woman.



And there are many women who have babies who do not have the slightest love for children. The woman may, instead, love *herself*, and want an extension of herself to love. Such a feeling may be healthy, or it may be unhealthy. If a woman feels strongly that no other children could possibly *do* for her to love and care for—if the children must be *hers* and no one else's—then this desire is ego-centered and may approach narcissism. It does not suggest "love of children" very strongly, that's for sure. If such a woman loved *children*, wouldn't she be out caring for children, or teaching?

If, in addition, this woman is eager to showcase herself during the process of child-production, this display can be taken as further indication of self-love, not love of children. There is a lot of vanity involved in such a woman's pregnancy, as she continually draws attention to her own body:

"Oh, Harry, just look at my stomach!"

"Ooh, just look—I'm starting to *show*!"

"Am I too big in the tummy for these slacks now?"

"Harry, could you loosen the seat belt another inch for me?"

"Ooh, Harry, I think I *felt* something!"

This behavior, in some women, speaks of more than a normal interest in the physical process of pregnancy. Their pregnancy becomes their vehicle of vanity, their way of focusing attention on themselves (but too often without any corresponding deepened knowledge or growth of the self). Their "Look at me!" games are just that: games.

Besides the "Look at me!" games, they have their "Care for me!" ploys. Friends, and particularly the husband, are expected to wonder if the pregnant woman would like some strawberries, would be more comfortable with a pillow. Now, gynecologists will tell you that there is no physical reason for a pregnant woman's capricious cravings for strawberries, pickles, pillows, maple-crunch ice cream at midnight. These desires are attention-getting devices.

Isn't the mere fact of pregnancy enough to "attention-get?" No, because the woman realizes that she is

no longer attractive, within the frame of reference her husband is used to. Many pregnant wives are haunted by fears that their husbands will be sexually attracted to a still-slender girl before the nine months are over. (Their husbands sometimes are.)

The little needs are an attempt to draw husband close. If a woman feels weak or faint, she makes him feel protective. If she feels an urge for maple-crunch ice cream, she involves him with this unique experience. If she does not feel able to go to that office picnic after all, she does two things: 1) she reminds him again of her delicate condition; 2) she keeps him away from the office picnic, where he might see all the slender secretaries in their cute sports clothes.

Of course, a totally secure girl or woman would not rely on these games. But then, the fact that the games are *so common* only points up that very few secure girls, who are sure of themselves and their femininity, get pregnant.

It's the insecure ones who do.

Three researchers, Lerner, Raskin, and Davis, reported in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (48:288-297, if you want to look it up) that a woman may use pregnancy to gratify infantile needs for affection; to try to strengthen a poor identity of herself as a woman, to reassure a weak or insecure ego.

Besides a basic, underlying insecurity or selfishness, other factors may be involved in pregnancy. The baby may be intended as a kind of coverup. A baby, to many women is a symbol, like a wedding ring or a nice house. What the baby will symbolize or indicate, these women hope, is that all is well with them and their husbands—that they have a successful marriage, a successful sex relationship. ("See, we did it!") But, like many symbols, it can tell a lie about *what* it is supposed to symbolize.

*Question:* Is the Cadillac really a hallmark of success? Or might it be the mark of a man who has *not* succeeded and so must make everyone think so?

*Question:* Is the woman who gives all those parties really well-liked socially? Or might she, just possibly,



have no social life at all without the parties?

*Question:* Is the woman who wants a baby—maybe, just maybe—trying to prove something, something that is not true?

Might she doubt her femininity, her sexuality? (Pregnant teenagers, according to social workers, find little pleasure in the sex act itself.) If she doubts her femininity or sexuality, is this not a way to establish it?

Many teenage girls find pregnancy appealing for this reason, especially teenage girls who find themselves going through a period of reasonless, crushing unpopularity, or, in the case of Irene, a 16-year-old I recently interviewed in a home for unwed mothers near this city, a total inability to relate to her peers. (I'm going into Irene's interview, by the way, not just because it's very interesting, but because it does have relevance to the emotions of *adult* gals who get pregnant.)

"Were you happy at school, Irene?" was the first thing I asked her.

"Not much, I guess."

"Was there somebody you didn't like?"

"There wasn't anybody I did like."

"Was there—were there any people you might have *wanted* to like?"

"No, Oh, well, I don't know. I guess I wouldn't have minded getting along with the kids in my homeroom. But I just couldn't get into what they were always talking about . . ."

" . . . which was what?"

"Boys mostly."

"Did you date?"

"Yeh, but not the way they did."

"Did they go to different places?"

"Yeh. I mean, when I'd get a guy to ask me out, we'd just like—go out, you know. The two of us. The others seemed to go all together. And like you said they went to different places."

"Did you have sex with most of the guys who took you out?"

"Yes, mostly."

"Did you take pills or anything?"

"No, but I knew when it was safe. I mean, I *read*, and you can find out all that."

"How did you happen to get pregnant, then?"

(Laugh.) "It wasn't safe *then*, I guess."

"Did you want to be pregnant and have a baby?"

"I don't know. I didn't think about it."

"Did you care if the kids in your class knew you were pregnant?"

"No, I didn't care. I mean, I don't care what they think. In fact, I told a couple of kids after gym class. I figured if they didn't like it, so what? I didn't care what they thought."

"But you did want them to *know* about it, right?"

"Not necessarily. I didn't even care whether they knew or not; or what they thought if they did know."

"Who was it that you told?"

"Two girls, Drea and Cathy."

"What did they say?"

"They got real upset about it. It was really funny."

"Why funny?"

"Well, I said, you know, 'Guess what?' And after they talked around for a few minutes, I said, 'Hey, guess what? I'm going to have a baby.' And they got real upset, like I said, and Cathy said, 'Oh my god! How did it happen?' and then we all started to laugh at *that*—how did it happen, you know; well, it's pretty obvious how! And Drea said, 'Are you sure?' and all that, and then she said, 'Who?' and I said, 'I'll never tell . . .' and made them keep on guessing. But even when they guessed who it was I didn't let on. I wouldn't have told them for anything."

Irene told about that last scene with some relish. She opened up for the only time during the half hour or so that I talked to her. It seemed pretty plain that she *had* wanted the kids at school to know she was pregnant. She wanted the sudden scandal of "Irene's going to have a *baby*!" Remember, Irene was not popular. This pregnancy seemed like implicit proof of, if not popularity, at least success with one boy. It was, she admitted, an improvement on her situation.

She had been drifting, rather unhappily. Suddenly, something had happened: an instant drama, starring her.

Did Irene want a *baby*? No, although some girls in her position do. Feeling loveless and with nothing to love, they want an infant, since it is something of their own to kiss, cuddle, care for, without fear of betrayal. But, according to Irene, "I don't have any particular feeling about it (the baby). They can do whatever they think's best with it." She hadn't wanted the baby and all that responsibility. She simply wanted a status symbol—one that symbolized sex—and the pregnancy was it.

It's not uncommon. Ghislaine Godenne of Johns Hopkins Hospital wrote in a recent paper, "I have seen many girls for whom pregnancy was a status symbol and not a disgrace." Girls assigned to Baltimore's school for unwed mothers often brag about it. ("I'm going to School # 1—and Jim's the reason why.") Besides instant attention, the pregnancy can offer a way out of social or school situation that isn't satisfying to them.

I talked to another girl, two years older than Irene, but with similar problems of social acceptance. She felt she wanted to keep the child when it was born. Two psychiatric caseworkers (Marcel Heiman and Esther G. Levitt) might have been writing about this second girl, Norma, when they wrote:

"... the motivation for pregnancy (can be) to find a replacement for a lost love object, either to ward off depression or to counteract a depression. Regressively ... a woman re-creates for herself an object. Since these objects ... are a substitute for the mother and since the woman has undergone a regression in order to create out of herself this object, the baby, it becomes clear that ... the mother is not the mother and the baby is not a baby. The very reverse is the case because the baby that has been created is a replacement for mother; thus *the mother is the baby and the baby*

*is the mother.*" (*American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, XXX, 1960.)

Norma's mother had raised her and seven brothers and sisters. Although she was a bit nervous, Norma had been considered a promising student by most of her teachers. As she began eleventh grade, though, her mother changed jobs and met a man she really wanted. They'd go to North Carolina and live for a year, he said, and see how things worked out; but he didn't want the children along. The children were packed posthaste to an aunt who lived in another part of Baltimore. Norma became pregnant soon afterwards. ("The baby that has been created is a replacement for mother; the mother is the baby ...")

Now, that neat role reversal may seem a bit too pat. And you may be getting tired of the occasional psychological jargon. But there *is* something of truth there, and if I quote psychiatrists and such, it's just to show that the whole idea of pregnancy as feminine inadequacy isn't just my own little theory. Other people agree. People who study the human mind. And *they* should know.

Rollo May should know.

In his best-seller *Love and Will* he quotes Kenneth Clark regarding mores of the lower-class Negro girl. The marginal Negro female, according to Clark, uses sex to gain personal affirmation. She is desired; and that is *almost* enough. Beyond that, however, she will have a child, as a symbol that she is a woman.

Dr. May adds to this: The struggle to prove one's identity and personal worth through pregnancy may be more outspoken in lower-class girls; but—*it is just as present in middle-class girls who can cover it up better by skillful social behavior.*

And of course he's right about middle-class motives for reproduction. They're similar to the motives of Irene and Norma. I have a friend, now twenty-seven, who was brought up in a wealthy middle-class suburb of Chicago. Thinking back to her teen-age years, she said, "There were times, twice that I recall definitely,

when I really, desperately wanted to become pregnant. Both times, I had just broken up with a boyfriend and . . . needed somehow to prove myself, I guess. Thank God I didn't," she added. But—the motive was there.

Rubin and Gertrude Blanck, in *Marriage and Personal Development*, discuss a married woman who is similar to Norma. "I just love the idea of a baby growing inside me . . ." this woman told them; "I feel so incomplete . . . I have nothing." Norma's attempt to explain her pregnancy echoed these words exactly: "I just had *nothing*; I wanted to have *something*."

The same dynamics do operate in the middle class, though they are not well recognized. In fact, hasn't a typical middle-class attitude been condescending toward the breeding habits of the lower classes ("She might as well get pregnant and drop out of school; she can't do anything else, anyway") without seeing a similar pattern in itself?

We who are, by economic definition, "middle class," have a few fewer children. We wait a bit longer. We cover the compensatory motive, as Dr. May said, with skillful social behavior, perhaps. But when we finally do bear children, we, too, may inwardly be trying to prove our identity and personal worth. Underscoring this is the fact that many adequate, emotionally confident, healthily sexual girls simply are not attracted to pregnancy. "Who needs it?" is their attitude. But many of us, in every class of society, who fail to prove our sexual identity or personal worth in life often attempt to prove the same by reproduction.

Dr. May has his own case history of this. He spoke of a divorced girl, well educated, in her early thirties, and a successful editor in a large publishing house. She "obviously was not the slightest deficient in knowledge of sex and contraception."

Nevertheless, after her divorce, she *twice* became pregnant.

"Now it is absurd," Dr. May writes, "to think we can understand this behavior on the basis of 'sexual needs.' Indeed the fact that she did *not* feel sexual

desire was actually more influential in leading her into the pregnancies . . . she became pregnant . . . to compensate for her feelings of emotional poverty . . ."

I think we've always recognized pregnancy as an attempt to prove femininity when dealing with the *unmarried* mother. In *Parade* magazine (November 20, 1966), Lloyd Shearer wrote:

"Girls who become pregnant out of wedlock, from whatever stratum of society they come, have in common one factor: they are nearly always emotionally immature and frustrated personalities who have failed to form satisfactory social, personal, and family relationships . . . Contrary to what might be imagined, the unwed mother is usually shy, withdrawn . . . lacking in self-confidence."

Florence Clothier, in a 1943 *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, seconds the motion:

"Unmarried motherhood in our culture represents a distorted and unrealistic way out of inner difficulties and is thus comparable to neurotic symptoms . . ."

And Louise Trout, in a 1956 *Child Welfare* magazine, agrees:

"We recognize unmarried motherhood as a symptom of a more pervading personality disturbance."

And, in discussing case studies of illegitimately pregnant women, John Loesch and N. H. Greenberg wrote in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* (July, 1962):

"We found with striking regularity evidence of significant alteration in the lives of these unmarried women just prior to conception. In general, these alterations fell into the category of *losses*,

involving such events as the death of a parent, some other significant relative, or *the loss of a boyfriend . . .*"

Once more, I want to make the point that the idea of pregnancy as a result of feelings of inadequacy is not just *my* idea. Now, there is an extension of those viewpoints that I'll take the responsibility for. You may wonder why I'm giving all these assessments of the motives of unmarried girls who are having illegitimate babies. Again, it is because *we are the same way*. Take the words "unmarried" or "unwed" out of the viewpoints above, and you *still* have statements with some degree of validity.

Of course, I would like to expand our concept of the word "illegitimate" in the first place. To my view a baby isn't "legitimate" just because the parents are married. If a baby is conceived for the wrong reasons (selfishness, immaturity, insecurity, to name a few) then that baby is illegitimate, whether born in or out of marriage. And *many* children of married couples result from wrong reasons. The emotional dynamics that produce a pregnancy don't automatically become different just because of a slip of paper, a marriage certificate.

*"Immature and frustrated personalities . . . who have failed to form satisfactory social, personal, and family relationships?"* Lots of girls meeting that description have wedding rings—and babies. A girl I know named Gina quit teaching last year when she became pregnant. Why? The job was too much of a struggle; disciplining her classes was becoming difficult; she couldn't get along with the other teachers. Rather than *talking this out* with her husband and *examining alternatives* (a new job; a different school; a change in her personality or attitude) she simply became pregnant, thinking this was the simplest excuse for quitting.

*"An unrealistic way out of inner difficulties?"* Yes, an inner difficulty such as not being able to face your feelings. This seems hard to believe in this era of sexual freedom and all that, but a marriage counselor

in San Francisco assured me that many wives still feel some distaste for the sex act. A baby can actually be their way of avoiding sex. They "don't feel well enough tonight, darling," during pregnancy; they're too "busy" or too "tired" after the baby arrives.

*"Significant losses . . ."* A loss of a boyfriend was a reason for pregnancy mentioned by Loesch and Greenberg. Actually, they went on to say that even the *threatened* loss of something in a girl's life is sufficient to cause depression and trigger a pregnancy. Maybe a wife fears that she *may* lose her husband's interest, that there isn't enough substance to the relationship without the commitment of a family. And, just as an unmarried woman may get pregnant hoping to get her man to marry her, a *married* woman may become pregnant hoping to manipulate her husband into *staying* with her. (Incidentally, this does not work. If there isn't enough substance to the relationship, you have to enrich the relationship itself, not toss in a child and hope for magic. If you have to resort to pregnancy to keep a guy, you've lost him. He may marry you for a while; he may stay with you for a while. But you've lost him.)

A college friend of mine tried to keep her husband's interest by becoming pregnant. Marie dropped her senior courses when she married Jim; she worked for a while, until his parents offered to subsidize the rest of his graduate study. She thought she'd wait one semester before taking up classes again. That was one semester too long. She didn't have the inner resources to keep herself interesting. She felt out of touch with the campus; she didn't have much in common any more with their friends—or with Jim. ("We just didn't have anything to *say* to each other any more.") At the same time, his law courses were becoming more demanding, and Marie felt neglected. She became pregnant.

Jim was upset. He was angry that she would make such a crucial decision on her own; and he felt that his parents should not have to pay for a grandchild along with his law-school expenses. Marie would have liked for him to quit school then and act like a

husband by supporting them. She became more and more withdrawn and resentful, and the baby did nothing to unify the marriage. They were divorced shortly after the child was born.

If a girl has a baby to try to make up for a lack in the relationship, or to bridge a communication gap, the hoped-for re-establishment of closeness usually doesn't happen. When roles are completely separate, closeness is rare.

The closest and most successful student marriages, according to Lillian Borgeson, a New York writer who studied this last year, are the ones where both partners are able to stay in school—in the same world, with the same interests. If you do that (share his interests; know his friends; discuss his classes; be a part of what he's doing) you will grow together, not apart. That compensatory (and divisive) retreat into the maternity ward won't be necessary; there will be no "loss" to compensate for.

If you have any doubts about that, I think I'd like to tell you about Lila and Tom Prager. They're in Houston, Texas, both getting Ph.D.'s in psychology. (He has a fellowship from the National Science Foundation, she from the American Association of University Women) and . . .

"This business of being in the same field is one of the reasons we are so happy with each other," Lila told me. "We understand all too well the pressures the other is under. So when I'm surly because the hypothesis on which I've based a paper turns out to be wrong, Tom is right there with me, offering sympathy of exactly the right kind, and—ever better—suggestions as to how to get out of the bind I'm in. This has a double advantage of keeping us close and of making us better psychologists in the professional sense. I also love the advantage I have at parties; I can wife-talk with the wives, or I can shop-talk with their husbands. One of the minor benefits!"

When I asked her to describe what they sometimes talk about in the evenings, there was no keeping up with her. "Well, last night was rare, because we were

home; and we go out for dinner often, usually the Night Hawk or someplace else close to the library. But last night we discussed our itinerary from here to London next month. We do some traveling under these grants we have, for comparative studies, always with a ton of tape recorders and books. Then I tried out the arguments I was writing up in the paper I turned in this morning; Tom kind of smiled and said it was hard for him to find counter-arguments against *vague* arguments, so we worked together to sharpen up what I was trying to say. Then we got to talking about the causes of aggression. Tom explained to me his latest theory, which sounded good; then he talked about some cases his theory couldn't handle; and we ditched the work about eleven, made some coffee and put on a 'Committee' record . . ."

Tom and Lila have been married since 1965, by the way; and I mean *married*.

You know the funny, relaxed kinds of conversations you have just when a relationship is really starting to mean something? Tom and Lila still have them . . .

You know the way a guy who really has a girl on his mind buys her things that are really *her* and not just candy-and-flowers tokens? Tom still does . . . ("Um-hmm. He buys me, oh, things like 18th-century lute music; and Rainbath; and, once in a while, like when I came back from a field trip last month, a single rose; and subscriptions to my favorite magazines, even though I could use the ones in the library just as well; and posters for my study area; and copies of my favorite statues from museums; and the Springbok jigsaw puzzle of a Breughel print we bought on our honeymoon; and . . . and . . . and . . .")

I've mentioned Lila's reason for not wanting children before—and it should be even more obvious now. They have something valuable and wonderful, as a couple.

There is simply no need for children.

I seem to have been talking just about college wives. But many wives, on Main Street and in suburbia as well as in the married-student housing projects, try to



use pregnancy to regain their husbands' interest. This ploy should be obvious if we look at just *when* the children come to a marriage (after one year; or two) and at just *what* has happened to the marriage at that point.

Typically, the initial novelty of the marriage has ended. The "getting started" projects like decorating the house or apartment are completed. The surface romanticism has tarnished a bit (he talks to other girls at parties; they don't always cuddle when listening to records at home any more; they haven't been out to dinner in a month; they have had an argument about laundry). And the intense intimacy of lovemaking has perhaps begun a descent into the routine. The honeymoon, in short, is over.

At this point, a wife has a choice. She can initiate a deeper, more personal and *real* relationship with her husband; she can enrich their relationship by drawing them both toward the world outside; she can stimulate her own personality, again by outside contacts, so that she is a person continually changing, continually new and valuable to herself, and to him; she can stimulate variety in lovemaking; she can find out what the challenge of being a married female is all about: keeping a man interested, *by being interesting*, even after he's used to her.

Or, she can have kids.

That's not a perfect dichotomy of the path forward; but it's not an invalid one, either. And I guess there's no doubt about which I think is the better way. Being a part of the real, adult world is my choice.

To me, retreating to a plastic, womblike, mini-world (a city apartment, a suburban house) there to reproduce myself amidst the Glo-Coat and the Endust just doesn't make it. I don't think that retreat does much to further an exciting or meaningful feminine personality. If it did, more husbands would go home more eagerly to their wives, for there would be something new for them to discover.

Some husbands who have children do go home eagerly, of course. (But some do not.) Some husbands and wives decide to have children because they prefer

a network of loving relationships to a single love. (But in many families conflict predominates over love.) And husbands and wives *without* children can surround themselves with a network of loving relationships, too; but those relationships are not restricted by four walls.

Children, according to Dr. Helene Zagier of Monthey, Switzerland, may not strain a healthy marriage; but neither are they necessary to enrich a healthy marriage. A marriage becomes enriched or enfeebled by its role in the total ambiance of the world around it. If you *think* you need a child as enrichment, seriously ask yourself if your own resources may be growing thin.

One husband, multi-married and divorced (he was in his fifth marriage when I talked to him), had come to this conclusion: "When I see that my wife is thinking about kids, it's a sure sign to me that something's wrong. It's almost a woman's way of punishing herself and me, by tying us both down." (Pregnancy as self-punishment? Maybe, maybe.)

"You know," the man continued, "it's almost as though pregnancy is a way some women reject men. I remember thinking this with my last wife. All she wanted to do was talk about pregnancy, read books about pregnancy, go to movies and plays about pregnancy. But what about *my* interests? This really dawned on me when she insisted we go to see the movie *Jenny*. Terrible movie. Maybe what put me off was seeing the ad on the way in. The blurb said, '*It doesn't matter who the father is: Jenny finally has someone to love.*' Can you imagine that? It doesn't matter who the father is . . . Now, isn't that rejecting men?"

According to Dr. Sanford Wolf of Baltimore, quite possibly. "With some women, the response is almost spiderlike. They have their young; they drive the man away."

You probably think I'm being extreme in dredging out these negative theories about motives for pregnancies. But I haven't even *mentioned* the *most* extreme theories I ran across. (I found five articles,



for instance, on a woman's desire for a "penis baby." I left *that* one alone because I don't know what they mean by that—whether a woman supposedly wants a penis, or intercourse—and it doesn't make any sense to me no matter what it means. My pregnant girlfriends have always had their problems, but I don't think they had penis envy.) And the March, 1970 *Glamour* magazine outlined, among recognized motives for pregnancy "a desire for suicide!"

Now, I don't know about *that*, either. At least, I don't think you can take it in a literal sense. Pregnancy can be a withdrawal from certain *areas* of life, of course. Far from being life-giving, it can be life-denying: denying future options to both the man and the woman. Therefore, its effects on a woman and her marriage could be, well, suicidal. There *may be* women who sense that their husbands will not react well to fatherhood. Pregnancy may be their way of denying a future together.

Pregnancy can also be a distress signal: "Help! Something's wrong with our marriage, Bob! I felt the need to make a drastic change."

But certainly you can be more flexible and more creative about making changes when you are *not* pregnant. Any woman who sees pregnancy as therapy for a sick marriage might better suggest a trip to Europe—or to Esalen—and seduce her husband into *that* idea. It will cost a fraction of what a child costs.

Now, money might seem like rather a mundane and unworthy consideration, if you're feeling like you want to have a baby. But we do live in a material society; and we've learned to want a good life, materially. If a child comes into conflict with the level of living you and your husband want, what will the result be? Sacrifice with joy? Or resentment at deprivation? The plain fact is that most people today simply cannot afford children; if a woman wants children despite that fact, she may be asking for something destructive.

According to the federal Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, it costs the average

family anywhere from \$80,000 to \$150,000 to raise two children and send them through college.

For a mother with only a grade-school education, the total cost of raising two children—including lost job opportunities—adds up to an estimated \$120,000. But for a woman with a college education (and therefore better earning prospects) the loss figure can approach \$200,000.

By the way, even after adjusting for inflation, the costs *per year* of raising a child rise about 30-45% between the first year and the eighteenth. Women who blithely have children "as a way out" will be in for a surprise in about eight years or so, as their husbands struggle to make ends meet (unless these women are CPA's and have taken into account age-dependent cost increases *as well as* inflationary increases.)

Personal experiences the two of you share, on the other hand, continually increase in value—and are a better way *out*, because they are also a way *to* an extension of your self-discovery. Children should be, too. But they are such a *sine qua non* of everybody's life that the ways to raise them have been rigidly prescribed, and there is little room for flexibility. At least it can be said there is less flexibility than is easily available for a couple.

Keep that in mind if you feel at some point that you want to have a baby. There are many feelings—about yourself, your husband or boyfriend, your marriage or love affair—that can lead to a desire for pregnancy. Unfortunately, many of these feelings are negative. (You don't feel loved; your guy is not paying enough attention to you; your relationship with him is slipping.) And, just as unfortunately, pregnancy is not curative.

Perhaps the most common underlying motive for pregnancy is a desire to establish or heighten your femininity. But it won't. You will feel "special" and be treated solicitously during pregnancy. But solicitedness on the part of a man is not the same as love. And there's an unwholesome falsity of expectation

among many pregnant women that that special treatment will continue after the child is born. But it doesn't happen.

Mothers—maternal figures—are less, not more, appealing. If you don't think that, just try, for a minute, to put yourself in your man's place. Which girl would he find more alluring: the 25-year-old housewife at home with two kids, a bridge club, and an electric oven, who shuttles in her station wagon between the school and the shopping center? Or the 25-year-old secretary at his office who flips around to business luncheons, political meetings, fashion shows, chic shops, and art openings?

Read the next chapter before you answer that.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *HUSBANDS AND BABIES*

"The male animal . . . really has very little interest in watching his young grow up, unless he's having a marvelous time with the female who provided him with the young. Often, by the time the young have grown up, he has another female who also is giving him a marvelous time and more young to grow up. Sometimes he's very clever or very lucky and gets a female who doesn't have any young at all.

"Then he's much happier altogether."

—Pamela Mason,  
*Marriage Is the First Step Toward Divorce*

Let's consider that possibility, shall we? That a man just might be "much happier altogether" if you—his female—did *not* produce any young.

Larry Muir, a Seattle scientist, is happier that way. Though he's been married for seven years, he and his wife, Ellen, are closer than many newlyweds. At a pool party they attended here before leaving for Seattle, they spent most of the evening talking just to each other.

David Lowry, an officer of Nexus Corporation, has been married for fifteen years; his wife has no children. I met him one day on Eastern's New York—Washington shuttle. He had several days of business in New York, but was commuting daily, since his wife hadn't been able to go with him. That just might indicate a man who's very happy with his

home life, and it is a refreshing contrast to the escapist husband who would have booked a room at the St. Moritz and a table at Sardi's for after-five activities.

And a Minneapolis lawyer, married for ten years and with no children, says about his wife, "My only complaint is that I have to leave her in the mornings."

How many stories would you like?

I could easily give you fifty. But they are not fifty stories, they are one story told fifty times—and the story is this: a wife who has no children to preoccupy her time and attention can *give* that time and attention to her husband. She is more of an attentive companion and a loving woman than a mother-of-two-or-three has *time* to be. And her husband thrives on this attention.

Nearly every man wants this kind of attention from a woman. I *don't* think many men have enthusiasm at the prospect of offspring. As psychologist Helena Lopata has pointed out, men regard neither fatherhood nor husbandhood as their chief roles in life and are rather easily annoyed by the inconveniences of both.

Commonly, the way a husband explains the decision to have children is, "Well, it seemed about time, I guess." And many men make it clear that it was their *wife* who wanted the children, not they. ("Well, I thought if it would make her happy, give her something to do, then it would be good;" or "I didn't feel ready. In fact I was really reluctant, but she was so emotional about wanting a child . . .")

Things like that are what husbands say. Typically.

And at times the responses get a great deal less enthusiastic than *that*. The adult male, it would seem, who has a clear and confident grasp on the world and on his life wants to *live* that life *himself*, rather than spend most of it "watching his young grow up." In the opinion of one therapist, "Women talk their husbands into having children far too often."

Now, there *are* husbands who want their wives to stay home, be "domestic," have children. In the opinion of the same therapist, "Such a husband is

either not very wise, or inwardly he does not love his wife very much. Let's look at such a situation in real terms. He wants her confined to the home, while he is out in the world of work. He gives her limited and routine tasks while he is out growing, learning, creating, being challenged and stimulated by conditions of competition within his field. *He is, by asking for such a situation, creating marital incompatibility*: first, in terms of conversation; then sexually. And there is virtually no way around that. Such a husband, in long-range subconscious terms, is aiming toward the dissolution of his marriage, denying future possibilities of relating to his wife as a companion. These men, you see, do not feel comfortable with emotional closeness and intimacy. This is their way out."

Not always are such subtle motives operating, of course. Probably, most husbands who do take the initiative in saying, "Time for a family," are expressing a simple feeling; they want children to add to, or give point to, their marriage. And this is a genuine feeling, on a conscious level at least. But you still have to remember that your husband, like you, has undergone a process of continual baby-bombardment (or young-son bombardment, via the insurance, clothing, and sports equipment ads). He has been affected by the same incessant cultural prods as you. Thus, his expressed desire is quite apt to be a simple acceptance of this cultural conditioning and *not* a deep, real, personal want.

If his marriage is losing its lustre, the idea of adding a child to that marriage may have appeal. The *idea* of it, mind you. Count on it: he has no idea of the realities involved. In fact, when the realities come, most men don't like them.

*Redbook* magazine, in one issue, admits that while a woman's feelings about her newborn have been carefully documented, "Less widely known is the feeling of responsibility that seems to settle on some men like a rain cloud."

"The night feedings will disturb your sleep, and the crying will get on your nerves," a cheery passage from *The Expectant Father* advises. "Your meals may not

be ready on time, and they may not be as elaborate or as well-prepared as they used to be. The house may not be as tidy or as quiet as it was when there were two of you. Finally, and this is the hardest fact for many husbands to accept, you are no longer the sole object of your wife's love and attention . . . You will have occasional moments when you'll feel that you made a mistake in starting the entire thing."

"Occasional moments!" stormed the father of two-year-old twins when I read that passage to him. "Occasional moments when I wish we hadn't had them?" He shook his head and seemed at a loss for words. "It was the worst mistake of my entire life. I should have known better, but I agreed to it. I'll have to say this—at least Betty didn't trick me, and I know plenty of guys whose wives have done that. But the effect is all the same, I guess. All the things I wanted to do while I was still young enough to enjoy them. Well, there's just no chance now. No time. And no money."

"I used to break my neck getting home," a taxi driver in Dallas told me. "I knew just how to get every green light and make it home in fifteen minutes flat after my shift. We'd have a beer; we'd put the steaks on; we'd talk about the kooks that turned up that day. She used to always worry I'd get mugged, you know? And we'd watch TV, go to the neighbors, or go to this bar a few blocks away for a nightcap and dance. This bar's a real friendly place; used to be like a real family. When I'd got a lot of money, I'd buy everybody in the place a drink. Other times, they'd do the same for us. It was great. All the guys thought I had the greatest wife around. Now, I get home to a kid screaming, and a wife who doesn't notice if I've come in the door or not half the time, she's that busy with the kid. I take the longest way around I can find."

Are these men's reactions typical?

Well, there's a study by Dr. E. E. LeMasters, and the fact that the study is titled "Parenthood as Crisis" should be a clue. If you'd like a statistic, 83% of the new fathers he interviewed reported "extensive" or

"severe" crises in their home situations.

New fathers were disturbed by the loss of sleep and the fact that their routines were upset; by the unforeseen financial complications of parenthood (how many couples really are aware that the purchasing power of the average employee with a wife and dependents goes *down* each year?); by the need to give up social activities and fun, particularly the spontaneous sort, which most men value. Fathers were seriously bothered by the decline in the sexual excitement of the marriage. There was noted a general disenchantment with the parental role, and, by implication, a disenchantment, too, with the marital role!

Another study by Arthur P. Jacoby in the November, 1969 *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, indicated that 87% of new parents were disturbed rather than pleased with the changed family situation.

This isn't the happy poppa image given out by the media.

It may not even be apparent, to the casual observer of the new father, that he is unhappy. His reactions of disappointment will take place within the privacy of his own mind; he will not express them openly. After all, following nine months of emotional buildup and expectation, any statement of, "I don't like all this," would not be tolerated.

Instead, there's almost always an initial elation on the part of the father. There's the ceremonial passing around of the cigars, the exhibit of Polaroid shots and paternal pride, and the joviality of many postpartum ceremonies which really serve to give attention to *him* as the new baby's father.

But the natal novelty and the euphoria connected with it *finis* fast. Then comes the letdown, the crisis that LeMasters and Jacoby and others have described. And the older the child, the more problems admitted by the father, report several counselors. This crisis, by the way, involves far more than just little annoyances like the baby crying or the house being untidy. The raising of children, most marriage counselors feel, challenges marital happiness in profound ways.

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If fathering children establishes or satisfies a man's need for male self-assertion, why do all those Latin American men (who father *lots* of children) have mistresses? The Latin American man has another distinctive trait, too: close ties to mother.

"Mama and the mistress, those are the main points of conflict," one Buenos Aires wife told David Belnap, in a Los Angeles *Times* interview. Mr. Belnap reports, later in that May 6, 1970, article, that "Latin men have social lives apart from their wives. . . . These involve any number of pursuits carried out with cronies and consuming a large part of the time . . ." What are some of these pursuits? A priest working in Peru estimated that 80% of the men in the average middle-class parish have permanent or semi-permanent mistresses.

So it would seem that fatherhood, if it has a role in proving masculinity, is not in itself *sufficient* to do so. The mistress is necessary, after a time, because a man is judged (and self-judged) "masculine" according to the *desirability* of the woman he sleeps with. After giving birth to many children, the Latin American man's wife usually is not attractive enough to cause other men to think, "Roderigo must be a *real* man to have *her*." To prompt this response from his comrades, Roderigo must search out a younger, more attractive and more sexually desirable woman.

It's basically the same here, isn't it?

After a while the American male, too, begins to feel he'd like a cute, young sexual ego prop. And parenthood can be the crisis which precipitates his search for one. Parenthood can be the trap that makes a man feel enclosed, stifled. "It signals a man's loss of freedom, the final and firm hold of responsibility on him," says a marriage counselor of thirty years experience.

Time passes. The children's needs increase, and so do husband-wife conflicts over money, with the wife typically implying that more money is needed. She may start seeing herself mainly in the role of consumer, thanks to all those clever advertisers we mentioned before. The "good mother" is the mother

who has a newly-decorated playroom for Junior, new clothes and toys—all the earmarks.

It can be quite an economic strain on Father.

The authors of *The Expectant Father*, cited earlier, seem to realize this; but they're quite cheerful about it:

"Take a deep breath and try to estimate what your child will cost you," they say. "The additional costs for the child may make it necessary to adjust yourselves to a different standard of living. This must be done as a result of a frank discussion between you and your wife. In any discussion of financial readjustment, remember that the baby is worth any sacrifices that you may be forced to make . . . Of course you may be envious or resentful of your neighbor or relative who has so many more material things than you can afford. Don't be tempted to compete . . ."

" . . . the baby is worth any sacrifices . . ."

That's easy to say.

And, to some men, a baby may *be* worth any sacrifice. Some men are willing to regard the relative affluence of early marriage as a phase. After a while, they're ready to provide for someone else, and, if a child comes into conflict with "the good life" they previously led, they'll give up that previous standard of living with little or no resentment.

But there are other men—and they are more numerous—who find great satisfaction in the sense of personal power that comes from being able to buy whatever they want. They want their good Scotch, stereo, vacations. They want a bright young thing on their arm (that's *you*) and that's *that*. Try to pin this sort of man down to a tight budget so that the kids can have everything from kiddie toys to college savings plans while *he* gives up his pleasures—and you've got trouble.

Sexual and economic stresses can begin to interact, in a complex and destructive pattern. There starts to be conflict over money. Given this conflict, some wives start to spend more than ever out of a disappointment that this man who was once so generous with them (when he could afford to be!) is



generous no longer. Another motive for wifely overspending can be sexual frustration. Sex life commonly declines after children are born. Some merchandisers view consumerism as directly related to sexual deprivation, with the "shopping trip" being almost an analog for the sex act—as the wife makes up for not being given *love* by spending her husband's *money*. ("If women were ever sexually satisfied," Mary Quant has said, "all of us designers might go right out of business. Consumerism, as we know it, would be in trouble.")

The wife's attempt, though, to find some sort of solace by spending actually only hurts the marriage further. She pushes her husband further into debt, hurting his feelings of economic adequacy. If a man feels inadequate as a provider, he may also become less adequate as a sex partner, and not just because of pre-bedtime comments like, "How can we pay the bills?" either. The treadmill of debt can lead to a general sense of masculine depression that's *not* the same thing as a feeling of sexy virility. And, continuing a vicious cycle, the wife experiences sexual disappointment again—and again compensates by spending.

That's one common pattern of marital breakdown; there are others. Some families just quietly resign themselves to relative poverty, and accept the fact that they can't afford much, not for themselves, anyway. I'd like to quote extensively from a *Life* magazine profile of the Mrak family, of Cleveland:

"It was 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and the temperature in Brookpark was 94 degrees," begins the article. "Frank Mrak and his wife were sitting at their dining room table, sorting grocery coupons which Mrs. Mrak had been clipping from the newspapers all week.

"Their four children waited in the living room: a boy, Fran, 16; and girls Susan, 13; Mary Pat, 8; and Karen, 7. 'Ground beef is going to be our big buy of the day,' Frank Mrak said, 'We might get 30 or 40 pounds . . .'

"Every Saturday at 3 p.m., the Mraks go shopping. There are five grocery stores in five different shop-

ping centers within fourteen minutes of their house. Most Saturdays, they visit each one. Sometimes they must hurry to finish by the 6 p.m. closing time, but by waiting until late in the afternoon, Frank Mrak is able to take advantage of sudden, unadvertised markdowns made by store managers . . . especially in the produce department, where the goods will not keep until Monday. With a monthly budget that allows \$150 for mortgage, \$15 for entertainment and \$150 for food, it is these bonuses, these unexpected windfalls, that are the highlights of the Mraks' weekend; indeed, sometimes of their week.

"Tell about the bread at Kroger's," Mrs. Mrak said."

And, in this report, Frank Mrak then smiled and proceeded to recount in detail the lucky chain of circumstances which, on Saturday, had saved him \$3.42 on twenty-eight loaves of bread.

"Their lack is more than money," commented Joe McGinness, who wrote this article for *Life*.

They also lack experience—the wide varieties of experience that give life its richness. "These bonuses are the highlights of their week . . ." And of their lives?

"Sometimes it breaks your heart," Mrs. Mrak said. 'A & P had a special on liver . . . but the children just won't eat it . . .'" The shopping trip seems the measure of the entire dimension of their lives (I have measured out my life in grocery coupons) and of their emotional existence. Joy is a bargain on bread; heartbreak is passing up a special on liver. I think that is why that article was so very painful for me to read. Every human being has the emotional capacity to respond to much greater things than bread and liver. Joy goes far, far beyond a supermarket. Heartbreak—well, if my heart is going to be broken, it will be because my love is in crisis, or because the spring had very little sunshine this year, or because Czechoslovakia was invaded. It is a waste of human emotion to be that concerned about the price of bread. No one should have to be.

And yet so many families live within budgets so tight as to squeeze all joy out of life. I met a man in

La Jolla, California, whose life is much like the Mraks'. He's a safety engineer who works a full weekly shift at the San Diego airport. He also does tax work for a CPA and drives a cab four nights a week. He's not happy.

"Five kids is more than anybody should have! If we had two kids, I wouldn't have to hustle at all these jobs and you'd better believe that would make me *very* happy. And if we didn't have any kids, we'd be living like kings, like the supervisor Larry and his wife ..."

There are beaches in La Jolla (beaches "too good to be true," according to *Holiday* magazine writer Chandler Brossard). This man and his wife never go to them.

A police officer in Benton Harbor, Michigan; a Manhattan elevator operator; a Denver accountant; an exhausted machinist who ingeniously courts overtime at a depressed Boeing company plant in Seattle—how many stories would you like of men who have "no time left for myself" due to job, extra jobs, overtime hours, because of family expenses? Do these husbands and wives have the leisure to enjoy each other?

Oh, but this has no relevance to us, you may be thinking. We're middle class. We earn almost \$11,000 a year. We have credit cards. Children wouldn't be such an economic burden that we couldn't enjoy life. With time payments, we can afford just about anything.

But how do those time payments make a man feel? Unless he's crazy about his work, he feels like a "servant" in two senses: employee for the boss, wage-slave for the home. That double-servant role can get kind of oppressive. Tied down with time payments, a man isn't free to have an impulse. And where, after all, is it going to end? When your husband's salary increases a year from now? Think again.

A financial corporation has a bright ad. "Relief for the financially indigent," is its headline. And that ad is meant for the middle class. Shown are husband, wife, small child in red jumpsuit, baby in arms.

"You know them," the ad reads. "The young family men with one or two kids. And one or two mortgages. They need life insurance. But looking after their families' welfare could put them on welfare. The life insurance they'll be able to afford at thirty-five, they need at twenty-five. Continental Assurance has a plan that lets the young wage earner have the permanent cash-value protection he needs right now. But lets him pay for it later. At first he pays about half the normal premium. *In ten years he reaches the final level . . .*" (emphasis mine).

Swell.

In other words, as his wages grow, they are eaten up not only by various inflations, taxes, hidden cost increases, family expenses, but increases in life-insurance payments, too. Now, do you really want your husband tied to ever-increasing, in-case-of-death payments of that sort when he should be enjoying *life*, and *you*, instead?

There are subtler aspects, too, to the economic burden of supporting a family. Some increased job tensions may be directly related to children.

"I'd better watch my step, I can't let anything happen to my job *now*; I really need every paycheck *now*," can be an inhibiting feeling for a man to carry with him through the work week.

That feeling can even reduce a man's chances of getting the raises that are critical to his self-esteem. I talked recently at lunch with a New York copywriter, who had just asked for, and gotten, a \$3,000 annual raise. "How did you bargain for that?" I wanted to know.

"There was no bargaining to it. They knew if I didn't get it, I'd simply walk off and go somewhere else. I don't care if I don't work for a month, or six months. I know what my work is worth; and if my agency wants to keep me, they'll have to pay for what it's worth.

"Of course," he went on, "it's not that easy for everybody. Elaine and I could get by, with our savings and her salary, for some time. But there's a guy in our office who's stuck at half my salary right

now, because he can't make demands like I can. His wife doesn't work; he's got three kids, so they *know* he's not about to walk out and take his chances on the street. They know they've got him. So, he doesn't ask for the raises, and he doesn't get them. Too bad, too, because he's just as good a writer as I am, and if he believed in himself a little more, he could get a better job. But he's afraid to take the risk."

I want to pose another question. *What if* the following assignment were given to those two copy-writers:

"Our largest client, The X Corporation, has been under public attack for polluting the city's air. Write a campaign that will convince the public the company is doing something about the problem." Both men might ask, "Listen, are they *really* doing anything?" What if the answer were, "No, they're really not; this is just a p.r. job." Both men might think, "In that case, I won't touch that assignment with a ten-foot pole and to hell with anybody who tries to make me, agency or client." Which of the two would have the courage to speak his mind?

What effect does it have on a man if he can't say what he thinks at his job because he needs every paycheck too desperately? What happens to a man who has to suppress or abandon his ideals?

I'll tell you what happened to a man I'll call Kenneth Dolan, who worked, years ago, at a minimal salary for the American Civil Liberties Union in Columbia, South Carolina. Looking back, he says, "I was on fire during those years. Life had so much purpose and meaning that I used to pity everybody I knew who just worked for a salary, who just worked at any job without believing in it. It was inconceivable to me that anybody could live without this kind of involvement. It uses you up completely, and yet it makes more of you all the time. I even pitied people who went to the movies, the concerts. What a waste of time; what pathetic shadows of life they were seeing; I was *living* it!"

He talked for maybe an hour, steadily.

But Ken Dolan doesn't talk much about the job he

has now. He's now an architect for a land developer in Atlanta. Seems when his wife became pregnant, they had a long talk. ("Or I should say *she* had a long talk. I was so stunned I couldn't even think.") She had been very patient, she said, but he was wasting himself and getting no reward for it. Look at the shabby apartment they lived in. But that wasn't the point. It was all very well, his wanting to help people. But he'd done enough. Now, with the baby coming, he should get a job with more money—and one that wasn't involved in controversy. She didn't want her baby's father's name on some sheriff's list.

They live in a nice house in Atlanta now.

Another crusader forced to abandon a crusade before beginning it is a close friend of ours, a young law student who wanted to join Ralph Nader's investigations immediately after graduation. In fact, he had applied to work with a team researching land practices in California. Ron was a keen, competitive guy, very turned on to what was wrong all over, very eager to get to work and change it. By graduation, though, his wife, also a law student, was pregnant. Working out of Nader's Center for Responsive Law he'd not have gotten much of a salary, just expenses. So that wouldn't work.

Ron is not working for Ralph Nader. He is working for Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation.

Parenthood can be a crisis involving more than the "disturbance of routine" and other inconveniences that Professor LeMasters' study turned up. R. H. Gardner, a writer for the Baltimore *Sun*, put it on the line in one of his columns: "How many young men's dreams," he asked, "have been sacrificed to the need for a modern kitchen, separate bedrooms for the children, and an education at the college of their choice?" How many? Would anybody like to count?

Children don't always force abandonment of ideals. But it can happen.

Family burdens can also cause trouble in simpler, more tangible ways. An engineer at a G.E. plant near here was laid off. No savings. He applied at once to two other large companies in the Baltimore area.

Surveying his former salary (\$16,000) and his family status (four children) one company was generous enough to offer him \$11,000. They knew he would go to work for that, because he needed a paycheck—soon. We're acquainted with the personnel manager of that company, and I asked him about it. "It might seem pretty heartless," he said, "but actually we figure we're doing him a favor taking him on, when we could hire somebody without his experience for \$1,000 less. And he'll have a chance to work his way up here, in just a few years . . ."

"No," he answered my next question, "he hasn't accepted yet, and I can understand his feelings. He thinks if he can just hang on for a month, he'll find something like the sixteen he was making before. I doubt that he could, but in any case he can't wait that long, not with all those kids. I really expect him to be in to work this week."

Then there was the loan officer of a Boston bank who, after the birth of his child, managed to get himself fired, because he was so suddenly shaken by the mounting expenses and responsibilities. "The only way we can make ends meet, with Louise not working," he told a friend of mine, "is for me to really make progress here at the bank. I'm really sweating it, but I'm acting the image, you know? Just watch the new Me—dynamic, full of authority."

Not too long after that, the bank manager told the same friend of mine, "We let Ben go. Really disappointed me; he was one of our best employees. Really well-liked by everybody. Nice, clean-cut young man. Very good employee. But something came over him. Hard to say, but it's as though he read a book called *How to Climb the Corporate Ladder* and started overstepping his authority, trying to tell me how the other loan officers were doing things wrong, really stepped on a lot of people's feelings."

"And then there was the question of salary. Now I know his wife has had to quit work, but Ben knew our scale of raises here; and the salary he started insisting he was worth . . . was just not in line with our policy. We couldn't have made an exception."

Not many men lose their jobs in that way, as a direct result of having a child. But many men with children do, at some time, lose a job, or have difficulty supporting their family. That's never an easy situation, and it is, in fact, a situation some men will simply walk away from. "And the more children a man has, the easier it is for him to walk away," explained a Pittsburgh welfare worker. "Seems that way, anyway: with more children, there's less sense of obligation; the more children there are, the less each one means. It's no accident, in my opinion, that the ghetto areas have the largest numbers of children per family, and the highest rate of desertion. Of course, economics is involved, too. A man looks at all those children and realizes not only that he can't care for them all but that there's no way he can support them all. So he leaves—leaves them to us."

Desertion by the father isn't limited to the ghetto. It's still basically a question of earning power and demands on that earning power. "Desertion goes up when the factories lay off," said the same counselor, "but even without that you'll have a certain percentage of, say, factory workers who just walk away every year. When a guy gets to a point where he can't buy the guys he works with a round of beers on payday without the wife screaming, 'Where's the rest of the money? The kids need this and this and this,' that's when he takes off. That's when he decides, 'To heck with his family business!'"

When annual income is above \$12,000, desertion is called divorce, because husband and wife can afford a certain legal minuet. But the reasons are the same. I asked a friend of mine, a lawyer in Minnesota, "What is the most usual reason men have for filing for divorce? What does a husband typically say when he comes to you?"

"Easy question. Ninety percent of the time, they say they haven't slept with their wife in two years . . ."

"Why?"

"Kids."

Other divorce lawyers generally agreed. Oh, one



didn't. "Children don't have much to do with whether a marriage breaks up. The breakups are over money and sex, not children," he said.

I think he was missing the point. Another lawyer (this man from Norfolk, Virginia) agreed, but put the matter in perspective: "The greatest areas of marital conflict are undoubtedly sexual and economic," he said, "but the presence of children can actually produce or catalyze the conflict."

Does sex always decline after children are born, and perhaps begin that economic spiral of overspend we talked about earlier?

"Yes, I think it's inevitable that sex declines after children," said one. "Well, I'll put it this way: I've never seen a case where it got *better*," said another.

"Your total romance picture declines, and so your sex life is going to go downhill, too, since men are conditioned to be sexually stimulated within a romantic context," went a third comment, in a later interview that same day.

Dr. Rustum Roy, mentioned previously, feels that the main reason for this decline is the simple matter of increased demands on a wife's time and attention. The wife knows she's got to get up in four hours to feed the baby; she's miserably tired from working around the house all day in an unaccustomed schedule; she's out of sorts; she has a headache and has just *got* to get some sleep. Not the sort of wife to pop into a tangerine negligee and lure her man into rapturous abandon.

"Why start anything? The kid will just cry," is the way husbands begin to feel. As a British husband who had just left his wife explained to me, "There were a few occasions when we could be free of the babies' needs. There were fewer occasions of sex, it was as simple as that. And therefore there were fewer occasions when everything went right and was fulfilling. This led to some trouble in other ways. It was simply not the same. It was not the marriage I had bargained for; she was not the wife she had been before, not responsive to me . . ."

In the LeMasters study, a major complaint of the

husbands interviewed was: lack of responsiveness on the part of their wives.

"Well, the men can complain about *lack of responsiveness* all they want," in the opinion of one Freudian psychiatrist. "It's somewhat of a cop-out to say that. It's really a matter also of lack of attraction to the wife, once she becomes a mother. A man's sexual response to a mother figure—well, let's say it's often ambivalent at best."

And Virginia Satir, formerly director of Esalen at Big Sur, California, explained a common pattern of infidelity: "When the *wife* becomes a *mother*, the man may seek competition, as he did when he was younger and broke away from his own mother, by looking for a *girlfriend*."

I think there's very definitely a change in image when a girl becomes a mother, and I think it has to affect a man's sexual response. In our culture, boys grow up learning that you sleep with young girls, not mother figures.

A friend of mine (two children) got very angry at this suggestion. "Mature men want something *more* than just a swinging chick!" she insisted.

Maybe.

Her husband was with her at the time; and he neither reinforced nor denied her point.

I wish there were some statistics on this. I'm not very fond of statistics, but this one I think would be interesting. Are men who have children more apt to look for sex outside of marriage? Maybe there are some figures, and I just wasn't clever or thorough enough to find them. But I did look, and although I found infidelity linked to such things as parents' religion and age at onset of puberty, there was nothing about infidelity and family size, or comparative infidelity of childless husbands and fathers.

A counselor of many years experience at American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles did venture an opinion: "With greater numbers of children, you experience greater economic and emotional strain," he said. "Therefore, you have greater possibility for conflict; therefore, you have greater need of



ego satisfaction. And with increased diminution (that was his phrase, really!) of the wife's attention to the husband, the husband might seek an alternate source of ego satisfaction."

Condensing that: Yes, the father just might go looking for another woman.

Then, too, there's the bare fact that a husband with children very often has more opportunities for sex outside of marriage. His wife is with him less.

"I had to go to Chicago for a week, and I thought maybe we could make a vacation out of it. But my wife didn't think we should take the kids out of school for a week, and she didn't want to leave them with her folks for some damn' reason, and if that's the way she feels about it, she can't blame me for what I do while I'm here alone . . ."

"No, Janet didn't go with me to New York. One of the twins had a possible upper-respiratory infection, and she didn't think she should leave . . ."

"No, I'm here at the ABA convention by myself this time. My wife used to make the trips with me every year, but since the kids . . ."

"Well, most of our wives used to travel with the team, but Dick's wife is the only one who does anymore; she doesn't have any kids to make arrangements for. The rest of us, well, manage to make—adjustments. You doing anything tonight?"

How many stories would you like?

I could tell you fifty.

But it is not fifty stories, really; it is one story, fifty times . . .

The husband traveling without his wife, in effect, a single man again. There are girls in whatever city he goes to, and lots of them look like my friend Lori. And there are lots of men who actively seek out such opportunities for freedom through travel, though at times the "travel" is only to another part of town. There was a man in the Southwest who turned down a promotion to branch manager of an insurance office, preferring to remain a claims inspector because he was able to be out of the office, "where my wife can't reach me."

And an executive told me in Boston, "It's my firm belief that this whole structure of business travel—conventions, sales meetings, management seminars, account solicitations, training programs—grew out of a pretty comprehensive desire on the part of company men to get away from their families. In fact, we've got a policy of discouraging wives from coming along. If even one wife did, she might tell the rest what goes on. The ostensible reason, of course, is that we're occupied with business. Not at night we're not."

Whether or not there is, and to what extent there is, infidelity is probably beside the point. The point is that men do seem to withdraw from the home, particularly after children are born. The factory men fill the neighborhood bars; the ghetto men are on the streetcorner; the middle-management types are working late at the office; and, at 7 p.m., from the Westwood Village for married students at UCLA, there is a mass exodus of men for the library, leaving their wives and very young babies in the apartments. ("After the child comes," said a UCLA counselor, "the husband will stay home less because it's difficult to study.")

Now, of course some men stay home a lot. Some never go on business trips, and if they do, they behave themselves. And some men drive home faithfully at 6 p.m. and take part in togetherness activities like neighborhood barbecues and Little League games. But please don't assume that this is the norm, because it honestly doesn't seem to be.

It's interesting, I think, that June Robbins, in an article dealing with Little League baseball, continually referred to *Mom's* interest in the game. You might imagine that the father's involvement might also be strong. But her article, in the July, 1969 *McCall's*, didn't even mention Father. By the time his lads reach Little League age, has he withdrawn from the family to the point where he's simply not interested? If so, then the marriage may not have much meaning. Whether or not it stays together, it has broken down.

Of course there are reasons, other than children, for

separation of husband's and wife's interests. There are other reasons for the breakdown of a marriage. Marriages without children can have their problems, too. If one or the other partner is insecure and demands too much attention, there are problems. If husband or wife finds his work boring or frustrating, there can be problems. If one partner does not get along well with the other's friends, that's a problem. Any marriage has to bring some problems, because marriage seeks to integrate two distinct personalities, and such integration can never be completely achieved. There are always some clashes along with all the love and cooperation.

But without children, the problems can be more easily solved. The chance to be alone, to *talk* about problems and to *relate* to each other is far easier without children. The novelty and stimulation of new experiences *together* (dinner out, a weekend away, a long trip) are more available, and they are necessary ingredients to growing love as well as therapy for troubled love.

But such prescriptions can be hard to fill if there are children. ("What do you mean, go out for dinner? Have you looked at the budget?" "What do you mean, go away? Who's going to keep Sarah and Junior, I'd like to know!") In such cases, is it surprising that a man might find *his* therapy alone?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WHAT HAPPENS TO GIRLS

#### WHO HAVE BABIES?

"I am tired of discussing household matters. There is no worse thing than for women to sit day after day taking care of miserable . . . puling children."

—from an 1870 *Harper's Bazaar* magazine  
accompanying a drawing now in the  
Bettman Archives

"The first twenty years of a woman's life are extraordinarily rich; she discovers the world . . . at twenty or thereabouts, mistress of a home, a child in her arms, she stands with her life virtually finished . . ."

—Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

The girl was young, twenty-three perhaps, and with bright red hair sleeked under an Indian band. She and her husband seemed far too young to be on the verge of separation, to have come to this Baltimore counselor's office as a last try to avoid divorce . . .

She was looking at her husband angrily. "Why did you *change* so completely toward me after the children came?" she demanded.

"Elizabeth, please think back. Wasn't it *you* who changed? Even after Troy was old enough to leave him with a sitter, you had no time to meet me, no interest in planning anything together . . ."

And the interview did show that the changes of attitude had been hers, at least initially.

Just the physical burdens of child care can cause a depressing change in a young wife. It occurs to me, really, that the problem of the population explosion might be solved—at once—if every girl who was even remotely thinking about babies were given a free batch of these “How-to-Be-a-Mother” books, outlining all the work involved.

I’m suspicious of anything titled *How to Be a Mother* anyway: the omission of the word “wife” seems curious. The redheaded girl who was about to lose her husband had read these books and taken their suggestions for efficiently scheduling her day.

“The day has arranged itself,” says a book called *How to Be a Successful Mother*; “it seems to have a will of its own. The work almost tells you what you have to do next. All the messy picking up, cleaning, laundry fall into the cheerful, energetic early part of the day . . . After lunch comes baby’s nap, and you have found out just how to utilize that time . . . perhaps you do some of your cooking then . . . you do long careful jobs where the baby is unwelcome—waxing, ironing . . .”

None of the books, though, had suggested keeping up with her husband’s world, or meeting him for lunch or cocktails. So involved are these manuals with structuring and analyzing all the tasks involved in child care that the husband is all but forgotten.

“You always seemed angry and pressured,” the man was saying to his wife. “You did two things constantly, two things: one, you complained about the housework; two, you never did it.”

“There was never *time* to do a goddam thing. You know what a difficult baby Troy was; it wasn’t my fault he would never sleep, that I was so busy taking him for check-ups and trying to stop his crying that I never—well, I barely had time to shop for *groceries* . . .”

Another book-for-mothers, this one by Dr. Clair

Isbister and called *What Is Your Problem, Mother?* (Hey, I think I could answer that) tells of a British survey studying 700 full-time housewife-mothers. Seems the average at-home mom spent *fifteen hours a day* (!) at child care and housekeeping.

I didn’t believe it either. But Elizabeth insisted almost tearfully that every minute *was* taken up. . . . And we visited some friends who have children last night, and I noticed a few things I hadn’t before. Fifteen hours might be about right. You see, even when a mother is just sitting down with her husband and friends to talk, she’s apt to hear “Mommy!” and she has to up and deal with a small child-crisis. It takes maybe ten minutes. Or, the telephone rings. And she must explain to another mother, “No, that’s not really what went on at the playground. Yes, Keithy was there alone, but it wasn’t Keithy who was causing the trouble. It was Jonathan, and . . . oh, Steffi came home *crying*? Oh, I’m sorry . . . But it was *really* nothing serious; it was just . . .” And *that* can take twenty minutes.

Those snatches of time do add up.

They also subtract—from time spent with a husband.

“We never had a *conversation* after the babies came, Elizabeth, I swear it. I’d come home, honestly, with things I felt I wanted to talk over, tell you about. But by the time you finished feeding Troy and Mary, I’d had two martinis and was out of the mood. By the time they were in bed, there’d been so much noise and confusion around the house that I just felt I wanted to be left *alone*. By that time, I wasn’t even sure I wanted to talk to you. Earlier in the evening, yes, but with all the interruptions . . . it was like living with a servant who’s on call twenty-four hours a day.”

Or fifteen.

I still don’t quite believe fifteen hours, but, as Dr. Isbister goes on to explain, it is a lot of work:

“Think of the woman who has two children under two,” Dr. Isbister writes, “and often even three-

and four-year-olds need lifting. Think how many miles that woman runs, looking to see that those children are not in trouble. Think of the constant mental strain of being on the alert—always listening, always ready to run, always half expecting an emergency . . . Think of the time needed to dress, wash, supervise homework, take children to school or lessons, take baby for a walk . . .”

That’s all in addition to cooking, cleaning, laundry, and errands, by the way. Dr. Isbister adds, though,

“Now, it really isn’t quite as bad as it sounds, because, except for the mothers of young children, we are not all working under pressure. We can pause now and again.”

Except for the mothers of young children? *Except* for the mothers of young children? Now, just how does one get to be the mother of older children without first going through the “mother of young children” phase?

What happens to the girl-mother in the meantime? To her interest in life? To her sense of sheer fun? Will it survive daily exposure to all that child-created tension? Sometimes not; some mothers of young (or older) children don’t laugh very easily or very spontaneously. If you or I as outsiders don’t notice this, there’s one person who does: her husband. To the question, “How has your wife changed since you had children?” there was one answer I got all the time: “She used to be more relaxed; she used to be a lot more fun . . .” That was certainly Elizabeth’s husband’s feeling.

Of course the problem is lessened if you use day-care centers. But that “constant mental strain of being on the alert” occurs just as easily in the evenings.

And finally, according to Dr. Isbister, the mothers of older children may pause “now and again.” *Now and again?* Now and again a mother may pause to think her own thoughts, read her own magazine,

experience her own sensations, live a touch of her own life? *Now and again?*

No wonder Hegel said the birth of children is the death of parents. It’s just too bad somebody a bit more popularly known didn’t say that. Maybe Elizabeth would have read it in high school and thought about it, balancing it against the *Ladies’ Home Journal’s* point of view. But that didn’t happen. She had her children; and they enforced a confinement to the home and subservience to routine that was all-absorbing—and life-denying.

Oh, but hasn’t the blender changed all this? And spray starch? And Enfamil pre-packs? And the vacuum cleaner?

N-o.

“Even with all the labor-saving devices,” Betty Friedan points out in *The Feminine Mystique*, “the modern American housewife probably spends more time on housework than her grandmother . . . *each labor-saving appliance brought in a labor-demanding elaboration of work.*” (Emphasis mine.)

“Housewifery,” she concluded (that’s her word for all those house, child, and garden tasks that produce sparkling rugs, rompers, sinks, and sofas) “expands to fit the time available.”

With small children in the home, women invariably stay in the home. A dayful of hours is available. They fill these hours scouring, sewing, waxing, polishing, dusting, changing, using dishwashers and dryers, electric mixers and vacuum cleaners. Those wives who recognize and resist or resent these tasks (like Elizabeth) may feel guilty; to ease this feeling, they may complain about the difficulty of the tasks they haven’t done. But calling attention to these things can cause conflict with their husbands.

Do child-raising and housewifery always cause these unfortunate results for a housewife?

I don’t know. I know girls who say they’re happy with it. Housework can be creative, they say. But then, I don’t know, and *they* don’t know, what they might be doing otherwise. Even if a housewife finds “creative” house tasks (baking bread; redecorating;

hobbies like ceramics and gardening) isn't she still restricting her environment, and her contacts with others?

One exception. A very attractive gal of about forty, with a teenage daughter. This wife is out all the time, but not at supermarkets and ceramics stores. She's into everything, usually bubbling with stories of bearding supervisors in town board meetings, conducting press conferences, trying to talk Laurance Rockefeller out of money, conducting protest marches on draft boards. Her daughter, Sally, and Sally's friends, say she's the only mother they can talk to. The reason is obvious: she's into the same world they are. And she can help the girls with their boy problems without reverting to "when I was young" story-relics, but with a cool, "Well, if I got the community committee to invite the Exuma group, we should be able to figure out how to get Howard to take you to hear them . . ." approach. She's still in the world; she still knows what it's all about.

But could you really consider her a housewife? She is a definite exception, to my experience (and to Betty Friedan's). Usually, it seems that getting out of the house and into the world requires too much initiative. It takes vision to see these things to do. Too often, when her child is very small, a housewife gets into a pattern of just housework; and the pattern is a strong one. Even after her child is older, she may not see the Sierra Club or other community projects; her vision is tuned instead to the dusty shelves, kitchen counters, and unplumped pillows. Housewifery expands to fit the time available; she spends all day housecleaning.

And that does nothing for a girl.

We all take our cues in life from environmental prompters. Put a girl in a fashion house among designers and models and she will become chic, stylish, aware of the cyclical changes of that quality called "taste." Put that same girl in a progressive law office, and she will become aware of the patterns of

our social ethics and aware of the inequities of those ethics.

Put her in a house amidst bassinet, bottles, diapers, diaper pails, Lysol, Electrasol, playpen, playthings, crib, back-pack, carry-all, Endust, waxer and vacuum cleaner . . . and what will happen? She has to *deal* with all those things; those items have to be kept straight, clean, organized, or track of. And it all will have to be done again soon. Soon there will be more dishes to be loaded, more things to be picked up, Junior to be changed again. Might this make her feel almost . . . mechanical? Might it make her feel less interesting than before?

My friend Laura summed it up very simply. "You know, when you stay at home all day, you feel different," she told me once.

"How?" I asked.

"Duller."

I would not have believed that Laura could ever feel dull. She's one of the wittiest girls I've ever known. Her husband, Greg, is far from being easy to live with, but she always handled him beautifully. Often, if he complained about something petty, she'd simply ignore the complaint and start chatting lightly about something else until he got over it.

But after she became an at-home mother, she didn't have as much to chat *about*. She began to respond to his complaints, and there was a general air of tension between them. ("When Greg comes home, we give each other this look that says, 'Well, are we going to fight tonight or aren't we?'"")

Even little things could cause fights. One day Greg brought a friend home for a drink. The way Laura told it, as she was getting the ice, she heard him show off one-month-old Gloria briefly, then say, "You'll have to excuse the mess in the place, Dan, but you know how it is with a kid." And they both gave a little laugh.

"I could have thrown the ice bucket in his face," Laura told me. "The apartment was *not* a mess. Good Lord, with all the time I spend cleaning, it should win



a national sanitation award. And it's not as though her teethers and things were strewn all over; they *never* are. There *may* have been *one* teether on the coffee table; there *may* have been *one* blanket on the arm of a chair. That's *all*. The diapers and towels were *stacked*, that means *neat*, by the bassinet. What does he expect, that you put a baby in a closet when people come over? And when I heard him apologizing like that, I thought—well, what's more important to him, a perfect apartment or his *child*? And when he called her a—*a kid*, I did not like the sound of that. Gloria is not just 'a kid.' She is *our baby*. I was so angry I barely said one word while we had our drinks. I'm sorry, but how do you make charming noises after a put-down like that? And believe me, we really had it out when Dan left . . ."

Now, you have to understand that before Gloria was born, Greg used to complain about Laura's housekeeping a lot. (I think I said Greg wasn't too easy to live with.) And Laura's reaction was a good-natured quip ("Well, you see, I was frightened by housework when I was little . . .") that smoothed everything over.

That changed.

Laura's role, after she had Gloria and quit her job, was home-centered, baby-centered. Therefore, any criticism of the apartment or the baby was a *personal affront* that couldn't be tolerated.

Greg and Laura have a different marriage, and it is not a better marriage for the addition of a child. At this point, it is Laura who has changed, is changing. She's more thin-skinned and quick to get angry at real or imagined slights. I think she's coping with what most new mothers have to cope with: physical work, loss of image, lack of novelty, loneliness . . .

She's not as close to Greg as she once was.

Since a mother is with a baby all day rather than with her husband, she is *more aware* of that baby's needs than she is of her husband's needs. She knows the baby's schedule for feeding, changing, cuddling, and check-ups. How can she possibly know that her husband has had such a terrific strain at work today

that he needs one hour of complete silence between 6 and 7 p.m. How can she know that he just lost an account at 3 p.m. and could really use a night out as an ego boost? The baby's needs are simpler, and she's in more direct touch with them, and the baby is small and helpless, so it's almost inevitable that baby's needs come first.

A husband can see his wife's devotion to the baby, and it's pretty for a while. (Usually for at least one month.) His wife exhibits new qualities: concern; motherliness; responsibility; maturity.

But there's a catch. These new qualities may not be *adding on* to the qualities that attracted him to his wife in the first place. They may be *displacing* those prior qualities: freedom; humor; impulsiveness; youth. Before a husband's eyes, the girl he married gradually disappears and is just as gradually replaced, by a mother.

Those changes are mental. There are usually physical changes that interact with the mental and emotional shifts. The physical changes may result from the physiology of childbirth or from simple neglect; and they do not always happen. But very, very often, girls become less attractive after having a child.

Some new mothers are not upset by this; they may have never felt comfortable displaying themselves as visual feminine creatures anyway. Pregnancy and motherhood can be a way of withdrawing from competition—or of putting oneself into a different competitive field. Mothers are not expected to be quite as attractive as young girls. They're to be compared to other mothers, not adolescents. (The catch here is that their husband's taste in femininity doesn't always change with his wife's figure.)

Lots of men maintain a nice pose, though, a pose of "I like the way you look now better, honey," or, "Sure, you're just as beautiful as ever." That *can* be a combination of guilt and concern for a wife's feelings. In plainer words, there can be some degree of hypocrisy involved. In still plainer words, those husbands may be lying.

A case in point: Once, attending a teachers' conven-

tion with a girlfriend, I met some friends of hers, a husband and wife who taught in Annapolis. The four of us had lunch together. This man's wife was expecting their second child, though that wasn't obvious yet. "Can't wait till she starts to show," the man said fondly. "Nothing more beautiful than a pregnant woman."

That night, he phoned my girlfriend, Naomi, and spent half an hour trying to convince her to meet him that weekend in Washington.

Why?

"Listen, men grow up on a diet of *Playboy*," a psychologist who treats male sexual inadequacy told me impatiently. "It's really such an obvious question that you're asking . . . it should be obvious to you if you'll think about it, that men respond to something approaching that ideal, physically. Now, put a woman through childbirth and a few things can change. The muscle tone of the torso goes. The breasts can sag, even if they're small. The legs change. And the most serious problem can be prolapse of the uterus. It doesn't add up to a good body. The conditioned response—good body, sexual arousal—doesn't work any more because the body's not there. Doctors miss the point sometimes, because after a while, the problem can become generalized."

Yes, most of his patients were men married for some time, and virtually all had one child or more.

How usual was it for men to lose desire for their wives after their wives had children? "I can only tell you that I'm very busy," he said.

"Sensual" and "maternal" may be two different kinds of femininity, prompting differing masculine responses.

A photographer who free-lances for several major magazines told me the following story: "We were at a friend's house, a bunch of us guys, planning a bachelor party for the boss at (X) magazine. We were at Bob and Madeline's, and somebody said, 'Well, OK, we go to a topless place. We find a topless place. That's all there is to it.' And Madeline was kind of

sitting around taking all this in and not saying much, and she decided to be cute and she said, 'Fine. I'll go along and dance topless for you.'

"Rob really let her have it. He said, 'You know, honey, when we were married, at first, I'd have been jealous at that. But after three kids, you can go ahead and dance topless if you want to. Nobody'd want you.'

"She handled it pretty well. She just said, 'Well, pardon me while I take off my clothes, and we'll see,' acting like it was a joke, and she went and got more ice. But it practically ruined the whole project as far as I was concerned; all I could think of was that she was probably in the kitchen, crying. I really don't understand it. Rob's just not that kind of guy. Or at least he used not to be."

No, probably not. But then Madeline has changed, too. And while I'm not trying to defend her husband's attitude, I'd like to do some thinking about what lies behind it.

His attitude seems selfish and shallow: "You're not pretty anymore, Madeline." But there could be more to it than that. Physical changes usually mean personality changes. And there are several qualities (some frivolous, some of more substance) that are more generally found in physically attractive women. An attractive woman is apt to be confident, and she's apt to be fun. She is easily conversational with men. All of this, and not just the line of the body, can change after children. Judith Viorst has a poem called "Nice Baby," which reads, in part:

"Last year I talked about black humor and the impact of the common market on the European economy and  
Threw clever little cocktail parties in our discerningly eclectic living room . . . and  
Was occasionally hungered after by highly placed men in communications, but  
This year we have a nice baby . . .  
And I talk about nursing versus sterilization

While the men in communications  
Hunger elsewhere . . .”\*

Of course, Mrs. Viorst means to show all this and say that it's mildly bothersome but just *fine*. I'm not so sure it's fine, but she does do a good job of demonstrating some changes that can occur after maternity: a woman's conversation changes; she may talk to women more than men; the men in communications “hunger elsewhere.” That all makes a difference to a husband, I think. It *matters* to him if his wife is attractive to other men; he feels good because this woman that other men are *hungering* after is *his*. Wasn't Rob expressing disappointment that Madeline wouldn't be attractive to his friends any longer?

It's possible that she was no longer as *interesting* to them, either. A girl who's suddenly in a new role (mother) and in a new body (maternal) may be unsure of herself. She may vacillate between super-cool and too-flirtatious (“I'll dance topless for you”) rather than talk naturally with men, from a base of feminine self-confidence.

And while it is true that Rob has not made a transition that is required of fathers, i.e., to appreciate deeper personal qualities rather than the physical, how do we know that Madeline has developed any deeper personal qualities for him to appreciate?

You don't automatically become more of a person when you become less of a sexpot.

In fact, loss of personality and appearance can coincide. Simone de Beauvoir has indicated that an unattractive appearance expresses resentment, is a rejection of a husband. (We are not speaking here of the woman who has lost torso tone and so forth, but of the one who deliberately neglects her appearance.) If Miss de Beauvoir's view is correct—if a wife's loss of beauty means, “I am angry at you, so I will not be a cute young thing anymore”—then husbands are reading an emotional as well as a physical barometer, and

they are correct in withdrawing from it. It is a rejection of them.

It is also a denial of the feminine self. So is a narrowing conversational repertoire. A shift from “black humor . . . the common market . . . the European economy” to “nursing versus sterilization” reflects another way in which the self is less significant. The self has resigned itself to a smaller world and a subservient role and an abandonment of the feminine role, to the extent that interaction with men is limited if one is talking about “nursing versus sterilization.”

Interaction with one's own *husband* can be limited if the talk is only about domestic matters, and if the wife's image is purely domestic. A husband comes home from a diverse, capricious, competitive and somewhat exciting world. It is also a flirtatious world, but there *are* men *and* women in it. Usually the flirtations are innocent. But they are stimulating, flattering to a husband; and they provide a good complement to his own self-image. Entering the home, the sight of wife/mother figure just might not complement his image of himself as much. And I think wives had better realize this.

Some wives would hotly deny that this is the case. They may see motherhood and domesticity as a trap, but a nice one. One article by a *Redbook* reader was called, “Why I Like Feeling Trapped.”

“As a bride, I dreamed of travelling and writing poetry,” the woman wrote. Now, with five children, she tells of the “satisfactions” of “scrubbing the life out of the linoleum, and toiling twelve times every five days up and down three flights of stairs with the laundry . . .”

“My husband understands,” she writes. “My husband understands that I've pushed the baby carriage twenty-five miles. When he comes home, he doesn't expect Jane Fonda . . .”

Oh no?

Oh no?

I think that after a while a difference in relative

\* From *It's Hard to Be Hip over Thirty*.

status makes itself clear to the husband: he's attractive to young, single women; and he's additionally desirable because he's married, and thus appeals to a certain adventurous spirit since he's supposedly "off limits."

Some married men almost project a challenge to these girls: "Can you lure me away from my wife?" The girls often try, these girls who travel and write poetry; and, whether or not they succeed, they gratify the husband's male ego in a way the wife-mother at home no longer can.

But what about the *female* ego of that wife-mother? What is there to bolster it? Is she as attractive as before? (In most cases, no.) Is her husband as attentive as formerly? (Probably not.) Is her work satisfying? (If it were, she would feel better about herself; and the answer to the two prior questions might be yes.) Her work, though, is largely maintenance and endlessly repetitive. It can add to her loneliness. Lederer and Jackson have written that there are many types of loneliness; there is, for one, the loneliness of the person who has a *limited behavioral repertoire*. This is almost certainly the housewife-mother. There should be creative aspects to child-raising; but the fact that so many children grow up so troubled indicates that in most households these creative aspects are overshadowed by minutiae and routine.

It is, all in all, an unsatisfying situation.

And there is a regrettable sort of affair which can grow out of it, as a wife-mother tries to escape the loneliness and reassert her femininity.

Now, I can be talked into the idea that affairs can have a place in today's marriages. It can be pointed out to me that some affairs are innocuous, and some are even positive.

But it seems to me that if an affair is meant to add something to a stable and balanced life pattern, that is one thing. If it is meant to compensate for a *lack* within a life, *that* is quite another thing. I don't think the dynamics of compensation are ever completely healthy; and it seems to me the example of a young mother given in February, 1970 *Philadelphia* maga-

zine is an example, and a typical one, of this latter type of affair.

"Jennifer," says the article, "found herself in the classic position of the young housewife with too many children that she had had too fast, an ambitious husband who was out of the house all the time furthering his career, and a growing sense of hostility and frustration.

"My husband was going to meetings and playing golf and having a ball, and there I was stuck in the house all the time, with nowhere to go, feeling sorry for myself. . . . This was one of my husband's best friends, wouldn't you know?"

(Yes, it usually is someone who knows her husband. Who *else*, in the all-female world of suburbia, is she apt to meet? Except the mailman, the delivery boys . . .)

Summer is a particularly vulnerable time for some women, according to the writer of that *Philadelphia* article: "A wife who's stuck at some summer colony somewhere with a brood of little kids and a gossipy gaggle of other hens while her husband is back in the city can find the vacuum intolerable . . . and maybe fill it if the right lifeguard or waiter or friend's husband comes along . . ."

On stopping to think, I know any number of similarly "vulnerable" young mothers who spend a month of the summer at Ocean City while their husbands commute out from their Baltimore and Washington offices on weekends. "I keep having this daydream," said a girl I questioned, "it's almost a fantasy really. Every morning before the kids wake up, I put on my bathing suit, brush my hair, and go walking along the beach, all alone. Walking, running. I want some man to suddenly appear and start walking along with me, then stop and take off my bathing suit and make love to me right there, on the sand."

Not every young mother would confess to having such thoughts; but how many do?

Another mother confessed to not just the thoughts, but to a pattern of affairs. Every year, the week before the season opens at Ocean City, she takes her

children there; while they're being cared for by a mother's helper, she meets "an old friend." This has been going on, she says, for a number of years. She has affairs with other men, too. "Just about anybody. It's the only excitement I have. I may be married," she said, "I may have children. But I am *not dead*."

Trying to feel alive, still feminine; can an affair built on that motivation be beneficial? Can a summer affair based on boredom ("It's the only excitement in my life") and loneliness really bring any meaningful happiness, any real change in life the other weeks of the year?

There are other unwholesome compensations.

Many wives become superconsumers, or supermothers. Having an unsatisfying inner life, they focus instead on the outer lives of their children, taking them everywhere, buying them everything.

This overspend does *nothing* to build love or closeness. "My job," said a Kansas City mother of five, "is to keep us exactly enough in debt, about \$500 a month, so that Jay can't get any ideas about running around; I keep it so that he can't afford to." But since the husband becomes unable to pay the bills, he has a perfect reason to spend even more time away from home: overtime, a second job, in order to earn more money. The wife counters by increasing her level of spending. Not always does this cycle of combat reach the divorce courts; the couple cannot afford divorce. But it's not a happy situation. The child-centered, overspending mother makes parenthood exclusively *material*, (bikes, sports equipment, records, clothing) and exclusively *maternal*. Parenthood can't be a shared activity when the husband is away from home so much.

It usually isn't, anyway.

The saddest attempted compensation is used by the woman Dr. A. H. Chapman calls "The Baby Machine." The mother feels neglected by the husband. Pregnancy, she remembers, focused her husband's attention on her (for nine months, anyway).

Betty Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique*, tells the story in detail:

"... the woman with two children ... bored and restive in her city apartment, is driven by her sense of futility and emptiness to move, 'for the children's sake,' to a spacious house in the suburbs. The house takes longer to clean, the shopping and gardening and chauffeuring ... are so time-consuming that, for a while, the emptiness seems solved. But when the house is furnished, and the children are in school, and the family's place in the community is settled ... the empty feeling returns, and so she must redecorate the living room, or wax the kitchen floor more often than necessary—or *have another baby*." (Emphasis mine.)

But each successive pregnancy, and child, further entraps her, until finally there is no possibility of joining the husband in his world. She tries instead to restrict his activities to the tightly-drawn domestic circle, too. She creates projects and problems to keep him around the house. (She doesn't call the plumber. She calls her husband's office to tell him about the problem and ask him to come home early. "No, I just couldn't get anybody to come," she lies.)

She nags if he suggests a night out on his own.

She curtails any freedom he used to have on weekends.

She is horrible.

"Before the kids came," an East Coast radio announcer told me, "I used to shoot a round of golf on Saturdays." (He now has eight children.) "May would usually do some shopping, have her hair done. Sundays we'd sleep late, have a pitcher of Bloody Marys in bed, maybe, just relax. Go for a drive, make plans with friends, take in a show, go out for dinner. I never minded going back to work on Monday. The weekends made it all worthwhile. Oh, and we used to take trips, too ..."

"But anyway, once the kids came, it was all different. Suddenly, I wasn't 'supposed' to play golf anymore. I should stay home and fix the hedges. She never worried about the hedges before ... ." (But



there are eight children now, and it *is* "all different.") . . . "Or the rumpus room has to be redone, or the walls washed down, or some damn' thing . . .

"Sundays are a pain. We can't just do what we want anymore. Like it or not, we've got to go someplace 'for the kids,' she says. 'We're going to do *this*, we're going to go *here*,' because it's something the kids haven't seen, you understand.

Some people would argue that there is a higher purpose to this: that sacrificing your own preferences in the raising of children is a noble thing. I don't agree. I think when you give up too much of yourself, you're of not much value to *anybody*, including those you're supposedly sacrificing for—the children.

The announcer was still talking, about the children, about his wife. He was driving me to his house, to meet them. "She used to be a wife," he said. "Now, she's a general, giving orders, directing traffic.

"Kids *change* a woman," he said, in a louder voice. "You know, it's funny. Very funny. I used to love her." He shook his head, smashed out a cigarette in the ashtray of his station wagon. (They have two station wagons.) We turned a corner. "This is the street," he said. "You'll see what I'm talking about."

I nodded. But I had been interviewing for this book for several months. I had seen what he was talking about so often. I was not looking forward to seeing it again.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Escaping the Baby Trap:*

### *Birth Control and Abortion*

"Make love, not more people."

—Sign in a 42nd Street Office in Manhattan

The Clergy Counseling Service of Los Angeles has put out a succinct recipe for avoiding motherhood:

- 1) Say "No," and mean it.
- 2) If Step 1 fails, use a contraceptive.
- 3) If Steps 1 and 2 fail, the very next day see a gynecologist. Tell his receptionist that the matter is confidential and that you must talk to the doctor immediately. Do not take "No" for an answer. Time is of the essence. If you see a doctor immediately, he can give you a "morning after" treatment—a series of hormone pills. If the gynecologist tries to put you off, find another gynecologist the same day.
- 4) If you fail to carry out Steps 1, 2 and 3, and if you miss your period—then consult a gynecologist. If you are pregnant, proceed to Step 5. (If the gynecologist tries to get you to wait until you have missed a second period, you have the wrong gynecologist. Find another one immediately.)
- 5) You now have two realistic options . . .
  - a) Phone Los Angeles Clergy Counseling service at (213) 666-7600. A recorded message will give

you a choice of ministers to call.

b) Write to A.R.A.L., Box 6083, San Francisco, 94101. Enclose \$5.00. The best current information will be sent to you.

Hopefully, by the time this book reaches print, abortion will be easy and open in all states; and that foregoing memo, with its ambiguous references to "options" and "best current information" will seem a quaint reminder of the time when girls had to negotiate a maze of underground channels in order to obtain an abortion.

Quaint though the wording may seem by this time, that CCS memo does a clear job of mapping out the routes circumventing Maternity Highway: Abstinence. Birth control. Morning-after treatment. Abortion.

All of them will work; but only birth control makes much sense.

Total abstinence is fine for twelve-year-olds. Maybe even for seventeen-year-olds. But after a while, "saying 'no' and meaning it" is not very much fun, and not very good for you, either. If you don't believe *that*, read Freud or somebody and find out how a neurotic personality can be traced to sexual repression.

Besides, sexual activity is good for the heart, according to one doctor I talked to recently. (He was not being facetious, by the way.) It would seem that in good-for-you exercise, such as jogging, the idea is to stimulate the heart rate to something like 142 beats per minute. Guess what happens during sex? 148 beats per minute.

But in more total terms, a girl or woman of a reasonable age should be allowed to experience the sensuality of which her body is capable. I'm not arguing for total sexual license. Simply, I think a girl or woman should be free to act on an honest feeling of desire for a man.

Of course the traditional moralists would say that such girls, if unmarried, would be haunted by guilt. I think it's just as possible to be haunted by regret over

what is *not* done as by guilt over what *is* done. In fact, it's *more* possible—and more painful, and more apt to be disruptive of future life. So I have to be strongly against abstinence as a means of birth control. I don't think it's very realistic, and I don't think it's very right.

Simply taking the Pill makes a lot more sense, as far as I'm concerned. It's as easy to take as a vitamin, as automatic to remember as brushing your teeth, and takes a fraction of the time required to slick on your Peach Glacé lip gloss. And the Pill as a method of birth control can maximize sexual pleasure in a number of ways: fear of pregnancy is removed as an inhibiting factor; there is nothing to interfere with the sensations of love-making; there is no interruption of love-play.

And the Pill is safe.

Exhaustive Senate hearings last year showed none of the dangers anybody was looking for in any significant degree. "The hearings did not uncover new dangers in the Pill but merely repeated old stories that the public had heard before and that had been carefully weighed beforehand by responsible medical authorities." That's a statement by Dr. Edward Tyler, a leading gynecologist of national repute, in a June, 1970 *Look* magazine.

What were those "old stories?"

Some dealt with minor side effects. Some girls using the Pill developed symptoms of nausea, nervousness, mood change, breakthrough bleeding, breast enlargement, a slight or temporary weight gain—the symptoms, in other words, of pregnancy. This is not surprising. The Pill, by suppressing ovulation, *can* imitate the effects of pregnancy. In *most* girls who developed the symptoms, though, the cause may have been psychological. With the exception of the change in breast size and sensitivity (which seems to be pretty inevitable), gynecologists have found that when they *suggest* to their patients that there *may* be these side effects, the side effects occur, with predictable regularity. When the side effects are not mentioned, they occur infrequently.

The "old stories" of blood clots and cancer seemed

more serious. But no case of cancer has ever been attributed to the Pill, during the more than *ten years* that the Pill has been in extensive use.

And incidents of irregular blood-clotting in girls using the Pill are as isolated as they are sensationalized. "The risk of blood-clotting irregularities due to the Pill is real," said Dr. Sanford Wolf of the Johns Hopkins Women's Clinic, "and it is *small*. And," he emphasized, "the risks must be compared to the infinitely greater risks of pregnancy."

According to Dr. Arthur J. Samuels, who studied the effects of the Pill on the clotting mechanisms of the blood for four years before publishing his thorough study of hormone contraception, the Pill is safe for normal users. Dr. Alan Guttmacher, Emeritus Professor of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York, considers the Pill an important health tool; and, in Senate subcommittee testimony early last year, he compared distrust of the Pill to distrust of penicillin. A few people react negatively to both drugs; most can benefit.

In fact, according to information provided by Dr. David Shaw of Baltimore's Peoples Free Clinic, a woman who takes the Pill has *more chance* of being alive one year later than her sisters who choose to have a baby or who choose some other form of contraception, assuming a failure rate for other methods.

When other methods fail, you see, pregnancy results.

And it is pregnancy which can be dangerous. It is interesting that the popular press, and particularly the ladies' magazines, journalize about the side effects of the Pill and ignore the side effects of pregnancy. Where are the articles about melanoma during pregnancy? About heart-valve prosthesis occurring during pregnancy? About ovarian lutein cysts associated with pregnancy? Or, for that matter, blood-clotting abnormalities during pregnancy? You have to go to the medical journals to find those articles!

In a 1967 British study—which has no doubt had its unrecorded analogs every year in all countries—death

rates due to oral contraception, abortion and pregnancies were compared:

<i>Cause of Death</i>	<i>Death Rate Per 100,000 Women Age 20-34</i>	<i>Death Rate Per 100,000 Women Age 35-44</i>
Blood clots due to use of oral contraceptives	1.5	3.9
Deaths due to abortion	5.6	10.4
Deaths due to complications of pregnancy and delivery	14.1	40.3
Deaths due to complications of the post-birth period	2.6	9.2

Add that up.

If you are between twenty and thirty-four, you have about twenty-three chances in 100,000 to die if you become pregnant.

And you have one and a half chances in 100,000 to die if you use the Pill.

Dr. Tyler, mentioned earlier, puts the odds even higher: chances of death, he says, are seventeen times greater for pregnancy than for use of oral contraceptives.

"Those Senate hearings," says one rather angry New York gynecologist, "produced a lot of unwanted babies who by all rights should be named after the subcommittee members. They also produced a lot of abortions, and a lot of needless medical risks. And what did they find? Essentially, nothing. The Pill is safe."

Also, as a birth control handbook published by McGill University in Montreal points out:

"... the Pill can be looked at—in its social context. For many women there is no alternative form of contraception that offers the degree of effectiveness, acceptability, and convenience which the Pill offers. Many aspects of social behavior carry a much greater

risk. Tobacco and alcohol, which society demands for its comfort and pleasure, are associated with a very heavy mortality and morbidity, and their consequences constitute a significant part of medical practice. *From the point of view of the health of society, it would be more justifiable to have oral contraceptives in slot machines and restrict the sale of cigarettes to medical prescription.*" (Emphasis mine.)

And, just to add some personal hurrahs for the Pill, an informal survey of dozens of girls (some of whom have been taking various brands ever since those first really high-estrogen jobs came out) shows that not only does the Pill do a grand job of preventing pregnancy, it also improves the figure, the complexion, and the psyche.

Unfortunately, although the Pill is safe; and although more and more doctors, psychologists, lawmakers, and even some moralists and ministers (and certainly we girls involved) prefer the Pill to saying "No," the Pill is not all that readily available.

It isn't in slot machines.

Maybe it should be.

Maybe the Pill should appear right along with such other symbols of the onset of feminine adolescence as the bikini and the mascara wand. Sex, after all, has been popularized to the extent that it's seen as not only *natural*, but *casual*. Contraception simply has to catch up.

Contraception, instead of being regarded as artificial, should *also* be regarded as natural; and casual; and just as right as rain. Or sex. And just casually part of a girl's tote-bag equipment or make-up paraphernalia. (Moralists might look at it this way: the Pill doesn't *have* to imply that a girl plans on a wild sex life any more than car insurance has to indicate that a driver is planning on a lot of auto wrecks.)

There are lots of casual ways the Pill could be distributed. A sixteen-year-old I know thinks there should be a compact of them in every box of Tampax. (Attention: merchandising people at Kimberly-Clark.) Or, they could be distributed where it would really count—as part of the health-service

facilities at high schools and colleges. And that last isn't just a wildly liberal idea of *mine*, by the way. Eda LeShan, author of five books on family life and commentator on the family scene for "Newsfront" of the National Educational Television Network, says, "Birth control information *and resources* should be easily available whenever a teenager wants them—not from his parents but through the school health service or the family doctor." She says that in her book *Sex and Your Teenager*, by the way, and the emphases in the quote are mine.

However, as things stand now, you've got to ask an M.D. or a gynecologist (or a free clinic) for a prescription.

If you're married, there's no problem.

If you're not married, there's no problem, if you *look* old enough to be married, and if you live in a large city, and if you don't mind lying a little when you go to the gyn.

It works like this: when you see the gynecologist, instead of Miss Lynne S. Smith, you are Mrs. Lyle S. Smith. And you wear a ring. After he's examined you and taken your medical history, you tell him the reason for your visit is that you've just gotten married, and you want some sort of oral contraceptive. You get your prescription. And, if you want to be sure to avoid any billing-by-mail mix-up's, simply pay his receptionist as you leave the office. If you want to have the bill sent to you, it's probably OK, too. You've given a name so similar to yours that the mailman will shrug and put the mail for "Mrs. Lyle S. Smith" in your mailbox.

If you're young and not married, though, and if you *look* young and not married, there can be problems.

Some gynecologists can get kind of moral and uppity with you. "I'd rather rely on self-control in girls your age," a gyn. of this breed told a young friend of mine.

The Pope Paul VI Award of the Year to him.

"He'd rather rely on self-control," Jan, who's seventeen, fumed. "What about *me*? And the way he looked at me when he said, 'I'd rather you controlled

yourself,' made it seem like I was intending to sleep with every guy I saw. Self-control. Honestly! I hope that joyless bastard runs into nothing but self-controlled girls at his next medical convention when *he's* not feeling like controlling himself . . ."

Usually, especially around college campuses, there's a kind of grapevine that will help you avoid such gynecologists. And it's important that you do, or you waste between \$10 and \$20; risk some hurt feelings; and *still* have to go to another doctor for your pills. (Unless you can convince one of these guardians of moral standards that you want the pills to stabilize your period or lessen those awful cramps you've been having.)

I should point out, in all fairness, that *many* gynecologists will be sympathetic and understanding; and they will give you the prescription.

Even the doctors at conservative, upper-middle-class Sinai Hospital in Baltimore do not hesitate about the Pill. Sinai runs a limited adolescent birth control clinic and treats about a hundred girls on a continuous basis. (Some of the girls are as young as twelve and thirteen and are sexually active; that's why I say any birth control program that really counts will have to be part of the school system, in some way.) "The Pill is the only kind of contraception we use," Dr. Eugene Kaplan, director of the Sinai program was quoted as saying.

"I give them to my *own* daughter, so I'd certainly not turn down anyone else's, under usual circumstances," said another doctor who works with teenagers.

But if you, in your town, can't find a helpful doctor, then contact Planned Parenthood, which has offices in over 200 major cities, including such unlikely places as Medford, Oregon, and Beaufort, South Carolina. (If you live in a small town, write to a regional Planned Parenthood office—they're in San Francisco, Austin, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and New York—and find out what branch office is closest to you.)

There are also free clinics scattered around. Many

are run by churches and Women's Lib. chapters (No, you don't have to join Women's Lib. or Corner Presbyterian in order to use their clinic; they're just there to help you) and you won't find any uptight conservatism. The free clinics tend to be friendly and informal, and mixed in with anything from political campaigning by telephone to guitar-group tryouts.

One, in a basement of a Georgetown church in Washington, D.C., has its staff names chalked in on a blackboard behind the coffee table (Administrator—Charles; Physicians—Denny, Paul, Craig; VD Counseling—Gina; Pill Counseling—Carol . . .) so you immediately feel you know these people on a first-name basis. And, in a Chicago free clinic, a girl went in for birth control counseling and ended up typing stencils and answering telephones before talking to a counselor. *That's* what I mean by "informal."

The free clinics, by the way, usually treat between 50% and 100% black girls, and this raises another question: one of race and birth control. Birth control is controversial to many blacks, and some would like to reject it altogether with the idea that they can better fight white oppression with an increased black population.

That feeling, though, is by no means unanimous. Some see an increasing black population as oppressive of itself: i.e., oppressive of such qualities as leadership and individuality. Some of the Panthers are scrupulous about bringing their girls in for birth control counseling, according to a Baltimore doctor who works in an inner-city clinic.

And, in a nationally distributed position paper, Patricia Haden, Sue Rudolph, Joyce Hoyt, Rita van Lew, Catherine Hoyt, and Patricia Robinson, signing themselves "Poor Black Women," say the following:

"Brothers . . . Poor black sisters decide for themselves whether to have a baby or not . . . If we take the pills or practice birth control in other ways, it's because of poor black men. Now here's how it is. Poor black men won't support their families, won't stick by their women . . . Poor



black women would be fools to sit in the house with a whole lot of children and eventually go crazy, sick, heartbroken, no place to go, no sign of affection, nothing . . . So when whitey put out the pill and poor black sisters spread the word, we saw how simple it was not to be a fool any more . . . For us, birth control is freedom . . . Having too many babies stops us from supporting our children, stops us from teaching them the truth."

That letter, distributed through various sources, including some Women's Lib. chapters, is a strong endorsement of the Pill as beneficial to the black girl's struggle for identity, beauty, and dignity in her life.

Their letter does not emphasize methods of birth control other than the Pill, and I haven't either, because the other usual methods have those things called "failure rates." Intra-uterine devices, in present form, can be expelled, particularly in women who have not had children; diaphragms can slip; condoms can break; vaginal foams and jellies are not anything most lovers want to bother with at bedtime; rhythm is ridiculous (fewer than 30% of all women have regular enough cycles to give rhythm a *chance* of working); and having the man withdraw himself before climax spoils everything. (It can also leave you pregnant. One or more drops of semen can be released before orgasm. And that's all it takes.)

But some other methods should be mentioned. My high enthusiasm for the Pill, and the evidence of its safety, are irrelevant to you if you are one of the few who should not take it. It might also be mentioned that if you are wary of the Pill, *that in itself* can produce minor side effects (notably nausea and headaches) and you should consider other methods of contraception.

As one birth control book notes, *any* method is better than *no* method; and two methods combined are better than one. Although rhythm by itself is rather hopeless, a fitted diaphragm—plus rhythm—compares in effectiveness to the Pill. The fitting

procedure takes only a few minutes in a gynecologist's office. It is simple, and it is essential—since, unless this cervical cap is fitted precisely, it can slip out of place during strenuous love-making.

Mary S. Calderone's *Manual of Contraceptive Practice* rates the condom fairly high in effectiveness. Keep the following things in mind, though:

1. For maximum effectiveness, combine use of a condom with rhythm.
  2. Be *sure* the man is wearing one.
  3. Be sure he has taken it from a small foil or cardboard package, *not* unwrapped from a wallet or billfold. (That's because rubbing against other things in a wallet can weaken the latex material.)
  4. Don't put vaseline on the condom; fatty substances cause rubber to deteriorate. Some condoms, though, come pre-lubricated in a foil package. And that's OK; they're lubricated with a nonfatty substance.
  5. You put the condom on him as part of the sexual foreplay; that way there's no awkward break in mood. (And besides, that way you *know* he's got it on.)
  6. *Never* use the same condom more than once.
- There are other economies.

Now, of course, condoms can break once in a while. But since a condom is worn externally, you can examine it afterwards. If there's a failure, you know about it. And the advantage of that knowledge is that you can get a "morning after" treatment the next day.

But this "morning after" business isn't quite as simple as it may sound. You don't, unfortunately, toss down a pill with your glass of orange juice, and that's that. You've got to look up a gynecologist and get a prescription for some high-voltage hormones that you will take for five days. These prevent implantation of the fertilized egg in the uterus, and they bring on your period—whether or not you had conceived. This treatment, by the way, is legal in all

states. It is just on the right side of the borderline between birth control and abortion.

But if there is a chance you've conceived, go get these five-day wonders. The cost isn't much: the regular cost of an office visit, plus a few dollars for the pills. This is infinitely easier than abortion; though, because there'll be some mild complications (like, you have to take a morning off from school or work), you shouldn't count on "morning after" treatments as your regular means of contraception.

Finally, if birth control has been neglected or has failed; and if the morning after has passed; there is the option of abortion.

Abortion is a simple operation, and hopefully by the time of this publication, it will also be simple to obtain—i.e., *legal*—in all states. At this writing, though, laws vary. The California abortion laws are liberal (98% of women can qualify under the mental health clause in the state law; and you can contact California Abortion Counseling Service, Box 73260, Los Angeles, for information; or phone Clergy Counseling Service, mentioned at the first of this chapter.) That's if you live in or around California.

For those in the East, the good news is that abortion is fully legal in New York State, and an abortion can be obtained with some ease. You can call a hospital directly and ask for their abortion or pregnancy interruption service. You'll be given a date for a preliminary appointment, and you'll have your operation about a week after that.

If you have any problems getting an appointment, there are two agencies that will help you free of charge: Family Planning Information Service, 300 Park Avenue South; and the Women's Abortion Project, 36 West 22nd St. These agencies can be useful in cutting through procedural snarls, and the Women's Abortion Project keeps costs as low as possible and actually arranges abortions, not just referrals.

That's New York.

And, abortions are on demand, no-strings-attached in Hawaii, but only if you *live* in Hawaii. Otherwise, there's a tricky, 3-month residency requirement. And

*that* means that to obtain an abortion you'd have to pack a bikini and move to the sunny state the day after the night you think you became pregnant; get a 90-day tan; and a just-under-the-wire abortion.

Laws to legalize abortion are pending in lots of states, though, so I guess it gets down to this: if you're pregnant and abortion is legal in your state, fine. If not, get a few hundred dollars together somehow and go to New York or California. There, if you work through the agencies mentioned, things should be fairly easy for you.

Just by way of historical sidelight, abortion has always been easy for girls with money. It has even been quite enjoyable, when combined with travel. Puerto Rico and Mexico were always popular during the winter. One chic Manhattanite accompanied her husband and their friends to their respective suites at the Caribe Hilton in San Juan a few Januarys ago; she missed just one day at the pool while she had her abortion nearby. (Her husband was, it must be admitted, slightly upset. "She forgets one pill, and it costs me hundreds," he pouted. But she, his wife, was pretty. And this inconvenience was merely that: an inconvenience, and not a catastrophe.)

For those who find Eastern Europe intriguing, Bulgaria and Hungary offer inexpensive, and quite safe, abortions-on-demand.

So does Israel.

And England is a real favorite because there is no language problem; it isn't necessary to traipse to Berlitz to learn to say, "I would like a private room, not a semiprivate room," in Bulgarian or Japanese. (Yes, Japan was popular, too, especially during its World's Fair.)

Abortion, like most things, was and is easy—and on occasion fun—for the rich.

But most girls who get pregnant and don't *want* to be are not rich. They do not have the easy money, or, for that matter, the easy morality that's not uncharacteristic of the rich. They agonize over the decision, and over the money. Many of them give birth to an unwanted child, or risk an abortion performed by

unskilled hands, perhaps their own.

Their reasons vary.

Many girls and women do not understand the operation itself.

In the future there will almost certainly be instant abortions via pills or vaginal injection. But presently, according to Dr. Alan Guttmacher's *Birth Control and Love*, there are four medical techniques which are commonly used:

1. Dilatation and curettage (D. and C.) with anesthesia. If duration of pregnancy is less than three months, the type of operation usually selected to cause abortion is the D. and C. The doctor first gradually widens the cervix (the opening of the uterus) by passing a series of gradually larger dilators into the cervix. (That's the dilatation part of the operation.) Then, with a surgical curette, the uterine lining that contains the embryo is loosened and removed. Dilatation and curettage involves no cutting of any body tissues.

2) Vacuum aspiration.

The doctor inserts, through the cervix, to the top of the uterus, a very narrow, sterile, hollow tube with a single window-like opening near its tip. This tube, called an aspirator, is connected to a suction bottle. A small suction pump operates as the aspirator is passed around the uterine cavity. The internal lining of the uterus is gently pulled away, and flows through the aspirator and into the suction bottle. This operation is simple and rapid, usually taking less than ten minutes for a skilled physician to perform.

3) Minute Cesarean section (for pregnancies advanced beyond three months).

By the time a woman is three months pregnant, the fetus is too large to be removed through a partially widened cervix. If an abortion is absolutely necessary after this three-month point, the fetus is removed from the womb, as in a Cesarean birth, with cutting of both the abdominal and

uterine walls. A stay in the hospital is necessary for this.

4) New method.

In 1960, a new technique was introduced for aborting pregnancies between the fourteenth and twenty-second week. A small area of skin is locally anesthetized below the navel. A needle is thrust through the abdominal wall into the cavity of the uterus. The amniotic fluid which surrounds the fetus is withdrawn and is replaced with a solution which will induce a spontaneous abortion in twenty to twenty-five hours.

With this method, too, you'll spend a night or so in the hospital.

Those are the four most usual means of abortion, all of which are completely safe when performed by qualified physicians.

But that's another hangup. If abortion isn't all that acceptable where you live, how do you *find* those physicians?

Please start with this thought in mind: wherever you live, *there is someone who will help you!* It may take you a few days, but you can find him.

In every large or medium-sized city there are perhaps a dozen doctors (and perhaps many more than that) who will perform safe abortions.

Other doctors in that city, who do not do abortions, still *know* which of their colleagues do. Pregnant women, looking for medical abortionists, usually find one by asking several doctors.

Usually it takes only three or four attempts.

Very often, too, medical students, interns, or social workers employed in hospital clinics are prepared to refer you to doctors who perform safe abortions.

In some cities, there are still organized referral services, such as the Clergy Consultation Service. Now, there's only one thing about phoning the CCS: their lines are nearly always busy. Try very late at night or early in the morning, and have a pencil and paper handy. You'll probably get a recording telling you the names and phone numbers of several minis-

ters. *Then* you call the minister of your preferred faith for direct referral to a suitable doctor.

In addition, the same sources that provide birth control services can sometimes aid in abortion referral—that is, Planned Parenthood (not *all* offices, but some) Women's Liberation chapters, etc.

And, during 1971, a unique abortion referral service was begun by one chapter of Zero Population Growth. From anywhere in the country, you can simply dial Libby Smith at (415) 398-6222. When Libby or an assistant answers the phone, tell her your name and address. In Libby's office is a shared-time computer, the Abortion Information Data Bank. When given your name and address, AID responds with a print-out of the physicians closest to you who can help you. Libby will mail this print-out to you; in return, a \$5 donation is requested.

Excellent information about abortion is also to be found in the Pinnacle paperback **EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ABORTION**, by David Hendin.

Some women who know very well *where* to get an abortion are deterred by moral considerations.

But New York's Reverend Howard Moody, who founded the Clergy Counseling Service, points out that the history of anti-abortion attitudes in the Protestant church is rooted in hostility, not reverence. The Calvinist attitude, for instance, was downright vindictive. Calvinists believed that if an unmarried girl became pregnant she must be punished. Her rightful punishment was to carry before the world the permanent mark of her fall: a child.

Surely we're capable of more humane attitudes today, Reverend Moody argues.

His organization, by the way, has saved many girls from being forced to bear unwanted children. CCS offices have been known to provide everything from low-cost psychiatric examinations (in states where *those* are still prerequisite to abortion) to a list of approved Puerto Rican clinics.

Reverend Moody also speaks of the theological bases of the Catholic position:

"Some priests and bishops would have us believe that abortion (therapeutic or otherwise) is a mortal sin growing out of 'natural law' doctrine; but those who know Catholic dogma can testify that far from being 'natural law' as old as creation, it only became dogma in the past hundred years with the interpretation of Pope Pius IX in 1869."

For that matter, a *Catholic* priest who quietly gives birth control and abortion counseling, and who understandably prefers to remain anonymous, had this to say:

"I do not believe that the soul enters the body until that body is capable of independent being, until birth. Abortion is not, therefore, synonymous with murder."

A colleague from the same diocese adds:

"Even assuming that instant animation does occur and that abortion is therefore technically, and I emphasize 'technically,' murder . . . I strongly state that murder comes in many forms. An unwanted child can be slowly murdered. In an overcrowded world, those born into it can murder each other—by lack of respect, absence of dignity.

"Now, certainly the boy who has irresponsibly been the cause of a girl's pregnancy has committed a grave sin. It is my opinion that the girl who removes herself from that dilemma by abortion sins *less* than the girl who would bear a child into frightened, confused, or uncertain and unloving circumstances."

*That's* from a Catholic priest.

It might also be appropriate to remember that this doctrine of fetal life ("instant animation") was only announced in 1869. It therefore depends on yet another disputable idea: papal infallibility, or the idea that the Pope can't make a mistake. Increasing numbers of Catholic theologians are questioning that idea, too. (And, of course, the same liberalization of thought is occurring, among Catholic clergy *and* Catholic couples, regarding the issue of birth control.)

Meanwhile, for women of Catholic, Protestant, or

Jewish faiths, the fact that there have been, for years, *clergymen's* counseling and abortion referral services should be reassuring.

And, just to complete the survey of religious beliefs, eloquent testimony before the Governor of Maryland during the abortion hearings here brought out that: in Mohammedan lands, it is the Islamic belief that life begins in the fetus only after 150 days; neither Buddhist nor Hindu theology contains any scriptural prohibition against early abortion; and the Shintu faith holds that a child becomes a human being only when it has seen the light of day.

The balance of theological thought, then, throughout history and including today, has not been weighted against abortion.

There is, of course, the expense.

Abortions cost money. And there are few things that vary more in cost. A physician performing an abortion may charge \$150, or twice that. With a private physician and hospital, rather than outpatient, care, it can cost as much as \$700. But though it's possible to pay more, \$700 is really a high price for an abortion.

What about the cost of *childbirth*? An extremely low estimate for that is \$1000. In fact, that's unrealistically low. A year ago, a major women's magazine estimated \$1626 as the average cost of having a baby. (For that kind of money, you could have a week-long, abortion-in-England vacation, including first-class plane fare, private hospital room, and theater tickets every night.)

But money is an essentially middle-class reason for demurring from abortion. In the low-income areas of any city, an abortion is available for \$35. Or \$20. Or even \$5. Usually, these cheap abortionists use a crude version of the D. and C. or the vacuum method. But listen. Lacking the precise instruments the hospital uses for the D. and C., the \$5 and \$10 operators may insert: knitting needles, coat hangers, slippery elm bark, chopsticks, ballpoint pens, artists' paintbrushes, curtain rods, pencils, or even telephone wire. And the walls of the uterus may be punctured by these

instruments. Death, from infection, hemorrhage, or shock, may occur.

And as far as the vacuum method is concerned, don't get the idea that you can just modify a vacuum cleaner. That aspirator they use at the hospital is precisely modified to have just the slight degree of suction necessary to remove the uterine lining. A vacuum-cleaner arrangement might remove the entire uterus! Again, death from infection or hemorrhage could occur.

It's easy to understand that the death rates for these five-and-dime abortions are rather high. Like, about 100 deaths per 100,000 operations.

Now, I talked recently with a woman who does \$40 abortions. She argues with me that that figure is due to a very few quacks and incompetents, and that she has been performing abortions, mainly on poor teenagers and older women, for nearly ten years without a single accident. She further argues that she's providing a needed service, and that being an abortionist—or midwife, as she prefers to call herself—is a respectable occupation, at least as much so as a nurse.

And, even as I was writing this chapter, I heard of a lady abortionist, a farm wife, who has also been performing cheap abortions for quite a few years, with (supposedly) no fatalities.

It's still not a good idea.

But because thousands of women still go to obscure corners of the city every month (due, no doubt to a combination of expensive and busily reluctant doctors, crowded and bureaucratic hospitals, and just plain red tape) I just want to say this: *if* you go to a non-medical abortionist (DON'T. But if you do . . .) find out for damned sure that this person has been performing successful abortions for a long time!

Keep talking. Keep talking to the people who told you about this abortionist in the first place. Keep asking, "And who else? And who else?" And then look up *those* people.

Follow up on these stories by getting in touch with as many girls as possible who've had abortions by the person you're thinking of going to. If there are any



scary stories, that way you'll hear about them. If you hear nothing but, "She knows what she's doing; don't worry," then maybe she does know what she's doing.

But I would worry. I'd worry to the extent of going to a hospital immediately afterward, even if you live in a state where abortion isn't yet acceptable.

Go to the emergency room.

Say, "I think I'm bleeding inside and I'm frightened." And say no more than that until you see a doctor. He is required by law, now, to help you, and if something did go wrong during your abortion, it can be dealt with now.

But, just one more time: don't go to a non-medical person in the first place. I *know* it's easier, if you live in the inner city, than going through the hospital rigamarole. But the agencies like Planned Parenthood, CCS, and the free clinics are all set up to kind of act as a buffer between you and the hospital so that you have as little hassle as possible. And going to the hospital is a *lot* safer. (And if you go someplace other than a hospital to start with, you just might end up there anyway. Clear?)

It must sound, after all this, like I am in favor of abortions, at least physician-performed abortions.

Not really.

I don't care how legal or how easy they are; it is still *easier* NOT to need one. I don't care if an abortion is as simple as having a tooth pulled. Even so, I'd still rather spend my lunch hour somewhere else than in a dentist's chair.

I think birth control is a grand idea; but abortion? Well, why not just use the Pill and avoid the need for it?

Of course there are various methods of birth control that differ from the Pill, in that they are permanent.

There are five different kinds of female sterilization, to begin with:

*oophorectomy* (removal of ovaries)

*hysterectomy* (removal of womb or uterus)

*salpingectomy* (removal of Fallopian tubes)

*tubal ligation* (simply tying off of Fallopian tubes)

*laparoscopy* (tying off of Fallopian tubes by use of a laparoscope, or "light pipe")

The first three methods, though completely safe, are not such a good idea. They have side effects; and following the operation, you have to take female hormones, because they're not produced automatically anymore.

Tubal ligation and laparoscopy are easier, generally inexpensive, and followed by no worries and full femininity. With both tubal ligation and laparoscopy, you leave the hospital within twenty-four hours; and a few doctors are beginning to perform the operation on an out-patient basis.

However, although these two operations are simple to perform, it can be difficult to get appointments for them.

There's no good reason why; but, evidently because they are related to sexual functioning and the avoidance of procreation, they activate latent Puritanism in some hospital staffs, who may fear the censure of the community as a whole at fund-raising time.

Many clinics and physicians have unspoken "quotas" for tubal ligations and laparoscopies—say, fifty a year, or one a week. More than that, they figure, won't look good.

They may operate according to a so-called "Rule of 120" in order to hold down the number of these female operations that are performed. The 120 rule works like this: Multiply the woman's age times the number of children she has. If the resulting figure is 120 or more, she can have her operation.

A friend of mine, a woman who will be thirty next month and who has two children, would like to have one, but has not been able to arrange it. Thirty times two is sixty, not 120. When she's sixty, she can have her laparoscopy, according to that rule.

And when I'm 120, I can have mine.

However, this is beginning to change, as I'm beginning to find out, thanks in no small measure to the Association for Voluntary Sterilization, 14 West 40th Street, New York. I had a very enlightening talk with

Mr. John R. Rague, Executive Director of AVS, and it seems that any couples wanting to be assured of childlessness will find it much easier from now on.

For example: in at least thirty-four states, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, as well as state Medicaid programs, pay for voluntary sterilization.

Also: a new Department of Defense policy makes voluntary sterilization more freely available to military personnel and dependents.

And: if you have trouble finding a physician to perform the operation, you can just write to AVS in New York. They have a roster of over 1600 experienced physicians, in all states.

Just by way of a statistic, there will be about 100,000 voluntary sterilizations in the U.S. this year, bringing the total to well over two million.

The male operation, vasectomy, is increasing fastest in popularity. Until recent years, more women than men sought the operation (it was they, after all, who were closest to the burden of childbearing). But the female operations are more delicate and costly than vasectomy.

In vasectomy, a small segment is removed from each of the two tubes called the vas deferens, which carry the sperm to the testicles. The ends of the tubes are then tied off, so that sperm cells are not in the semen that is ejaculated during love-making—and, the man cannot make a woman pregnant. No widely used form of male or female sterilization involves the removal of any gland or organ; it just seals off certain passageways which normally bring sperm and ovum together.\*

A vasectomy takes fifteen or twenty minutes. And it's becoming increasingly popular. AVS and many urologists are swamped with requests. One physician compares the wave of popularity of the vasectomy to the sudden and dramatic upsurge in the use of the Pill about ten years ago.

And its effects on sexuality are similar. The Pill, by

\* 10% of vasectomies arranged through AVS referrals in early 1970 were requested by men in their early 20's.

freeing hundreds of thousands of women from fear of pregnancy, made these girls and women wildly sexy. Female sterilization, too, increases a woman's sexuality; and vasectomy releases all a man's virility.

Arthur Godfrey and Paul Ehrlich are among well-known men who, having had vasectomies themselves, are enthusiastic about endorsing the operation. Though they don't come right out and say that one of the benefits is increased sexual enjoyment, others do. When I talked to men who'd had the operation, I found enthusiasm bordering on the evangelical—and *that* was the reason!

To give a little scientific grounding to this reaction: Judson T. Landis, way back in 1965, reported that a questionnaire study was made of 330 couples who had chosen vasectomy as a means of birth control. The respondents reported great improvement in their sex lives following the operation; also, for the entire group, *frequency* of intercourse tended to be stepped up. (That article was in February, 1965, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, in case you're interested in more details.)

Now, the vasectomies referred to in this and some other of the older surveys had been performed on middle-aged men whose wives had already had children.

But Mr. Rague, at AVS, stresses that there is a similar intensity of sexuality when younger men\* who have *not* fathered children have vasectomies. Their follow-up studies at AVS are very thorough, and show, in fact, that the popularity of the vasectomy may be increasing most among younger men. The basic reason why a man becomes unrestrained sexually, following the operation, is that the fear of impregnating a woman is gone. But to young men who are aware and concerned about the world population as well as their own personal lives, a double fear is removed.

By the way, vasectomy and tubal ligation are usually reversible operations. That is, should you change your mind, you can, well, change your mind.

But the rates of reversibility far outweigh the

requests for reversal. For example, studies have shown up to 90% reversibility for men, and 65% for women.

How many men who have had vasectomies have requested reversal? Less than *one* per cent. Requests for reversal from women are slightly higher, but still very, very slight.

Indicating that after most couples *do* escape the baby trap, they like it.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Beyond the Baby Trap:*

### *Coping with the Culture*

*"And when are you going to start your family?"*

*"You live in a Disneyland. When are you going to grow up and settle down?"*

*"Lucy has three children; why don't you?"*

Escaping the baby trap, physically, is as easy as taking the Pill.

But there are more subtle factors operating psychologically, factors that can weaken your *will* about the Pill, factors that can undermine your confidence in the rightness of your decision not to have children. There are pressures that can make you feel isolated, different, even guilty, because you're childless. Pressures that can tempt you to think, "Oh, it'd be so much easier just to go ahead and *get* pregnant, just like everybody else. Then maybe people would stop hammering at me." Pressures that can accumulate and be responsible for that "forgotten" Pill, that subconscious "mistake."

You see, there's a pretty widespread social expectation of childbearing that Mark Flapan and Nathaniel Branden, among others, have spoken of.

"The great value of advancing civilization," according to Nathaniel Branden, "is that we have more and more choices over how we will live our lives, rather than fewer and fewer. And yet in the most crucial and potentially life-denying decision, i.e., whether or not to bear children, most people assume that they

have no choice at all. Most people proceed to have children because they accept the notion that they are *supposed to*."

And Mark Flapan, in a 1969 medical journal, says, "Although women are increasingly free to choose alternatives to motherhood as a way of life, women who entertain the possibility of remaining childless become keenly aware of the social expectation of childbearing . . ."

He's putting it rather mildly.

Bill and I have, for six years, found ourselves subjected to all the pressures I've mentioned in previous chapters, but aimed straight *at us* by a variety of social sharpshooters. You'll probably find it that way, too, for a while, anyway, and especially in smaller communities.

As time goes on, it will be easier. When a variety of organizations, such as Zero Population Growth, have successfully questioned our national preoccupation with reproduction; and when lots of couples in Dubuque and Peoria as well as in New York, Miami, and L.A. have realized that when you stop breeding you have more fun; then maybe we'll have a new and valid cultural perspective about children.

And it will not be up to us, the childless couples, to justify our remaining childless. Rather, it will be the responsibility of those who feel they want to have children to justify themselves!

But for now, you've got to cope with an environment that's heavy with baby influences, a culture that expects you to trade the swimming pool for the car pool, the bikini for maternity garb.

In casual conversations, most people let you know that it's just *assumed* that your childlessness is temporary. They *assume* you'll get yourself in a "delicate condition" eventually, and they're not always delicate about asking about it.

"When are you going to start your family?" asks Aunt Helen (*and just about everybody else in the world*.)

I was always annoyed by the question. Always. Even before Bill and I had definitely dismissed the

possibility of children, it seemed to me that people, asking about such a profound influence on the rest of your life, should allow you a decision beyond mere timing. The question (and please take note, all Aunt Helens) should not be, "When are you going to start your family?" but "*Are you planning to have a family?*"

There should be a choice, an option.

Even though you, too, have a perfect right to be annoyed by the question, you cannot always dismiss the questioner with a flip one-liner.

Oh, once in a while you can.

For example, you run into Frayna Loeb, a former roommate you never could stand, at a downtown department store. She hushes her four-year-old with a sharp slap on the hand; complains that her five-year-old has ("without permission, you bad boy, Johnny") asked some little friends over for the afternoon so she has to run home quick to fix peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches; adjusts her one-year-old in the Toddler Tote, saying "Thank goodness this one isn't quite old enough to socialize yet"; then breaks off, looks at you hard, and simps: "And what about you and Bill? Don't *you* have any children yet?"

OK. Indulge yourself.

"Of course not. We're too smart for that." Or, "Never! We're having too much fun!" And dash off to meet your husband for lunch.

You and your husband can also use one-liners with casual acquaintances and at cocktail parties.

Examples:

*Question:* What's the matter? No kids yet? Don't you like children?

*Response:* Yes. Other people's. And on occasion.  
*or:* Yes. And we want to keep *on* liking children.

\* \* \*

*Comment:* Lucy and Harry have three children.

*Response:* Yes, Lucy and Harry *do* have their problems.

\* \* \*

*Question:* No children. But what do you *do*?

*Response:* I'm a wife, companion, mistress, social director, planner of menus and reviewer of books for the two of us, volunteer worker for the Sierra Club and . . . (insert job description or additional information).

\* \* \*

*Question:* Well, you should have children. We all have the right to replace ourselves, don't we?

*Response:* Of course not. We don't, in all probability, have the right to be here ourselves.

\* \* \*

*Comment:* But children are our greatest national resource.

*Response:* At latest count, this "greatest national resource" was found to amount to between sixty-five and seventy million children under the age of 14. Perhaps that is enough.

\* \* \*

*Comment:* My husband and I really find a lot of joy in our children.

*Response:* My husband and I really find a lot of joy in each other.

\* \* \*

*Comment:* You won't have anybody to take care of when you're old.

*Response:* Neither will you, I'm afraid. Children don't very often take care of old parents.

\* \* \*

(Richard J. Margolis reports in the January 10, 1972, NEW LEADER, "We continue to discover 'new' poverty victims like the elderly Jews of New York, whom we had thought were being cared for by their children in Scarsdale.")

\* \* \*

*Question:* Don't you believe in giving life?

*Response:* I believe in *living* life.

\* \* \*

*Comment:* Every real woman wants children.

*Response:* (smile) Every real woman wants a man. (If talking to a woman, I follow this one up by glancing in the direction of her husband.)

\* \* \*

*Comment:* There's something a bit unnatural about not having children.

*Response:* No, there's something a bit unnatural about (choose one:) electricity; cars; clothing; telephones; typewriters; ties; shoes; chlorine; canned or frozen foods; the SST; that nailpolish you're wearing; that tie you have on.

\* \* \*

*Comment:* You two really have a sublimated desire for children. After all, you have dogs.

*Response:* No, you have a sublimated desire for dogs. You, after all, have children.

\* \* \*

But that's for parties.

What do you do about your *aunt*, though, who nursed your whole family through double pneumonia when you were six, and took you to New York for your fourteenth birthday, and loaned you an antique



brooch to wear to your junior prom, and who is just *living* for the day you'll tell her, "I'm expecting."

And what about your husband's boss, who's terribly nice to both you and Bill, has taken you out to dinner, given Bill extra days off on your anniversaries, and who thinks, since you and Bill are the finest young people he knows, that it would be a goshawful shame not to reproduce yourselves?

And what about your friends who have children and are suddenly talking of babythings and looking at you funnily?

And what about your parents who feel they have a "right" to grandchildren?

These people can't be put off with one-liners.

You either have to carry on a delicate and elaborate charade ("Well, nothing's happened yet,") or you have to *explain* somehow. The explanations are more difficult than the charade, but let's try them:

#### CASE #1—AUNT HELEN

She's typical of the high-minded people who think large families are religiously ordained. To her, childlessness is pitiful, if not immoral. (Of course, she never married, so she escaped the realities and is able to continue to view children as ideal.) She draws her attitude, she says, from the Bible. "Be fruitful, and multiply . . ." is the quote she uses.

Now, even if your reason for being childless is simple preference, I would suggest being able to meet Aunt Helen on her own grounds: biblical. Even if you're not basing your decision on the Bible, there's no reason you can't use it to *justify* your decision.

You might point out that the Bible is also concerned with soil conservation, kindness to animals, and preservation of trees; and that fruitfully multiplying human beings interfere with all of these.

Overpopulation interferes with soil conservation. "Every seventh year shall be a sabbath unto the land . . . a year of rest unto the land," says Leviticus, Chapter 25. Try *that* in a crowded country! Today,

nations give the land little rest; instead, the land is polluted with the immensity of human wastes that are the by-products of an enormous population.

Kindness to animals does not mean giving a pet puppy or kitten to a five-year-old. It means, biblically, allowing those creatures which God or Nature created to live.

Human overpopulation kills animals.

"Only moments ago in biological time," (*Time*, June 8, 1970) "the earth abounded with a myriad of animals, reptiles and fish . . . But since 1600 when the first precise records were compiled, man has butchered creatures ranging from the abalone to the blue whale and the zebra. During the past 150 years . . . the rate of extermination of mammals has increased fifty-five-fold. If the killing goes on at this pace, in about thirty years all of the remaining species of mammals will be gone . . ."

The rather scary "red data book" of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources lists 835 (!) species that are on the brink of disappearing forever.

Preservation of trees is quite clearly ordered in a number of biblical books, Deuteronomy, Chapter 20, for example: "When thou shalt besiege a city . . . thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof . . . for the tree of the field is man's life."

Dean L. Harold de Wolf of Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., holds that God sanctified not only humanity but the whole fabric of life ("for the tree of the field is man's life . . .")

Man, by being *too* fruitful, is threatening the warp of that fabric.

And as we destroy wildlife by cutting down its forests, and as we efficiently slaughter trees both by chainsaw and sulfur dioxide, and as we build our "good for children" housing projects with cancerous speed on the cleared land, we might ponder something else the Bible says:

"Shame on you! you who add house to house  
and join field to field,  
until not an acre remains,  
and you are left to dwell alone in the land."

That's from Isaiah. Chapter 5, I think.

Human beings, left to dwell alone in the land, having driven out all other creatures to make room for their swelling numbers. That's what's being said "Shame!" to. And it's not just a matter of shame, but of suicide. For the things on this planet are linked, one to the other. Destroying a *part* can destroy *all*.

Why are some of us so interested in birds and wildlife? Quite apart from a John Muirian appreciation of them for themselves, there is also a selfish concern. What happens to them happens to us. Why are some of us so interested in the trees? Because when "sulfur dioxide poisoning" goes on the death certificate of two-thirds of California's ponderosa pines, we can't help wondering: when will the first hospital write those three words on a human death certificate?

Sulfur dioxide is an industrial by-product; and industrialization is a by-product of burgeoning human numbers.

Now, that's a long speech to give somebody who's simply said, "Be fruitful and multiply . . ." to you. But you can select some points from it.

Or you might try interpreting "Cast your bread upon the waters, and it shall return a thousandfold," for Aunt Helen. Bread is a food. Fine. Cast upon waters, it returns, multiplied and re-formed, as food from the sea.

But what if, instead of bread, we cast upon and into our waters: pollutions, pesticides, oil, the solid sump of a thousand thousand industries, mountainous human wastes. This, too, returns to us, as banks of reeking fish, killed beds of undersea plants, oil-soaked and screaming birds, death squared, death times death.

And of course those wastes, too, result from overabundant human life.

There's one more argument, a friend reminds me, that can come from a well-meaning aunt: "If God had intended for you not to have children, you'd have been born with contraceptives. But you weren't. So you're going against God and against Nature."

Well, you see, God and Nature may have intended for some of us to have children, for many children to be born . . . but let's not stop there: *it was also intended for many of the children born to die.*

We've messed with that being-born-and-dying system. We've given ourselves Pasteur and penicillin, vitamins, antibiotics, and heart transplants. We have ingenious systems for completely replacing the blood of some defective newborns and for turning around the skin on children who are born inside out. (Yes, that happens once in a while; the condition is known as gastroschisis.)

And that's not what God intended either.

What was intended was for there to be a *balance*.

And it's to keep things in balance, Aunt Helen, that some of us prefer not to have children.

Maybe you've never even thought of having such a conversation. It does take nerve. We get used to answering the Aunt Helen's in our lives with soft excuses. But a candid talk can be gratifying. Aunt Helen, once we explain our feelings, may even understand. But *unless* we explain, we can't expect her to. After all, when she was growing up, people didn't *realize* what they were doing. Facts about the population explosion and its consequences weren't common currency then. And other options for living just weren't there.

Now, with people who are capable of providing greater pressure than Aunt Helen, like friends your own age who have children, you *can* use some variation of the ecological or personal argument—sometimes.

Or, there are some dodges you can use when Sheila and Mike come over.

## CASE #2—SHEILA AND MIKE

Mike shows off snapshots of Mike, Jr., when he's not showing off Mike, Jr., in person. And Sheila talks about nothing but motherhood, Mike, Jr., and the new baby, Juliette.

Your husband can counter the snapshot-showing Mike's doing by simply producing something else. Snapshots of the two of *you* are ideal. Or, he can simply say, "Hey, that reminds me, I had something I wanted to show *you*," and that "something" can be anything, related or unrelated: book, record, magazine article, latest *New Yorker* cover, notes on a project at work.

Your conversation with Sheila may be a bit more complicated but you can use the same sort of parry. When Sheila says something like, "I was never so happy as when I was pregnant," you can say, "I was never so happy as last night . . ." (and tell her whatever it was you did last night.)

The Sheila's of our acquaintance won't always let us get away with this, though. They often take the subject *back* to pregnancy and even say, "Well, gee, why don't you have a baby?" Continue the cop-out: "Oh, Sheila, we're just so busy as it is . . ." and continue your recital of activities.

Why avoid an open, honest discussion with Sheila and Mike?

Because they—especially Sheila—are pressuring you a bit. And people who pressure you are probably acting.

"Many of the people who *urge* [emphasis mine] married couples to have children and try to make them feel guilty if they do not, are resentful of the freedom and enjoyment of life shown by childless couples. 'I'm tied down with a life I dislike because of my having a family; why shouldn't you be likewise?' is what is unconsciously being thought by some of the people who are overtly saying, 'Nothing like kids to make life worthwhile; you shouldn't be without them.'"

That's Albert Ellis talking there, not me, by the way.

If Sheila and Mike really make a big deal out of how glorious it is to have children, you can suspect they're the ones Albert Ellis is talking about. They're acting. And people acting a role ("Happy Parents") can't usually relate to a real discussion ("Parenthood in Perspective"). So to keep their friendship, just evade their urgings rather than explain your feelings.

Either of the two common reasons for childlessness—ecology or personal preference—can have a negative effect on your friendship. Talking about the population pressures can imply that *they're* foggily unaware of same or acted heartlessly in having children if they *were* aware of the problem. And explaining that you have better things to do with the next twenty years of your life can seem, no matter how delicately it's phrased, to be condescending.

This isn't to say that you keep quiet about all your activities and projects; of course you talk about these. Share all your experiences with them, just as they share child-raising with you. The exchange gives everybody a slightly better perspective.

But sometimes you have to be careful, even about this:

Dave and Sandy, who have no children and know many Sheila-and-Mike's, find that the weeks just after vacations can be a bit of a problem.

"For example," Dave said, "we went on a long cruise last November. No particular reason, really. Sandy just felt like going someplace glamorous, and I love to give her what she wants. We relaxed, got a tan before the holidays. Sandy looks terrific with a tan, especially since she wears those glittery outfits to winter parties . . . Well, our neighbors didn't forgive us for weeks. You see, our mistake was, we came back too full of enthusiasm about the cruise. And our neighbors can take that, in the *summer*, because at least when we come back from the Caribbean, they've been to Ocean City. So we can trade stories. But they really resented last November. Then, they hadn't been anywhere."

Sandy agreed. "You have to be *very* careful after vacations. But there are a few things that can help.

"In the first place," according to Sandy, "act very glad to be home. That reassures everybody that they're pretty well-off after all, since even after a fancy trip, you're happy to be back.

"In the second place, don't tell them everything that happened at once. That's hard, because we come back with *so much* to tell. But to people who are tied down with kids, it can be a real slap in the face. Just mention one thing at a time, and they can absorb it better, without feeling envious.

"In the third place—this might sound silly, like a bribe—but do it. Bring back souvenirs for the kids. If you bring back little *things*, as well as just stories about Paradise Island and San Juan, it helps make your friends more a part of it. They're more willing to hear about what happened, and everybody gains then."

Sandy, too, believes in being patient when girlfriends talk about their pregnancies and their children.

In fact, besides passively "putting up with" talk about their children's grades and games, you might even take an *active* interest in friends' children as the children grow up.

Bill and I baby-sit once in a while for friends whose budget sometimes won't cover both the movie and a sitter. And last summer I helped teach an adorable four-year-old named Danny how to swim.

In fact, if I say so myself, I have good ideas about the details of child-raising, once in a while. Last week, for example, a "Sheila" we know complained that a gold-star chart she had made to reward her three-year-old for washing his hands was just *not* working. He didn't put the stars *in* the squares, it seemed, so there was no steady progress that might have motivated him to complete the chart.

Well, if he doesn't like squares, I suggested, why not get a blank cardboard and stars in different colors and let him make a free-form design? (That seems to be working. But if it doesn't, I have another idea. A dark

blue cardboard with a half moon, full moon, or whatever moon we have this week, and he can arrange the stars into constellations. Astronomy as motivation for hand washing. Well, that's what the great universal abstractions reduce down to, sometimes.)

The point *is*, you can take part in bringing-up-kids discussions, even though you have no kids of your own. Just make a few common-sense suggestions now and then. You can also take part in parties and outings for youngsters, if you're so inclined.

Rex and Diane Roupe of Des Moines, Iowa, for example, gave an egg hunt in the park one Easter Sunday. (Complete with ponies, games, refreshments, prizes.) All the children in the neighborhood came. "We were up half the night hiding all those eggs," Diane recalls.

Diane and several other childless girls I talked to feel that, far from dividing you from friends who *do* have children, the fact that you are childless can make you even closer friends. After all, you're available to appreciate *their* children, not brag about your own.

That, of course, is an ideal situation; and, though I hope it's one you find often, I don't want to paint too rosy a picture. With a certain "Sheila and Mike" of our acquaintance, a continued friendship just wasn't worth the effort. Their pressure on us was continual; not an evening with them passed without the "Why don't you have your own kids?" questions.

And Sheila said, "Childbirth is the greatest experience and I was happiest when pregnant," once too often. And I just decided to say what I was thinking.

"Well, just what is it you *like*, Sheila—children or pregnancy? What do you mean, you were happiest when pregnant? Because of the attention you got? Well, you see, I don't need that. Bill gives me plenty of attention anyway. But frankly, Mike doesn't seem all that intent on you anymore. He talks about the kids, sure, but I haven't heard him talk about you lately. And what do you mean, childbirth is the greatest experience? What about making love with Mike? Isn't that just as exciting to you?"

"Oh, Ellen, there's no comparison," she said. "Childbirth is so much more intense. It—lasts so much longer."

"Not for everybody, maybe."

"No, what I mean is, the aftereffects last longer. When you have a baby, it's always *there*, to remind you of how happy you were when he was born . . . [Very sad statement, that. Very common, but very sad. That brief euphoric happiness following childbirth leaves quickly. Hoping to re-achieve it, some women, like this "Sheila," become pregnant and pregnant again, and pregnant once more, hoping to find that feeling again and make it last this time. It doesn't work. The only way to improve the man-and-woman relationship is to work with those two: the man and the woman. Children do not help: they interfere.]

"I mean," she continued, "the child is a reminder that the two of you went through that wonderful experience of childbirth . . ."

"Well, Bill and I don't need reminders of anything, really. We don't need to be reminded that we were once in love; we still *are*. And we don't need to recall wonderful experiences; we're still *having* them."

Following that, Sheila and Mike didn't talk too much more to us about having children. Of course, we don't see them that much anymore, either. And I rather regret that. My only point in telling this story is to point up the consequences that complete candor can have.

Now, it goes without saying that some of the Sheilas and Mikes that we must tiptoe around may not be "friends" in a very real sense. But to set very high requirements for friends can be to sharply restrict the number of people you know. I think it is possible to learn from people without being completely *like* them, (and may be without completely liking them). I think you can share ideas and have enjoyable mutual experiences without being mutually honest.

In short, do as I say, not as I did, in that particular situation. Have more patience than I did; try not to

write off the Sheilas and Mikes you know. Co-exist. It's possible.

Now, some couples, probably *better* friends of yours, would also like to see you have children. And, unlike Sheila and Mike, they're not acting out selected scenarios from *The Happy Family*. Though their arguments are sometimes essentially the same, the tone of discussions you'll have with them is different. They won't push you. They simply would like to share something that's been enjoyable to them.

### CASE #3—LINDA AND HENRY

Linda has several reasons for having children that seem good. In the first place, she says, "I love Henry so much, I simply wanted to have *his* baby. Adopting, or caring for other children part-time, simply wouldn't have been the same. I wanted the baby to *look* like him."

I love my husband, too, is the simplest response, so much that I don't want to change our relationship. I don't want to have any constant demands on my attention that would take my attention from him.

Now, there's another, more complicated overtone to her argument. By saying she wants a baby that *looks* like her husband, Linda is expressing a desire to feel that the baby is theirs, in a biological sense of carrying their genes, and, by implication, their family traditions. A desire for a kind of immortality, through offspring, is involved. (If having a baby that *looked* like Henry were all that mattered, adoption would present no problem. Cooperative agencies will place a child in a home with parents who resemble the child, physically.) But certainly natural children are no more to be counted on than adopted children to continue family traditions; the traditions of all cultures are changing too quickly. And certainly it is just as worthwhile to work to help, and win the respect of, the community within your lifetime as to count on a hoped-for "immortality" via your children in *their* community, after your death.



And Linda, too, presents the "childbirth as experience" argument. (Everyone does.) Without pressuring you, she simply says she can't understand why you'd want to deprive yourself of the experience of childbirth. You believe in experience, don't you? she asks.

Of course you believe in experience, is your answer. But there are many valuable experiences, some of which children would shut you off from. Describe honestly any experience you've ever loved or look forward to having, whether it's swimming in the Aegean or absorbing the music and meaning of New Orleans' Preservation Hall; or talking to an ambassador, or visiting a Hindu shrine; watching still-wild animals roam across a still-free Australian plain; making snowballs on an Alp or making love in a castle; or the experience of devoting yourself to making the world a better place for Linda's children. There is such a wealth of things to be experienced that I can get lost just thinking about them. And I cannot be convinced, in the face of all the world has to offer, that there is anything unique about maternity hospitalization.

Yes, Linda says, but don't you want to share all these values and delights with another generation?

We want to share our experiences, yes. We will talk about them, and we will write about them. But there is a period of at least ten years when the delights of children are different from, and in some ways incompatible with, the things we treasure as adults. (How many parents have had to coax children to put away their comic books and *please* look at the Grand Canyon?) The experiences that you and your husband will share will be, to some extent, different from the experiences Linda and Henry will have with their children. Both may be fulfilling. This is the important thing: there is *no one pattern* of fulfillment as a woman. Linda has found one pattern (though it is a mistake, to my way of thinking, to consider parenthood *in itself* as fulfilling; to make it so, you must be actively a part of the world your child grows up in) and you are finding another.

And there is no one single experience that is central

to a full life. Although, to my mind, love-making comes close, I would not try to convince religious celibates, who think differently, of this.

Linda may also say, "Well, I love life, and so I wanted to give life."

Your answer to that: there are many ways of giving life. One of the best is *not* having children. Too many people, as experts have been explaining for the last few years, destroy life rather than create it. By creating life on a small scale (babies) you can harm life as a whole (by drawing heavily on the world and its resources to raise those babies). This statement is particularly true in the United States. Because of our high pattern of consumption, one American child consumes (i.e., destroys) as much of the stuff of the world as *fifty* (!) children born in India.

Henry may quite matter-of-factly express his feeling, too. "Well," he says, "I just wanted to have some say in how one member of the next generation grows up."

There are other ways. You can teach. You can join a Big Brother or Big Sister program. You can Send-a-Kid-to-Camp. You can support a Navajo Indian child through a charity, open your home to an inner-city youngster, or contribute to a scholarship fund. You can help with open-space and urban recreation projects.

Furthermore, it may be somewhat naïve to think that parents have a lot to say about how their children grow up. Kahlil Gibran wrote, "Your children are not your children . . ." and it is true. Parents don't raise their children, when you get right down to it. The world does. Maybe you and your husband prefer working with the world.

The point is, if Linda and Henry are really friends of yours, you'll understand, and accept, each other's point of view, and that's that. That's the difference between Linda and Henry and the Sheila-and-Mike type. Linda and Henry are not compulsive about forcing you to convert to their point of view; they just want to make sure you know and understand that point of view.

#### CASE #4—YOUR HUSBAND'S BOSS

And what do you say to Mr. Ellis, who takes you both to lunch and dinner whenever he can, listens with enthusiasm to every project you get involved with, and just digs you kids so much that he and his wife think it's unthinkable for you to think of not having children?

On first hearing of your decision, Mrs. Ellis will ask, "No children? But what are you going to do for the rest of your life?"

This answer is individual; you simply tell her what you plan to do. Or maybe your answer is that you don't *know* yet, in specific terms, but you just want to live in the world with your husband and be a part of as many forces in the world as possible.

"Well," Mr. Ellis coughs, "you can still do a lot if you have kids, not everything, maybe, but a lot. And it just seems kind of a shame not to have kids, as nice as you two are."

"Well, we can't really see it that way," your husband explains. "In fact, it's kind of a shame to *have* kids. They'd be growing up in such an overcrowded society, where it would be so difficult to have any individual recognition. We just don't feel the need to contribute to the overcrowding. In fact, we'd like to see a trend to not having children. Why shouldn't the United States, leader of living standards, lead the way to a really good quality of life, by stressing just that: *quality* and not quantity of population. Raise fewer children the next generation; and raise them better."

"Oh, you're overemphasizing that overcrowding thing. It's all a matter of distribution; plenty of room in Nevada."

"Well, it's not a matter of people and square feet. It's a matter of people and resources. Right now, we're spending the planet's capital, you know—burning the fossil fuels, using up the air and water."

"I'm not saying you should contribute very *much*

to it; *we* didn't. You could just have one child, like we did."

"Well, you see, Mr. Ellis, I would feel sorry for *that child*. What kind of world would it grow up in? It bothers me, to think of a baby growing up in a society that's so filled with compartments, categories—and restrictions.

"Maybe there's no getting away from the restrictions; and maybe some of them are even good, but they bother me. Have you read about the government files being kept on hundreds of thousands of people? Supposedly, these people are potential threats, but some of them have just signed one peace petition.

"Now, I don't know. Maybe it's necessary to keep tabs on troublemakers. Maybe if they'd had more of that in '63, Kennedy wouldn't have been shot in Dallas, because they'd have *known* about Oswald and nabbed him. But it all smacks too much of *Brave New World* to me. And it all gets back to numbers, doesn't it? *More* people have *fewer* freedoms. A baby born today would have to face a lot of restrictions. And I just couldn't feel right to bring a child into that kind of world. I know *I* wouldn't want to grow up during the next twenty years, and I don't think you would, either . . ."

"Well, then, if people like you, who feel that way, don't have any children, you're selectively breeding *out* of the race people with any sensitivity to freedom and the nature of the individual."

"Let's hope not. Regardless of how insensitive the people of this generation who have children are, if there are *fewer people* in the next generations, a new sense of the individual can be acquired. Maybe people can feel like human beings again, instead of automations . . ."

"Maybe," Mr. Ellis responds, "maybe."

But you may have to go through a similar dialog every few weeks or so.

## CASE #5—YOUR PARENTS

This is tough.

Telling your parents that you don't intend to have any children is so difficult, in fact, that I know at least a dozen girls (some married as long as ten years) who just haven't been able to do it.

"To her dying day, Mother will just have to think we tried to have children and couldn't," one girl told me. "You see, if I were to try to tell her that we don't think it's necessary, that we don't see any *reason* for having kids—well, there's no way, just no way to do that. That would be knocking down the only thing she *did* do with her life. She devoted herself to raising us; she had no life of her own. I intend to *have* a life of my own. But I just cannot tell her."

Another girl also avoided an explanation to her parents, but had an interesting and constructive approach that added to their lives immeasurably: "What my folks really *want* is to do a certain amount of living *through* grandchildren. Well, we try to let them share *our* lives as much as possible, especially when we do something that's new to them. For example, we got it into our heads once that we'd go to an opera opening. I bought a simply—well, I can't find words to describe that dress. But you see, I'm pretty casual, usually; I keep shortening my college Pendleton's and wear them to work *and* to parties, and this was a real change.

"It was a black and copper print, like a French toile mixed with a bit of Beardsley, with an immense copper belt. And we had a great time, and I spent about an hour writing my folks about it, and his, telling them everything from the story of the opera, to the conversations we had at intermission, to the way every third guy in the foyer kept pretending to be blinded by that copper belt . . . *oh*, and our pictures were taken by a news photographer. *That* was *unreal*; we laughed after he went away and tried to imagine what would go on at the society desk the next day as they tried to figure out *who* those

unknown socialites were . . . As a matter of fact, we ended up calling the paper, since we were fairly sure they wouldn't run the picture, and they gave us two large prints.

"But, anyway, when we do anything out of the ordinary—which we *do*, quite often, we write about it, at *great* length. That's what I mean about sharing our own life with them. It's a good thing to do; and I even think you have an *obligation* to do it."

Another couple has been trying an even more direct approach for some time—seven years, in fact.

"You know, our parents are still asking us vague little things like 'Well, Donna, are you two going to, uh, *settle down* soon?' or 'Are you going to have any, uh, *news* for us one of these months?'

"Now, by this time, they *have* to know we're not interested in the suburb-and-station-wagon thing. But we don't say so. We've been saying 'No, we don't think so,' or 'No, not a sign,' for so long it's gotten to be a joke between us."

The girl I was talking to got a little sad. "You know," she said quietly, "they even have tried a little bit of good-natured bribery. Dad said, 'Yes, I've really got the business where I want it now. Got it built up to something I'd be proud to pass on, you know what I mean? Got some trust funds for college set up, no names on 'em yet . . .'"

That is a pathetic speech and must indicate a great desire for grandchildren. Yet, as Dr. Robert Gould pointed out in a *New York Times* article last year, what such men ultimately want goes beyond grandchildren: they want to rekindle an interest in life, a *sense of importance*.

The girl I was talking to evidently realized that.

"Meanwhile, what we're trying to do is encourage them to get out in the community and find some interests, so they won't feel so empty, and won't *need* grandchildren. I clip the 'What's Going On' section of the newspaper sometimes. 'Boy, I wish I could get to that show,' I'll say to Mom. 'If you make it, would you tell me what it was like?'

"Maybe that will take hold, after a while. And I'm

truly *serious* with that technique, you know; I *would* like to hear about some of the things I can't attend afternoons because of work. Dad's proving more malleable than Mom, actually. He took our suggestion and joined a golf club, and that led to all kinds of things. He ran into an old friend who was running for city office, for instance, and is doing part-time canvassing for him and having a ball!

"So maybe the questions will stop, after a while, because they'll have their *own* interests to talk about. And when they stop asking the questions, then we can start considering answering them . . ."

One 35-year-old bank officer was lucky. "Our problem was solved," he told me, "when my parents tried reverse psychology with us. They started saying, 'We certainly think you and Rita are right not to have children. This certainly isn't a world *we'd* bring children into, either.'"

"Then they'd go on with all the ecology arguments, just to really play the role and show how thoroughly they understood our feelings.

"What *happened* is that they *really* began to see it our way! So, we're lucky, as far as my parents are concerned, anyway. Now, if they'd only get together with *Rita's* folks . . ."

I found very few couples who told their parents, straight out, of their decision not to have children. Bill and I did, of course. (But then, we *had* to; I was writing this book.) We could have anyway, because if your parents are actively involved in their own life, and therefore not dependent on you, you can be honest with them.

The problem is also eased if there are other grandchildren in the family. (*Your* problem is eased, anyway; of course it's tough on your brothers or sisters who had the kids.)

But there usually *will* be a strong problem with parents. Parents vary. Some may say nothing, and yet you *know* they'd be thrilled if you were to become pregnant. Other, more aggressive parents may be quite direct with verbal pressures or even bribes.

And there's no denying it feels good to please

people. If you know that your parents would be ecstatic, you may even wonder if you have a right to deny them that happiness. After all, they raised you with certain implicit assumptions, one of which was that you would have children of your own.

Ultimately, though, you cannot live your life to please other people, whether they are neighbors, people you work with, or the man and woman who raised you. If you and your husband know that it is right for you not to have children, then don't be afraid to face the culture with confidence, if not with complete candor; and *expect* it to accept you.

Eventually, it will.

It is easy for us to see, then, that we do not want to spend our lives baby-raising. But at least, for those who choose it, the road is well-marked: Enfamil. Gerber. The PTA.

To live a less-usual life style is an unpredictable business.

Once we reject the maternal role, we are out of step with the girls in the station wagons at the supermarkets. We are on bikes or in, perhaps, a Fiat custom convertible. And do not count on finding us at the supermarkets. We are elsewhere. We are free.

But where are we? And what are we free to do?

Anything, of course. But the complexity of choices can bewilder us into inertia. What do we want to do? Devote ourselves to a charity or a politician? Teach? Write? Take modeling lessons, study the guitar, or learn Japanese floral arranging? Or immerse ourselves in the business and personal emotions and competitions of the urban office-city?

And where are the guidelines, the media models, and the columns of helpful hints for *us*? The magazines are filled with spoon-feeding, fight-stopping, koffee-klatching supermommies. But where do we see ourselves in the magazines? Where do we see wives as *women*—attuned to men, rather than children? Where do we see a wife reading something that will enrich her conversationally, teasing her husband into an

evening of needed extravagance, or tempting him into bed as he's changing for dinner?

Such examples are rare.

Partly because of this lack, the next three chapters have been less than easy. It is always easier, I think, to reject an established life style than to define a new one. And a reaction to this book might be, "Well, she shows at great length why having children may be a bad idea; but she's a bit wavery on just *what* you're supposed to do otherwise." This may be true, and I'm sorry if it is. But I am twenty-seven years old; I haven't had a lifetime of experience in living. My husband and I are still in the process of finding directions for ourselves.

But I will try to show what I've done with my life without children, to this point at least. And, perhaps of more value, I'll describe what some other girls and women without children have done, mixing in facts about their jobs, some of their thoughts about life, love, men and marriage.

I think all the stories have some value, though you'll find some contradictions. (Karen Kramer of New York states firmly that men are more interested in ideas than meals; Carole Ann Tucker of Los Angeles states just as firmly that marinades or a good bernaise or hollandaise are ideas in themselves.) On the basis of your own tendencies and your own husband, you will make your own amalgam.

All the stories do demonstrate, though, that beyond the baby trap lots of doors are open.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Jobs, Careers, and a Few Other Things*

You're nobody till somebody hires you.

I've had a zillion jobs. I've taught, typed, modeled for a total of one ad campaign, acted in a total of one play, and filled out accident reports for an insurance company. I've fund-raised for political candidates, volunteer-worked for consumer and conservation causes, and catalogued books in a library. What else? Nurse's aide, Kelly Girl, file clerk, secretary, receptionist, and cocktail waitress.

I was rather a bust as a cocktail waitress (I kept eavesdropping on the interesting tables and giving slow service to the dull ones); and filling those car-accident forms gave me a lasting skepticism about the automobile.

But other than that, I've liked everything. And I think there's value to a wide variety of working situations. If *you* aren't intent on building a career record within a particular field and if there's no cause to which you're ready to commit yourself completely, then I think you should switch jobs every so often, too. Without the stimulation of new circumstances, I think it's possible to start doing your job—and everything else—by rote.

Many of the girls I talked to agreed.

One job changer is Karen, who's had an interesting string of Manhattan secretarial situations and an interesting marriage to artist Gary Kramer.



Karen and Gary met in Florence. "I was on a study-abroad program; only that summer I wasn't studying. My roommate and I," explains Karen, "had a place overlooking a busy Italian street, where kids who knew kids who knew us would just drop in. Average occupancy was about ten.

"But that afternoon I was alone, trying to sleep in spite of the noises from the street. There was a knock on the door, though, and the guy said, 'Hi. I know Dorothy. Can I come in?'

"We talked. He was from Chicago. I was from New York. He was studying under an art scholarship. (I, as I said, wasn't studying.) We talked some more. He said he'd like to paint me. I asked what his name was. 'Gary,' he said. 'I'd love for you to paint me,' I said. 'I'm twenty years old,' I added. 'Why did you tell me that?' he wanted to know. And of course I couldn't tell him the reason was that he looked twenty-seven and I was barely eighteen. 'Oh, I don't know,' I said. 'When are you going to paint me?'

"Well, that's been a long time ago—eight years, as a matter of fact. After that summer, Gary stayed in Florence and commuted to see me in Rome on weekends. At some time or other, he said, 'Will you marry me?' and I said, 'Yes,' and it was such a natural assumption that we went right on with our conversation. Which was about art, by the way.

"It's hard to condense the essence of a marriage into a few words," Karen continued, "but there were two things that were important to us: each other and Gary's work in art. Not necessarily in that order. In fact, Gary said that art was 51% of his life, and I'd be the other 49%!

"We came back to New York and got married; he taught art history while I finished the dreary final hours for a B.A. I'd often be tempted to cut a class and spend all afternoon on a gourmet dinner, to show what a domestic little wife I could be. But to an artist like my husband, food is always less interesting than an idea. And he was far more fascinated by details of tudor history and architecture than in details of what-trouble-I-had-chopping-up-the-bread-

cubes. Trouble was, his teaching wasn't leaving him any time for painting. It got to be pretty clear that if he were really to develop his style and skill, that teaching job had to go. And it did.

"This," she interrupted herself to emphasize, "is to me one of the important reasons for not having children. Marriage was never meant to put a man under continual obligation. I think that a man has to be free to do what he wants with his life. Gary wouldn't have been free, if we'd had kids, because we would have needed two incomes. That would have been terrible.

"As it happened, the matter was quite simple. He quit teaching. And I guess this brings me to what I've been doing. My first job, which I took approximately one second after graduation, was for a funny, two-man film company, where there was nothing to do. I mean *nothing*. No correspondence, no customers, no salesmen, no files, no films. Just two men in an office waiting for something to happen.

"What did I do? I read about two novels a day. And my most crucial task was serving them coffee constantly. At one point, I decided I wasn't being sufficiently challenged and left.

"My next job was doing research for a television film series on middle-class Black America. The series never made it. But the insight I gained into how an emerging society organizes itself (almost strictly on the white model, in this case) was more fantastic than any ten college soc. courses. And of course I shared all this with Gary, and we *both* learned a great deal.

"The really devastating job was as researcher for the Johnson Commission report. The hours were a panic. Some days I'd be home all day; other days, out at 7 a.m. Or, I might be phoned at *midnight* and told, by a New York radio station, 'The log your supervisor requested will be available for the next hour only.' And Gary would be out hailing a cab while I grabbed clothes and a notebook."

Karen has also worked for several New York publishers and is in the process of learning something about art herself: she's becoming a potter.

"All of the jobs I've had have kept both Gary and me in touch with different things happening in the world . . . we talk for hours every evening, just hours. Gary gets out himself, of course, but the fact that he hasn't had to, on a regular basis, has left him free to develop his style and skill as an artist."

Gary, according to Karen, "began as an abstract expressionist" (I hesitated as I was taking notes, thinking, "Oh yeah, that's when you can't recognize the object . . .") "but he's moved into a unique sort of realism. It's vivid, alive, full of surfaces; and those surfaces can put the focus of a painting in *front* of the canvas. Actually that's continuing a trend that started with cubism, but Gary's taken it about ten steps farther than anyone else . . ."

Karen's enthusiasm was so high that I wasn't keeping up with her. There are only phrases, from this point, in my notebook: "As far as texture, he could be compared to Pollock," ". . . shares with Stella a concern for a colored field . . ."

Does he sell?

"He will, when he's ready. He's had some grand offers, but nearly always turns them down. Two exceptions: no, three. A famous actress' husband has one of his paintings, and a big Texas art collector, and our plumber. Gary was home when the plumber came to fix the sink; and the plumber said, 'Gee, that's great! I love it!' And so he now owns a Gary Kramer original.

"One of the things Gary and I value very much," she said, shifting to another thought, "is our freedom to be just with each other, to do just what we want . . ."

Freedom.

The word was used by almost every couple I interviewed. The childless couples' ways of living showed enjoyment of it; the couples with children regretted not having it.

The Kramers have it; another artist-couple I interviewed did not. In fact, the first thing said when I told them I'd like to talk to them about their marriage was, "Well, it'd be nice to go out once in a

while, when we wanted to, instead of arranging for a sitter two weeks in advance!"

In the case of this second couple, the girl, pressured by her mother not to take birth control pills, became pregnant and gave birth to twins five years ago. (She has taken the Pill since.)

"If we had the money," she added.

This couple, too, lives in New York, but they talk about their life and their jobs without enthusiasm. Both were promising artists; now, just plain poverty and the pressure of caring for two young children are destroying her potential (by her own admission) and cutting into his. "Who feels like painting," she says, "when you come home from the nine-to-five? Who's got the time, with all that's got to be done around here? I've all but given it up."

Her husband sells *his* paintings, when he can. "He'd better," the wife says, "or we'll be walking in bare feet and have pediatricians' bills for wallpaper."

He also drives a cab; in fact, he usually manages to drive by their apartment about eight to take the children to nursery school and drop off his wife at her office job in the east 70's.

This second girl, like Karen, has had a variety of secretarial jobs. Unlike Karen, she doesn't share very much with her husband. "What do we talk about? The kids, the money, and that's it," her husband said. She doesn't talk to him for hours in the evening; she evidently has nothing to say about however she has spent her day.

And that's regrettable.

There is a lot of variety within the secretarial experience. Any office is rich with human feelings and activity: office personality rivalries; account competitions; good guy-versus-bad guy management struggles; love, rejection, and the expense account. Modern civ. condensed to four floors.

But may be you can get involved in all this, really get into it and learn from it, only if you're not pressured all day thinking about things that need to be done when you get home to the kids. (There will be those who disagree with that as a generalization.

But *sometimes it is true*. Virginia Satir spoke of the principle underlying this in another context: "The human situations that exist in every contact can be meaningless if the wife is worried about the kids and the sitter.")

Karen, and the second girl, could have worked in the very same office. And Karen would have been open to experience; the second girl would not have been. Karen would have taken home a lot from her job; the second girl? Probably nothing.

A girl named Marcia finds her secretarial job fascinating, partly because she has an interesting reason for working where she does.

Marcia is twenty-six, wildly gorgeous (I guarantee you, if you were just to visualize what you'd like to look like, the result would be Marcia), moderately liberal, and she likes to play her boss-secretary scenes in conservative companies.

Right now she's with the biggest copper company in the industry, where it seems she's changing some people's minds about metals, defense, and big government.

She does not believe in job switching.

"It's too easy to leave a job before you learn anything, or know anybody," she says. "Let me give you an example. There was a man, at the job I had before this one, who always seemed so withdrawn, so lonely. He was about forty-five. He worked in the stock room, always got to work and left on the minute, said 'hello' and not much else. After I'd worked there two years, he started talking to me one day, about the Indians of the Southwest. Turns out he's really an expert, quietly writes articles for a natural history magazine and is a blood brother of one of the tribes. Now that's one person who'd have been just a cipher to me—one person I wouldn't have known—if I'd left that job after six months.

"But I'm talking as though getting to know people is my reason for working. For some girls, it is. Not for me. I think you have to have some overall cause, overall reason, for whatever you're doing. Here's how

it is with me. For some personal reasons—like a brother who got killed in '68, and Wally could have, too; he was in the service then—I'm just plain anti-Pentagon. And I look for a boss who's pro-Pentagon. And I try to change his thinking.

"Both Wally and I are quiet reformers. We don't organize rallies and carry banners or live in 'Look how pure we are' communes. That's just not our style. I like comfort. I like pink soap, instant foods, and running water." ("I once found her the only cabin in northern Alberta with full bath and shower," Wally interrupted.) "And I like fashion."

She looked very fashionable. Clouds of brown hair, artfully cut. Eyes by Eve of Roma, face framed by fringed leather that was either a necklace or a miniserape: it reached to the shoulders. The pants suit was fluid, India-ink-black, and I had the feeling I'd seen it in *Vogue* or someplace.

At this point, Wally interrupted her. "We go to Washington to do some informal lobbying, once in a while, just looking up our congressmen and talking to them. Marcie divides her time between Capitol Hill and the Georgetown shops! One time, in fact, a new designer boutique was opening when we were there. The owner saw Marcie, and offered to give her any outfit, free, if she'd be seen around Georgetown that night and tell anybody that asked her where the outfit came from!"

"Of course I took him up on that!" she laughed. "But listen, sure I like clothes. But I also like to be able to vote. And believe me I'd like more of a choice about who I vote for sometimes. Wouldn't it have been great, two years ago, to have had a choice between a businessman and a poet, instead of between two *politicians*? I'd have loved a choice between Rockefeller and McCarthy . . . And I'd like a few other things, too. I'd like to have some say about some controls on the Pentagon budget, and about whether that stupid, insane SST is going to be built. And the day I decide that scrapping my Puccis will stop the war machine, I'll start wearing blue jeans."

"In the meantime," Wally said, "if there's ever an award for the best-dressed political radical, Marcie will get it!"

Marcia left to go back to her office shortly after this, just as I was about to ask specifically *how* she got her ideas across at work; but Wally explained.

"It works like this. One of the things she's supposed to do at work is read all the papers every morning. The *Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, all the big ones—and clip anything, article or editorial, that has any possible bearing on the copper industry. Then she gives her boss a rundown as he has his coffee. Well, she slips *other* things into that pile of clippings. All very casually, of course.

"She'll say, in a *very* innocent voice, for example, 'Mr. Simms, you were talking about cost-increase limits yesterday; I thought you might be interested in this article . . .'

"Then she gives it to him and hits the figures. For a Pentagon electronic system, research costs were \$3 million in '67, \$80 million in '68. Procurement costs on the same system: \$190 million in '67, \$524 million in '68.

"Then she'll say, 'Is that sort of cost increase typical in the military? And what are the real effects of that? And are there any controls over that?' and so on.

"There was one bad scene, though, when her *boss's* supervisor came in one afternoon cursing about Fulbright. And Marcia talked back to him, said Fulbright was a good man. And the supervisor swallowed his teeth and said Fulbright was too critical of the administration, and anybody who was that dissatisfied should leave the country.

"And Marcie said it was impossible to leave the U.S.; there was nowhere to go.

"And the big guy started naming, Russia, France, Africa, England . . . And Marcia said, 'No, that won't work. There's no other *planet*, and what the U.S. does affects every country on *this* one. England, for instance, is getting very upset because DDT from here is falling in *their* rain.'

"And the supervisor harrumphed but didn't have an answer for that one and just came out with the 'Love it or leave it' line again. Then Marcie said, in that cool little voice of hers, if you can believe it, 'That is an idiotic statement.' And the big boss swallowed his teeth again, and she went right on, 'If you love the country, you've got to stay and try to make it the best country possible, and that is exactly what Mr. Fulbright is trying to do.'

"I guess the discussion went on for a while, but she was kind of upset. We joked that if she got fired, we'd write to Senator Fulbright and tell him why!

"But she wasn't fired. One of the girls told her the next morning that after Marcie left, her boss took up her side of the argument, *against* the supervisor. We celebrated that next night; we went to Bianci and Margarita's in the Village and toasted the partial conversation of Mr. Simms."

("We celebrate funny things," Marcia had told me earlier. "We may forget each other's birthdays, but we'll go out to celebrate when the Senate passes a bill we like. We feel, like it's our world, *all* of it. We're part of it. You've got to get more excited over a possible nuclear disaster averted than over your 25th birthday . . .")

I wanted to know if Wally tried to do the same thing.

"Oh, sure, I was with COM\* in the Army. And sure I try to operate the way she does at my office, too, but with less result. See, you've got to keep in mind that it's kind of unexpected when a girl like Marcie starts talking politics. The shock element alone has some value: it shocks people into shutting up until she's said what she wants to. She really gets inside people's heads. And I think it's great, really great."

I think that Marcia may have found something.

One of my favorite writers, Jo Coudert, has cautioned against finding an "easy" job, because nothing is more exhausting than easy work. She goes on to point out that the only truly exhilarating work, that

\* Concerned Officers' Movement.

which can turn your whole life up to 100 watts, is work that is demanding. Look for a job, she says, where you will be overworked, not underworked. Take a job you don't think you can quite do; that way you'll overreach your capacities and grow.

Well, it's not always that easy to find a job whose requirements *per se* are absorbing and demanding. But you *can* set yourself a demanding task in human relationships. And that's what Marcia has done.

If you have a job where you're really *doing* something, like Marcia, and getting across ideas you believe in, you can stay with it a long time.

Teaching you could stay with a long time.

I could have, anyway.

Only in teaching do you get an intimate, meaningful contact with a broad cross section of the younger world; the chance to guide young minds in their growth of awareness; the excitement of probing contemporary problems and literary themes; and summers off.

You get a few other things, too. The fun of suddenly devoting a day to folk singing. (If you teach English, you work this into the poetry unit; if you teach social studies, it falls under current events; if you teach math, you work in percentages: "What percentage of the records played today involved social issues? Political personalities?")

And you get to know kids. And that was surprising, in some ways, to me. I was twenty-two when I started teaching; and my students were fourteen. And of course I knew what they were like. They were:

- a) fashionable
- b) super-cool
- c) conversationally sophisticated
- d) sexually liberated and politically aware
- e) socially intelligent and turned on
- f) all of these

Sure.

My idea that they were politically aware and all that

was reinforced one morning and shattered that same afternoon. Third hour, a student brought in an internal Army memo about how the war casualty figures should be "modified" for the press. And that student gave a stirring speech about the implications of that memo.

Very good.

Later that day, I launched another class into *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Discussing the evils of the 19th century that might have driven Captain Nemo from land, someone mentioned "slavery." "Well, what was so bad about slavery?" somebody else asked.

This was an integrated classroom.

And don't ask me how I avoided a riot, because I don't remember. But there *are* fast ones like that that you have to field sometimes. And I'm convinced, by the way, that one difference between teachers and the rest of the population is that teachers think at a slightly faster rate.

Usually, we *have* to!

It was dawning on me, about this time, that not all teenage girls were as with it as I had thought. Some of them seemed so confused and bewildered by how they were treated (or ignored) by the boys that I started a book on the subject. But more about that, later.

A point I'd like to make right now is that if you teach, or if you have any job that gets you home hours before your husband, don't spend all that time house-working. If you do, the danger exists that by the time your guy gets home the freshest experiences in your mind will be Problems of Mopping or How I Cleaned that Wall. (Is that what a man wants to hear about?)

I will admit that there are times when things have to be done. But get things done quickly, and that's it. Honestly, any apartment I've ever lived in (and we have a fairly large one now) can be cleaned in half an hour, tops. It helps if you have a basic distaste for housework, as I do, so you speed to finish with it;



and it also helps if you keep in mind that certain things can always be put off. (Mopping floors, for example.)

Do something else.

Change into something chic.

If you don't have anything chic, go shop for it.

Phone a friend.

Put on a record.

Make yourself a drink and read a book. (That's usually what I did, when I wasn't trying to find a reasonably priced pre-Columbian sculpture at one of the private galleries on Charles Street, or bicycling two miles to buy some Brie for after dinner.) We have always subscribed to ten thousand magazines and every book club in existence, and that is probably a good idea. I always found that Bill enjoyed a *précis* of *Strawberry Statement*, *On the Beach*, *Prince of Foxes*, *Feminine Plural*, of *Love Story* along with the hors d'oeuvres. Really, it's a good prelude to how-was-your-day discussions.

Now, at one point during my teaching career, I changed my 3-5 p.m. routine, though, because I began that book I mentioned.

It might not have occurred to me to write it had Bill not written two books, which I had *typed* and which taught me that a non-fiction manuscript consists mainly of examples of whatever it is you are trying to say, examples hopefully compiled and presented in a coherent fashion.

Even before we had any idea that book would be published, a certain change in *me* pleased both of us. I suddenly had some entirely different things to talk about when he came home. And frankly, it was fun to say, when he asked if I'd talked to Frank and Irene, or read the *Atlantic*, "I just haven't had time to do a *thing*; I've been rewriting a chapter . . ."

And because I truly hadn't had time to do anything, we'd often end up cooking dinner together. And that was good, too. Unless you're Julia Childs, seasoning a *marchand de vin* sauce for half an hour is a little tiresome. By yourself, anyway. But shaking stuff into

the butter, flour, stock, and wine, with your husband there, and nibbling on the *vin* before you put it in the *marchand de* is something else again. Try it; it's fun.

The book I was writing was published. And then (not that I'd ever been particularly *displeased* with the way we lived) everything entered a new dimension, and we were living in a way I *really* liked.

I like knowing people in different cities. I like travel, and I like a telegram somewhere on the tour saying, "Congratulations; your show last night was good." I like going to department stores in Cleveland as well as in Baltimore, and meeting young people there. I like doing a TV show once a month or so, even when I'm not on tour. (Last week was a cooking show, "Parsley, Sage, Janey and Love.") I like riding the Powell Street cable car between appointments in San Francisco; and I like, for that matter, long distance phone calls, even if they spell work: another interview to do, another article revision required.

But it is worth it to me—all of it. And it is all something I would not have if I had had children.

I'm not trying to imply that *only* women without children can have interesting jobs and lives. Letty Cottin Pogrebin wrote a book the same year I did—and she has three children. And, while Helen Gurley Brown, who has no children, is an example *par excellence* of the successful career girl, there's an agency president a few blocks from Helen's office: Mary Wells. And Mary Wells has children—two, I think. My sister, who does not plan to have a family, works as a scientist; but in a nearby laboratory a mother of twins is working on similar projects. I could name parallels, also, from nearly any office.

But that's really beside the point. Though some women with children have rewarding jobs and careers, most do not. And of those women with children who do not, many *would—if* they did not have the children.

A close friend of mine through high school, Sharon, was brighter and more talented than I. She got more writing awards, more roles in the school plays, than I

did. Sharon, though, has three children now. We met for coffee when I was in Illinois last winter, and she is not completely happy.

For her, the role requirements of motherhood have extracted too high a price. She has lost the social involvement she valued; she never had a chance for the career she wanted. She watches me on television shows sometimes, and she would like to be on those shows herself. She could have been. Or she could have easily become a reporter, as did another friend of mine, Gail Blaisdell, a girl who is, with reason, almost totally satisfied with her life.

Gail's job has given her an enviable range of experiences. She's interviewed the McCarthy kids, political figures, and local celebrities. She wrote a fantastic and moving story on Vietnam war widows (after a minor mishap; some incorrect editorial instructions sent her to the wrong funeral, at first.)

"The exposure to the things you write about is more exciting than the actual writing process," according to Gail. And that's evident from hearing her talk about some of her assignments.

Once last winter, she and a photographer left at 3 a.m. to go duck hunting on the Eastern shore of Maryland. ("It was forty below zero; the ice on the bay kept scraping the sides of the rowboat as we went out to the blind. It was so cold I could barely get the questions out. But I learned from the mayor of Annapolis how to shoot a gun, talked politics and told jokes with a couple of lawyers, helped retrieve the photographer when he fell out of the blind trying to get a shot, and TALKED REAL LOUD whenever any ducks came around! Fortunately, nobody got any . . .")

Another assignment: report on the only clock factory in the country where grandfather clocks are still crafted by hand. "After a beautiful drive and some fascinating conversations with the people in the small town where the factory is, I rushed home. Paul fixed dinner, since this story was a rush job. The deadline was the next day, and I worked till 2 a.m. trying to finish it. As Paul was driving me to the newspaper

office the next morning, though, we heard the news: the clock factory had caught fire at midnight the night before, just as I was writing the story! It was almost completely destroyed . . ."

Gail recently interviewed the poet Elliott Coleman; and, when I talked to her on the phone earlier this morning, she was involved with another sort of project—condensing a twenty-nine-page report which began, "Because we deal with data in the aggregate, there are few cases posing any severe or significant limitations on the variables we can study simultaneously without using up too many degrees of statistical freedom . . ."

The report concerned urban riots. Gail was ready to riot herself when she saw the useless verbosity that surrounded the basic issues.

Yes, there are times when writing can be a bit of a struggle.

However, it can be an exciting mix of the people you've interviewed, the books and articles you read as you research. The ideas that result make it worthwhile to me.

And yet, as far as ideas are concerned, I can see an advantage to working in a publishing house or magazine office. Rather than having to think up, stew over, and pound out the ideas themselves, you could just be treated to the finished products, in book or magazine form. And you'd have an advantage over, say, the magazine *reader*, because you'd see the wealth of material that, due to limited space, never sees print.

That might be even more fun than writing. It definitely seems so, when you talk to Carole Ann Tucker, who edits *Teen* magazine. She sees a lot of ideas in her work and she channels and directs them into one of the liveliest young-girl magazines around. And she has fun doing it.

Carole whipped by the Beverly Hilton to pick me up for a lunch date last spring. We weren't quite sure who was interviewing whom. She was asking me questions for a profile in *Teen*; I was interviewing her for this book. She and her husband Jack have been

married for some time, idyllically, with no children.

After a lot of interesting talk about how she decides what rock groups to feature and how she answers reader questions, I commented that it was perfectly clear how she spent her *days* with no children ("Actually, I have children," she said, "thousands and thousands."), but how, for example, do you spend your weekends?

She laughed. "That depends entirely on the weekend. My job extends to the weekends once in a while. Last Saturday, for example, Jack and I started for Palm Springs at 6 a.m., which is *dawn*, because I had to tape a TV show there. It was a gorgeous drive; we sang every song ever written.

"Then, during the first taping, I saw an expression on Jack's face that I know precedes criticism. He began to tell me, between tapings, why and how I should be expressing myself better. And suddenly I said, 'Now stop right there, Jack. I don't think I want criticism from you, and besides you're my husband, how *can* you criticize me?' And he said, 'Carole, it isn't easy, but it's necessary. Now you listen.' And he draped his arms over my shoulders, looked me straight in the eye make-up and proceeded to give me some instructions.

"Not only was the second taping better, but so was my understanding of our relationship. Jack was honest enough to criticize me, but he cared enough to do it lovingly . . .

"Then we spent the rest of the day leisurely driving back, stopping here, stopping there, stopping for a two-hour lunch, stopping to look at the ocean and talk, talk about the other people on the show that day, about the details of our jobs the week before, about our plans for the next week. We spend a lot of time planning, thinking, dreaming. We forget to talk of the mundane. And that's why my job is important. If you maximize your work experiences, if you give and get from your job as much as you can, it adds to you and your marriage. You are not mundane. That's important; how can you expect your husband to be fascinated by you if you're not fascinating, if you are,

instead, everyday and dull?"

A good question.

"Oh, of course I cook. But even this has to be an adventure. We both love good food and wine. Jack likes good solid meats (no casseroles!) and I have a cabinet filled with spices, so I experiment. Marinades and spices are a must. And the meats have to be cooked slowly, so there's time for the seasonings to be absorbed, and the flavors are fuller . . .

"And we'll talk while I'm getting dinner, usually, or we'll read the mail we've gotten that day, and finally sit down, with the candlelight reflecting in the wine-glasses—yes, that's every night. There is one thing, you see, that can never be routine: and that's romance. At least to us, it can't be. As long as it's sparked with change and variety within ourselves, life is exciting."

There's another magazine editor, a bit older than Carole Ann, and on the East Coast rather than in L.A., who is also childless by choice and who also leads an exciting life with her husband.

I can imagine that it must be a treat for David Brown to drop in and see his wife, Helen, in her Manhattan office. It is beautiful. Diane de Poitiers could have simply removed the phones, tossed a velvet pillow on the small satin sofa, and entertained whichever of the Charleses or Henrys she was involved with at the time.

Helen has evidently decorated husband David's den with a similar sensuality. "Everything is comfortable and sexy: there's a lot of fake leopard, which David likes . . . I fix him a drink and settle him down, like a geisha . . . then I serve dinner. The atmosphere is intimate. There is no one else around. We're free to talk, laugh, explore the day, what happened, how we felt about it, on any terms we want.

"We are not interrupted, and I want it that way. For real intimacy, perhaps it has to be that way. I want no one else around: no servants, no children."

Actually, along with being the single girl's guide to romance and fun, Helen Gurley Brown's *Cosmopolitan* is also for the married, childless girl.

I read *Cosmopolitan*.

I have my own ideas about keeping my husband happy, but once every few articles I pick up some new ideas, and I suggest that you do, too.

Helen's office is a clue, for example, that *Cosmo* considers surroundings important. (And so should you.) They've got decorating ideas that are far advanced in the psychology of texture, color, and sensuality. And *Cosmo*, of course, was talking about sensuality in the sexual sense long before "J."

I suggest, for example, that we take advantage of articles like "Thirty-two Different Ways to Kiss"—because we *can*. Not every girl who has children can. Chapters ago, we talked about image change after childbirth: a change from "free romantic girl" to "mother," and a change that, if it occurs, makes using sex-kitten ideas difficult, incongruous, perhaps ridiculous. (A girl I know, mother of three, tried one of the kisses suggested. Her husband responded, "What the hell do you think you're doing, Lois?"')

But that's not our problem. We can give our husbands those upside-down kisses. We can eyelash-kiss, French-kiss, and kiss all the other ways suggested by that article.

Getting back to careers for a moment, one of the things that Helen Gurley Brown has proved is that it is easy to blend a career with femininity.

It's far more feminine to be working in an office than to be playing wifey-wife in your house or apartment all day.

The reason is obvious. For femininity to be functional, there has to be a man around. Your husband isn't home during the day. (Hence the term "housewife.") If you stay home all day, you're married to a *house*. I'm unable to see much fun in that!

But if you're out in the world, meeting people, talking to them, having coffee with them, arguing with them, playing politics to get a certain office project assigned to you, going to lunch with friends, picking up a new idea from a co-worker, *interacting* with people (some of whom are men), you are

keeping your skills as a person, and as a female, very much alive.

This can't help but show in the way you are when you meet your husband after work. All day, you've been talked to, flirted with, looked at, appreciated, *seen*. And the resulting confidence you feel inevitably shows. And your husband responds to this, and his response is much different than it would be if he came home to a dull little house drudge who had forgotten how to flirt and make conversation months before.

If you have a job or career, house *work* doesn't seem like house *drudgery*, by the way. "Our apartment doesn't take that much care," says Dianne Sullivan, who works for NASA in Los Angeles, "and I've noticed that work at home seems a hobby to me, and I really enjoy it. When you haven't seen your apartment all day, it seems a marvelous place. When you haven't had to fix Spaghetti-o's and Kool-Aid and peanut butter sandwiches all day, fixing dinner is a creative activity."

There's a difference in your husband's appreciation of your housework if you have your own career. If you're just a housewife, it's assumed that everything is going to be polished, dusted, and perfect. It's further assumed that you will serve a perfect dinner and bring coffee-and-newspaper afterwards. And a husband takes this for granted; and something taken for granted may not mean very much.

But, if you are a girl who has a life outside the home, that same coffee-and-newspaper service is different. If you play geisha to your guy, as Helen Brown proudly says she does, it is something you *choose* to do. And it means something to your man, then.

Ann Berman, a friend of mine here in Baltimore, is a good example of this. She runs two boutiques which have grown from homemade jewelry to hand-cut English leather boots and coats and the latest Seventh Avenue has to offer.

Speaking of Seventh Avenue, she goes there once

every few months on buying trips.

Once, on an overnight trip, she struck up a sudden friendship with a group of designers. They all took her out: the Ad Lib for cocktails, Serendipity for dinner, Yellowfingers afterwards, and dancing all over midtown Manhattan till 4 a.m.

"I didn't know whether to tell Bruce or not. As I was getting off the train in Baltimore the next night, I was still thinking, 'Shall I tell him? There's no reason *not* to tell him. But there's no reason to *tell* him. Maybe I'll tell him later; no, I don't think there's any reason to mention it now . . .' And of course the first thing I said after he'd kissed me was, 'Bruce, guess what I did last night!'

"And it was not only all right, it was *all right*!

"A man, I think," she continued, "has to know his wife is still attractive to other men. This is one reason a wife needs to work, or she forgets what it's all about, and then her husband forgets all about her. If she works, she'll stay attractive, and stay interesting."

Ann will, anyway.

Staying interesting is one big reason for working, but you don't have to walk into a magazine editorship or a boutique ownership in order to be interesting. Helen Brown's husband no doubt enjoys seeing her in her lady-executive suite at *Cosmo*. But when I was a *receptionist*, my husband liked to come by my office and see me, too, and just talk for ten minutes or so, see me as I directed somebody down the right corridor. In effect, he was seeing me as other people did, and it was not just as "his wife," but it made the fact that I *was* his wife all the more special.

And a girl named Pat here in Baltimore had what she *thought* was "an enjoyable but insignificant little job" as a junior copywriter.

"But suddenly I was thrown into something *quite* significant. My ad agency took on a candidate for governor, and they transferred *me* to his office for two months, where I was the advertising-public-relations contact for him. *I* was the one who said, 'Yes, he'll be happy to make an appearance at your Rotary meeting Tuesday,' and 'No, there's no time for a TV

taping tomorrow; it'll have to be done over the weekend, or next week.'

"Sounds like being a supersecretary keeping the boss' appointments straight, doesn't it? It was. But it was more. I've been a secretary before, in different businesses. But the talk here was different. It was civil rights, state taxes and voting precincts, not stockholders' reports and sales records. And I worked out the press releases, then got the releases to the right people at the right time. I got to know the newsmen, some of whom were friends of my husband. Some days, I'd do nothing but drive the candidate and his wife to appointments; other days, I couldn't get free of the phone. And I went to banquets and danced with politicians . . .

"Oh, and there was one time (this was later, when I was with a different agency, working for a different candidate) when we were filming a TV commercial in downtown Baltimore, and the City Comptroller came up to me; we were introduced and we talked; and the music for the TV film started; and suddenly he said to me, 'Would you like to dance?' And so, in front of about a thousand people, there we were, doing an improvised polka around the Jacob France Fountain . . . and laughing . . .

"To everybody I know," Pat added, "Hyman Pressman is the City Watchdog, the *Comptroller Terrible*. I saw him differently. In working, you get to see unexpected glimpses of character like that; and I value them terribly."

Of course, one could argue that if you're at home, you get those glimpses of character, too—into other housewife-neighbors. But that's rather limited. It is, after all, an all-female society. To my way of thinking, seeing men other than the checkout boy at the Super-M is important, plus which I think productive and cooperative effort prompts more revealing conversation than koffee-klatching.

Pat proves a point we were making before, too, by the way. A girl who helps organize banquets and run political campaigns is more feminine and exciting than a girl who stays home playing housekeeper. So is



a girl who addresses envelopes at a political headquarters, like I did. (I got to meet everybody, too.)

Most girls I talked to agreed that there is something intrinsic to the working situation that keeps their husbands actively interested in them. Part of what attracts a man to a woman is a certain competitive spirit. If you really look at it, men want women that *other* men want. And if you're working, your husband knows that other men are seeing and appreciating you. Result: he appreciates you more, too.

But developing your femininity, and enriching your personality, aren't the only reasons for working. Money counts, too, for most people, at least. The best things in life haven't been free for some time. Natural beauty certainly has its price these days (as does clean air), to say nothing of food, drink, clothing, recreation, and entertainment.

You have to be free to pick up a bottle of really fine Scotch or some really expensive groceries once in a while, or an expensive negligee or tickets for a hockey game or a concert, just to treat your husband to a special evening. If you work, you have some money of your own, and the "special evening" doesn't have to show its price tag and dissolve into a discussion of the budget.

Work can also guide you to use your leisure time well. It's one thing to spend a day reading Hemingway, Tom Wolfe, or Rollo May at home. But it just works better, somehow, to pick up enthusiasm and ideas about *what's* good, and *why*, from other people.

I can still recall snatches of teachers'-room conversation that turned me on to Jonathan Kozol and Tom Wolfe: ("*Death at an Early Age* can't possibly be telling the truth; there's nobody like that *here* . . ." "Tom Wolfe has something new out . . ." "And Naomi's ordered it for the library somebody told me, and I *don't* think that's a good idea at *all* . . . It's about Ken Kesey and literary merit aside, I just don't think youngsters should be exposed . . ." "Well, I think . . .")

And after reading the book in question (*Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*) I not only had my own reactions

to the book, but a lot of character-revealing reactions of other people, too.

Picking up ideas about books, films, sports, politics, music, dress, conservation or gardening, for that matter, is a pleasant outgrowth of being paid for a job. And *that's* a consensus of all the girls mentioned so far.

These girls, too, would support my husband's theory that, "It's the with-it wives who go out and have jobs and do things. Wives who stay shut up in the suburbs are like presents from Aunt Hattie: not too attractive; so you keep them closeted rather than on display."

Two other good examples are Susan Root, a native New Yorker who now works in Chicago, and Los Angeles' Patrecia Branden. You couldn't imagine either of these girls staying home!

Susan zings around the windy city in a small sports car, doing all sorts of interviews for the *Chicago Daily News*, and has been sent on assignment to Rome and the Riviera. (At age 23, she covered the Cannes Film Festival.)

"There seems to be nothing she can't do," according to her husband, Clayton, who's a treasurer of Borg-Warner as well as manager of his own business. "She wrote a story on changes in the market that ended up on page 1 of the financial section . . ."

"When I saw *that*," Susan recalls, "I realized that maybe I knew as much about the market as most brokers. And *that* scared us right out of the market!"

Many evenings, they're out: at an opening, a benefit, a movie, a new revue at Second City ("Last night, 'Swine Lake' opened; it was fantastic—it satirized everything from ballet styles to politics . . .") But there are quiet evenings, too.

"When we're having dinner at home, I shop for what we need, and arrive at the apartment *before* Clayton. I need a bit of time—to get out of a bubble bath and into a hostess dress—and then start dealing with dinner. By the time Clayton comes in the door, the music is on; the candles are lighted; the wine is chilled; and I'm (I hope) such a picture of relaxation that he might think I'd been home all day . . ."

Except for her conversation.

Count on it: Susan does *not* talk about household minutiae over the candlelight and wine. She's had an interesting day, and it shows.

Patrecia Branden's life is interesting, too. Seeing her leave her husband's Sunset Boulevard offices in Los Angeles, you might guess that she's an actress, or a model. And you'd be right. She'll tell you though, that she's impatient with straight fashion modeling. "I much prefer acting; there has to be something to say . . ."

Another part of her working life is assisting her husband at the Institute of Biocentric Psychology, which has as its aims marital enrichment and personality enrichment through a sense of self-esteem.

The Brandens believe very strongly in the unique values of a childless marriage, and I've indicated that when I've quoted Nathaniel earlier in this book. What I have not described, because I'm not sure I can do it adequately, is the unique quality of their own marriage. The friend who introduced me to the Brandens said, "If there is an argument for the childless marriage, it is Nathaniel and Patrecia. They are perfect."

Nathaniel speaks of everything with enthusiasm, but particularly he's proud of Patrecia. "She's the most exciting and delightful woman I have ever known." She could not live in the ordinary way. Shutting herself off in their Beverly Hills home as a 'housewife,' she would miss too much.

"There are," she says, "well—I'll put it this way. There are dramatic moments in life, when everything stops short. There are periods of time when one lives at a high intensity, at peak awareness. Acting is like that; our feeling with *people* is like that . . ."

"For that matter," Nathaniel interrupts, "life with Patrecia is like that."

The Brandens go out less often than the Roots; and their evenings at home have less of a storybook quality than Susans and Clayton's. They are more apt to have an informal meal than one by candlelight, and they are not inclined to night life. For no particular

reason, they do not drink. Other things are wine to them: ideas, people, and the experiences of working with both.

I think that's true of other childless couples—in fact, I think that's *typical* of childless couples. And I think that such an approach to life has much to recommend it. You have to be ready to tune in to the real world, to try to look at the kaleidoscopic shifts of the adult personalities around you and get them to stop, once in a while, in patterns. What you see becomes a part of you. What you experience you then communicate. And you do not have to be a reporter or a model for this to be true. When I was in Chicago, I was a secretary, not a reporter. But I went to Second City and to a few benefit dances. And, frankly, although I think I am an interesting person to my husband now, I think I was just as interesting to him when I was a receptionist. I was just as aware of people; I just didn't *write* about them, that's all.

Any job or career that you might try can provide experiences that will increase in value, that will add to you, and that will be exciting in themselves.

There are experiences that I call "circus" experiences, taking the term from an e.e. cummings poem. In the poem I'm thinking of, cummings says something like, "damn everything but the circus . . . damn everything that is grim, dull, motionless, unrisking, inward-turning . . . damn everything that won't throw its heart into the tension, surprise, fear and delight of the circus, the round world, the full existence . . ."

But in order to have these experiences (sharing coffee with a mayor in a duck blind; riding a cable car in San Francisco between interviews; dancing around a fountain with a conservative comptroller; *seeing an expression change and knowing it means a mind has changed*) you've got to be out in the world. You've got to be doing something, making your mark, or trying to.

And then everything happens.

And it won't if you sit home playing housewife-mother.

Circuses don't come to your door.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Communicating*

"To understand *men* is easy. To know and understand *one man* can be the most difficult thing in the world."

—A wife of one year

To know and understand, you must communicate. And yet, most married couples don't. Not on any real level, anyway.

Dr. Carl Meador, Director of the Center for Studies of the Person, La Jolla, California, says that within the function of their jobs, and within the structure of their homes, most couples have limited opportunity for self-discovery and meaningful communication. Or rather, he explains, "they *see* limited opportunities for discovering and communicating themselves.

"Most couples set limits on their relationship. A husband or wife will think, 'I want something more, something deeper,' but will decide, 'Well, I'll settle for this.' Their marriage is a continuous and subtle struggle against the desire for *more*, in terms of intimacy and communication, than they now have."

Hence the profusion of the intimacy-building, self-revealing encounter groups. Hence the popularity of communications workshops. If Dr. Meador's generalization is correct, many married couples are living in a kind of emotional prison, and they want *out*—into life (significantly, one of the Center's programs is called "To Be Alive")—and the escape route has to be communication.

While Dr. Meador's statement undeniably applies, to some extent, to most couples, it seems strangely inapplicable to most *childless* couples I have interviewed.

Think back, for example, to Karen and Gary Kramer ("We talk for hours, every evening, hours . . .") and the way Wally was able to conclude Marcia's interview, because *he knew in detail* what had happened between Marcia and her supervisor.

Or remember the way Helen Gurley Brown, Susan Root, and Patrecia Branden described their evenings with their husbands. Or Carole Ann and Jack Tucker: ("We spend so much time planning, thinking, dreaming . . . there is no time, it seems, to talk of the mundane; there is too much else, of more significance, that we have to say . . .")

"Our second evening in London," Ann Berman recalls, "Bruce and I didn't go out. We sat in our hotel room and just spent the evening talking—oh, I couldn't tell you about what. About the fact that we were in London, and what *that* meant. Just being there seemed to affect our feelings somehow. We both felt as though we'd just been married . . ."

That description of "struggling for more" just doesn't fit these marriages.

Communication? These couples do it. Intimacy? They have it. It does not come automatically, though, even for childless couples. It is *easier* for us, by one thousand times, but it does not come automatically.

I know it *seems*, for a long time, as though everything falls into place naturally. When you first meet a guy and fall in love with him, it seems that you're holding nothing back, that intimacy is complete, that communicating is natural. But that is really an illusion, based on novelty, the surface romanticism of dinners out and other fun rituals and sexual attraction.

The talking you do during this time is seldom real communication. It is far too selective. Love talk is code phrases, verbal stimuli to spur the sexual response. Conversationally, he is saying what will impress you; you are saying what will please him. You

are showing the positive facets of your personality and past experiences, and, inasmuch as you conceal the mundane and the unflattering, you are guilty of some distortion. You are not really communicating the person you are; you are projecting an image.

Such surface romanticism, obviously, cannot last. Sustaining an illusion is pretty impossible when you live with somebody. A while after marriage, the illusions begin to subside, pushed out by such subtle realities as juice cans left in the sink, towels crumpled on the bathroom floor (or a wife who's constantly running around tossing out the juice cans and picking up the towels; *that's* infinitely worse!).

And there is a point—in most marriages, after a year or so—when the illusions are gone. And this occurs whether or not there are children. The difference is, the vanished illusions can be replaced by a deeper, real, and personal intimacy *if* there are no children. (With children, on the other hand, the leisure that is so vital to real self-discovery is hard to find.) For childless couples, the loss of illusion we've been talking about does not mean the loss of romance; and it does not mean, for us, any loss of sexuality. The *surface* romanticism goes; what comes next is *real*.

The thing is, you have to admit reality gracefully. You can not grasp at the past or pout about "the way things were before."

"It is a truism," says Jo Coudert in *Advice from a Failure*, "that the more things change, the more they stay the same, but it is equally accurate to reverse this: the more things stay the same, the more they change. For a marriage to stay the same—that is, for it to remain the enclosure of love and delight in the other—the people in it must be capable of growing and finding new ways of relating to each other . . . If they cannot, the more they stay the same, and the marriage will change, and perhaps deteriorate beyond the point where one or both feel it is worth preserving . . ."

Why not bring "change" to a marriage or "find new ways to relate to each other" the easy way—by having children? Because the changes can escalate complete-

ly out of control. Because the roles of man and woman separate. Because the social expectations for "fathers" and "mothers" actually function to prevent fulfillment as "man" and "woman." Because the triad is less functional than the dyad, and, rather than relating to each other in newer ways, the husband and wife may find themselves relating to each other in *fewer* ways.

But I do not want you to think that, just because you avoid the pitfalls of child-raising, your marriage will automatically attain a state of perfection and automatically stay there.

There will be *change*. And, if you accept this fact, that change can be growth. Don't be like one silly wife I know who went into a fit of petulance because her husband didn't bring her roses on their six months anniversary. That kind of clinging to the past ("But he *used* to bring me roses all the time!") is reserved strictly for wives who don't care that their roses will be sent in the future by their husband's secretary!

But if, as a wife, your life is full, if you relate to what happens today because it is, after all, *today*, and not because it is a six months anniversary, then you may get some flowers once in a while. And you'll get them from reasons of spontaneous feeling, and not because of empty ritual. They will represent something *real*.

There are several things to be done to make a relationship real.

For a start, live that relationship in the present tense. When you're first getting to know each other, there's inevitably a lot of talking about the past (he had two broken teeth at age six; you had two prom dates at age sixteen) and there's something intoxicating about this continual character revelation, the growing insights into each other's life as you glimpse these selected vignettes from each other's backgrounds.

But stories of the past have their limits of time and charm. The thing that's absolutely necessary is to keep living, actively, so that you still have new

insights into yourself to offer and to share.

"The important thing to us," according to Ellen Muir of Seattle, "isn't doing everything together, but doing our *own* thing, then sharing it."

Ellen is not a wife like May Larsen, who tries to pen her husband inside the home at all times. Larry comes home because he *wants* to, not because there's a lawn to mow, a hedge to trim, the kids to be taken to this or that appointment.

I think it's usual for childless wives to have enough self-confidence to allow their husbands some freedom. We can simply *assume* we are loved; we don't need continual Fido-like fidelity and ritual roses to "prove" it. We do not cling. Our husbands are not driven (as so many *fathers* are) to constantly seek escape. Their independent activities are based on real interests and do not grow out of claustrophobia.

If Clayton Root had an evening business or political meeting, Susan would never say to him, "Stay home." And Ellen Muir wouldn't say that to her husband when he had planned a climbing trip. (Larry Muir is not a novice climber; with other Western mountain enthusiasts, he'll take on an almost vertical sheet of rock.) "I'm not saying I'm overjoyed when he leaves on a trip," Ellen explains, "but Larry loves the challenge of difficult climbs. He has a taste for adventure that does *not* get satisfied in a scientific laboratory. What right would I have to try to keep him home?"

While Larry is gone, Ellen doesn't sit around getting bored. She does community work, or goes to a play with friends. And she has a passion for reading—and writing—excellent mystery stories.

While *your husband* is at a Chamber of Commerce meeting or at an Orioles game with his boss, you should find something to do, too—and it should be more than your nails or the kitchen floor, as these afford only the most limited communication when your husband comes home. I'll have to admit that this is a perfect time to do housework and errands, but housework can be finished quickly, and errands needn't be limited to the usual shop-for-food and

pick-up-laundry. Stop at a record shop or the library and bring home a Van Cliburn to go with the lamb roast. (Van Cliburn also goes very nicely with after-dinner letter writing, café au lait, and random talk.)

Patrecia Branden gave me that idea, actually. She brings home albums constantly, and her taste is distinctive. ("Most of the top-selling albums we have never heard of.") She likes romantic classical music—Saint-Saëns is a favorite—or something unusual, like the Richard Harris/Jim Webb album, *The Yard Went on Forever*.

Music can be a communications aid. A light-classical lp is simple background for feelings; and something like *The Yard Went on Forever* can actually prompt feelings. When Bill and I were listening to *The Yard*, we just looked at each other and couldn't discuss it for maybe five minutes. It's a very powerful song; it creates a world and takes you into it, whether or not you want to go.

There is really a dual function to things you do on your own: they add to *you*; and so they add to what you have to communicate.

But we've only talked about leisure time so far.

It is also vital, to truly know someone, to share his work experiences. As Helen Gurley Brown explains, "The woman who works, sees, experiences, can therefore understand her husband's reactions to the pressures and tensions of a job." Such a wife is more apt to be a meaningful partner and one that her husband can talk to.

I found that childless wives, particularly those with jobs of their own, could usually tell me a great deal about their husbands' work. A wife *with* children, by contrast, had often lost touch completely. She typically gave me a one-sentence answer. Or she added information like, "He's been with the company five years."

Contrast this with Carole Tucker's description of her husband's job: (Jack is financial manager for the publishing company that also employs Carole as editor of *Teen* magazine.)

"... Jack works with projections of advertising,



circulation, salesmen's efforts, changes in office buildings, operating costs, expense accounts, promotional projects. He draws data from seventeen branch offices, looks at everything involved in the total financial picture of the company, projects probable costs and makes sure they're in line with gross income and net profits.

"Sure, Jack talks to me about all this. And we're constantly exchanging ideas about our work; ideas, too, about people we both know in the company. *That* can be wild, because we see people so differently. Jack, being a bit reserved, sees people from ten paces back. I eyeball them. And we can get involved in some far-out discussions about people we both know; what they're really like, what they really want, are they really happy. Putting our thoughts together makes for more understanding, and far more rewarding relationships than we could have singly.

"But it's impossible to talk about Jack's work without talking about *Jack*. Unlike me, Jack is cool at all times. Never does emotion override the logic of the situation at hand. *Except* when there's mention of a stock-market or commodities-market downswing, some unforeseen company costs. Then there's a complete metamorphosis. He paces, worries, wrestles with charts and graphs . . .

"His work is fascinating, an entirely different world from mine. Jack can make a graph seem interesting. And I can appreciate what his special talents are. His job *does* take talent, though of a different sort. I'm sure *some* men working with the financial aspects of a publishing company wouldn't know anything about *what* the company published, wouldn't know an editorial page from an ad page. But Jack can understand the esthetics of a magazine, yet grasp both the esthetic and *practical* applications. A rare combination!"

What is rare is Carole's appreciation of his work.

It occurred to me after talking to Carole that possibly the total communication within a marriage is aided if husband and wife work closely together. I had the same feeling hearing Lila Prager talk about

her relationship with her husband, Tom. (I've discussed them in Chapter 5.) Whereas Carole and Jack share the same company within which they have differing functions, Lila and Tom share the same career field: both are psychologists. "Although our work is important," she says, "when one of us wants to drop it for a while, the other does, too. For example, Tom just came up to my study cubicle last night and said, 'Let's *do* something tonight. I just can't study anymore.'

"On evenings like that, we catch a six o'clock showing of something light, like *Airport*, or a Beatles movie, and get a hamburger afterwards. Or we might drive around the edge of town watching the sun set, or drop in on friends for cards and coffee. Or go to the bookstore, stock up on magazines, and take them to the Union building to laugh over. I think this is the most important thing about our recreation: its spontaneity, and the way it suits the needs of the moment . . ."

Significantly, Lila adds: "Eventually, we get around to talking about the problem that drove one or the other of us away from studying."

Now, with the wife-in-the-home, taking care of babies, and the husband-outside-the-home, involved in studies, such ideal communication just couldn't result. Neither would appreciate the other's tasks; neither would truly understand the other's problems.

I want to add a word about the housework, in their case, because housework can have a bearing on communication, too.

"The housework is done by whoever feels like it. Tom always cooks the meat, I do the vegetables and salad. He makes the salad dressing, I do dessert. If we have spaghetti, though, Tom makes it, because his is brilliant. If we have anything that comes from a recipe, I do it. He takes out the trash; I do the ironing. Whichever one of us feels least negative towards it cleans out the bathtub. We both straighten things up; we take turns tossing the dishes into the machine."

If you'll think about that a minute, you'll see why that's ideal, as far as communication's concerned. If your husband is in the living room and you're in the kitchen, do you talk much? See what happens, though, if you fix dinner together one night.

Of course, not all husbands will go for that idea, so be subtle if you have to. Not, "Dear, I thought it would be nice if we got dinner *together* tonight," but, "Hey, help! I can't get the lid off the olives and the cheese for the salad is too hard to put through the grater!"

If you can do this at least occasionally, you won't lose touch with each other. And if you *are* in touch with each other, it's easy to talk about whatever is on your mind, before it gets repressed or becomes depressing.

"We always discuss with each other any little thing that comes up," says Lila. "There's no problem there because we're so close that anything gets discussed naturally, as it occurs. Probably this is why we fight so seldom. We're in such a state of complete understanding usually that there's nothing to fight *about*. And little things that *might* bother us get talked out before they have a chance to assume any large proportion."

Not every couple, of course—not even every childless couple—would want such complete closeness.

It wouldn't suit Paul and Gail Blaisdell. Paul has a rather rigorous academic administration job at Johns Hopkins University; he wants his wife involved in something completely different. Gail is out every day, free-lancing at a dozen different writing, photography, and public-relations jobs (which she qualifies for due to a lengthy stint as a newspaper reporter).

And Ann and Bruce Berman find that two separate careers give them two views of the city: two worlds, not one. Ann sees young Baltimore from the frenzied perspective of her downtown boutique; Bruce (though he's with her at the store on Saturdays) deals with more established parts of the city in his real-estate job.

Whether *you* and *your* husband want relative close-

ness or relative separation in your work has nothing to do with the degree of love in your marriage. It is more a matter of job interests. In order for both husband and wife to be in the same career field, like the Pragers, both must be *highly* interested in that field and see a lot of variety within it.

In most cases, it's probably better if we wives have jobs and careers somewhat separate from our husbands'. There will still be a basis for sharing, communicating with our husbands about their jobs.

It can be difficult to communicate about jobs, because most jobs have problems. But something happens when a vital area of life is unshared. That "something" is emotional separation, and it starts with silence.

Most married couples get to know each other—up to a point, a certain, clearly-defined point—and that's *it*. That stopping point is the point beyond which vulnerability or inadequacy might be exposed. And many people feel inadequate within their field of work. Probably the majority of men are, on their own terms, unsuccessful in their jobs. Some degree of dissatisfaction is the general rule. That's why many wives, when they ask, "How was work today, dear?" get some form of silence: a monosyllable ("Fine") or an excuse ("Oh, I don't like to bring office problems home with me").

This is often the first area of silence, of not sharing. Later, there may be others.

That's why you can't accept the silence or the "I want to leave the office at the office" excuse. Not consistently, anyway. Silence often effectively masks problems. But it also causes it own. If a guy gets used to never *expressing* things he feels, outwardly, he may stop *defining* these things to himself, inwardly. Whatever is difficult for him to deal with is buried then, true. But buried preoccupations, as Jo Coudert points out, do not go underground alone. They take with them valuable parts of the personality, depriving the personality of richness and variety of response, and, I might add, of general enjoyment.

This happens all the time to men in households with

children. I heard dozens of comments more or less like the following: "Look, supposing I *did* want to talk something over. In the first place, she wouldn't understand anyway. If I tell her I lost an account, she'd think I was trying to say I was being fired, and we'd argue all night. But besides, who can talk about the office or *anything* with Lois yelling about who hit Tommy and where Jimmie left his bike and why were they late getting home? Believe me, even if I come home at six with something on my mind, who can remember it through three hours of that commotion?"

But let's be honest. The same situation—a taciturn husband—happens sometimes to those of us without children. We have to ask ourselves why.

Perhaps we, too, lack understanding. If we, too, go to pieces when a husband tells us about a poor client interview, a lost account, we can't expect much in the way of future candor about work problems. And that, of course, means trouble. Men talk about their problems to someone, eventually. If you want your husband to talk about his to you, you've got to be more supportive than critical.

And some of us who have no children may have, from time to time, what amounts to a substitute "child." That is, we may find ourselves involved in a project that requires similar expenditures of time, energy, and attention. I did not find very many examples of this. But I can give you a very personal one. It happened to me (ironically enough!) at one point during the writing of this book. I was, one evening, expounding to Bill on all that's in Chapter 7. What a trap it all was! How much enjoyment it prevented! "I could never spend all that time doing laundry and changing diapers," I concluded. "No," Bill agreed, "you do revisions, and you change typewriter ribbons."

That was all he had to say. I got the point; and I'm sure you do, too. If, occasionally, you have a project of such importance that it *does* pre-empt lots of your time, catch yourself before such projects become a pattern.

Or, if our husbands are not communicating problems, it's possibly because we're still illusion-tending. Wife is busy being Perfect Wife, Perfect Homemaker. Husband doesn't feel like introducing real problems into all this artificial perfection. So, Wife (Perfect Homekaer) does dishes in the kitchen ("I must remember to get some new barbecue tools tomorrow and try that new dessert mix I have the cents-off coupon for . . .") while husband reads and works out his own problems ("I'll put in a request for some extra office help and maybe we can get the monthly report out on time; I wish Phil would quit bothering me about it though . . .").

And that's no good.

Neither wife nor husband knows what's going on in each other's mind, and that can be the first step down two separate roads.

Personally, I've found that certain situations can help stimulate talk about work problems. I've *not* found any leading questions to be helpful, though. In fact, little lead-ins like, "Gee, did something go wrong today, dear? You look so dejected," can prompt anything from an explosion to a denial to a clam-up but probably *not* an answer to your question.

Here are some things that do help:

1) Relaxation. Some simple sensuality. (More on this later in the chapter.) Some humor. Some music in the house. A shoulder-rub. A shower. A drink. If your husband *does* look tense and dejected, don't tell him he looks tense and dejected. Say, "You look like you could use a cold shower and a Scotch."

2) Activity. Carole Ann and Jack play tennis twice a week. Susan and Clayton Root bicycle along the Chicago shoreline sometimes. Ann and Bruce Berman run around Druid Park Lake ("Bruce jogs in circles around me so that I can keep up with him," Ann explains.) If the weather's at all good, Bill and I are at the swimming pool. Or, try golf. Or horseback riding. (If you don't know how, they have people to teach you.) Surf, if you live

near an ocean and it's summer; ski, if you live in the mountains and it's winter.

3) Conversation, from *you*. Rather than ask him a question, just start talking. What happened to *you* during the day, for example?

4) If you're going to ask a question, make it specific. Not just "How was work?" but "Is Harold back from vacation?" "Did you finish that assignment you were working on?" "How did you tell Phil you didn't like his reorganization idea?"

Or, start talking about something that's not even related to work. You've read a newspaper or a magazine or seen somebody interesting on the subway today, haven't you? Or you've been shopping for vine leaves to stuff and brown rice to stuff them with and became instant friends with the owner of the specialty food shop? Or talk about Dustin Hoffman, the windows at Hecht's, the Polisfair, or politics.

Just joking around can be good. ("I'm worried about this wine," I heard Ellen Muir say once, "it tastes like the skin stayed on the grape just slightly too long during the second pressing; so the wine is at the same time too young and too old . . .")

And reminiscing can be good, especially if you're looking back to some difficult times. Comments like, "Do you remember when I *always* used to get mad about that, not just sometimes?" is a way of pointing out progress in a relationship.

Though this seems like small talk, and often is, it does establish verbal contact and gets things moving. Lots of times, "just talk" precedes real communication.

The stimulation of a new situation also helps; and here, again, we have an advantage over wives with kids-in-the-house. We can say, "Take me out to dinner, OK?" or, "Could we go out and see a movie tonight?" And, away from the usual home setting, thought-sharing is often easier.

Communicating means sharing thoughts about nearly *everything*, whether it's jobs, art, sex, tennis, or values. And communication involves feeling as well

as words, the body as well as the mind. The *self* is sensual; that's why most "encounter" or "communications" groups begin on a level of sensuality.

Unfortunately, the loss of the sensual self is common, particularly among city dwellers, and maybe this shouldn't be very surprising. Our awareness of our physical selves depends to some extent on the stimulation offered by our surroundings; and city surroundings (unless you happen to work in an art gallery) can offer meager sensory input. There are about ten trillion textures, for example, in your average forest—and maybe ten in the Union Carbide Building.

But beyond this, cities (and civilization in general, I suppose) set up funny material values based more on *status* than *sensuality*. In fact, the loss of sensuality (or pleasure) can be almost directly measured by the attention given to status (power) symbols. And the point is, within your own home, it would be a mistake to set up these status-y values. Status items do not aid communication, as do things that provide sensual pleasure.

In the first place, communication at the level of physical sensation is relaxing and enjoyable. Tall *about* the taste of the fontina cheese, *about* the Cajun sounds of an Exuma album, or *about* what you hear during a walk at midnight. (It may occur to you that your perceptions of sight and sound *increase* as your speed of walking decreases.)

Or, if you have any interest in giving you and your husband an "encounter group at home" experience, begin where the encounter groups do: with the sense of touch.

Now, since the explosion of the sensitivity/communications/encounter groups, there have been a lot of books that deal, in whole or in part, with awakening the sense of touch. One of my favorites is Bernard Gunther's *Sense Relaxation*. It differs from other good books on the subject (like William Schutz's *Joy*) in its wealth of specific sense-play exercises.

Many of the other books of the genre are mainly theory. This one begins:

NOW

## LISTEN!

(those two words take up the entire page)

and then it tells you exactly what to do. Your first assignment is to "sit straight, not rigid in a chair . . . close your eyes and follow your thoughts for one minute." Then you let the thoughts go and simply concentrate on how every part of your body *feels*.

There are pages of exercises for stretching, lifting, slapping, touching, falling, tapping, bending, exploring all the parts of your body (would you believe two pages on how to touch the back of the leg?) in order to awaken every part of the body to the sense of touch.

And (here we go!) there are exercises for the two of you, including, in a lengthy page, some general instructions for touching:

- \*let your hands take the contour of the area to be touched

- \*don't move your hands or fingers around once you have established contact

- \* give you partner plenty of time in between touches

- \* the touch is firm-light; don't push down or squeeze your partner

- \* stay with what you're doing, touching, rather than let your mind wander elsewhere

and for being touched:

- \* keep your eyes closed during the entire experience unless instructed otherwise

- \* be open . . . and let the effects of the touch move through you

- \* allow whatever wants to happen

\* don't make anything happen or keep anything from happening

And the actual touching exercises that follow those general instructions are very good for you. Part of the fun of these sense-play games with your husband is really getting into the instructions and letting them turn you on ("Stay alive in your hands . . .") and part of the fun is in "allowing whatever wants to happen." And (forgive me for beating my drum again) it's a lot easier to *let* things happen and grow from these exercises if you don't have to put the kids to bed or check to make sure they're not tearing the pillows apart.

By the way, although these sense-relaxation exercises often lead to sexual arousal, that's not the sole reason for them. In a marriage that already has a healthy sexual relationship, these sensitivity exercises serve as a simple stimulant to communication.

Because talking about sense experiences is easy ("that feels funny;" "that feels good;" "that feels like needles, like fire") it can lead into talking about things that are less easy to discuss.

Then, too, the ability to appreciate sense experiences improves a person's emotional experiences.

Sense perceptions depend on variety and contrast. So do emotional perceptions.

When a person can feel—in his hands—the difference between one body surface and another, he may be opened up enough to feel in his mind the difference between the way he felt about you an hour ago and now.

And as we've implied, since sex is a part of the total sensual self, perceptions of the sexual self increase right along with sensuality.

Now, of course, it will be no news to you that not all husbands are going to go for these formalized sensitivity-training-at-home games. Not if they're directly suggested, anyway. Of course, a book with free and unclothed bodies illustrating its exercises (like the Gunther book) might be halfway intriguing, if it's just lying on the coffee table.



I simply brought the book home one night and tossed it down as I started to get some drinks for us. "What's this?" Bill called as he picked it up.

"Oh, I just thought it looked interesting."

He read it for a few minutes.

"Come here!" he said.

But you can increase sense awareness without books at all. (Towel him off after his shower; ask him to put your body lotion on you. Play barefoot games under the coffee table as you're leafing through magazines and the mail after dinner.) The trick is to keep your mind alive to your body: *realize* what you're doing, *as* you're doing it; be aware of sensations, *as* you're feeling them. This applies to love-making, too, of course; and here, too, being actively aware of what you're feeling, and even talking or whispering about those feelings, can add to the sensations involved and give infinite variety to the sexual experience.

Inasmuch as these things promote physical intimacy, they allow you and your husband to know each other better on a sensual level. But they do not expand the mind and the personality in and of themselves. Other input is needed for totally meaningful communication. You need continually changing situations around you—new people, new interests.

For too many married couples, though, marriage signals a retreat to the womb. They enter Their House, and they Stay Put. They don't go out. "Oh, we used to before we were married . . ."—but now they're economizing. They're saving for the house, the furniture, the children. By the time they acquire the house and furniture, by the time the children come, they can hate each other. Inwardly, each blames the other for those deadly goals of "thrift" that have cheated each one of a richness of experience that is the soil for emotional growth.

Don't let that happen. Get out and go interesting places. Keep yourself open to what you see. You can get carried away talking, just reacting to what is around you, *if* there are stimulating situations around you.

Go to the Crack of Dawn coffee house and hear a

new singer, or to a campaign-committee meeting for a state congressman. (Go out to dinner afterwards and talk about folk singing and politics.) Go to a wilderness-club meeting and find out about a white-water trip by raft down the Youghiogheny River. Come home, and, amidst the snug security of comfy throw pillows and bubbly fondue, ask each other if you're really the sort of people who can *do* that, who can get on a raft and face a sixteen-hour trip over rocks and rapids. Go to an out-of-town restaurant, to a community theater play, to a night ball game, or to a movie you don't think you'll like.

And that is the way you get to know each other, by the way. You don't really learn much about one another by sitting down and word-exchanging. A person can say, "I like modern music," or "I like films that make a social comment," and so what? You don't *really* know that person's tastes until you go with him to an experimental symphony, or to a rerun of *Medium Cool*.

("Did you like that . . . ?" "Yes . . ." "Why?" "Because . . .")

These external situations are like mirrors, in which you see each other's views and attitudes quite clearly reflected.

And, while it undoubtedly helps if you live in New York, you don't have to live in a large city to do all this. Evansville, Indiana, for example, is probably fairly typical of cities which are not New York, and there are things to do there! Frequent art festivals have included such events as poetry reading by Mari Evans, folk singing by John Jacob Niles, a Black artists' show from DuSable Museum, films ranging from *Wild Strawberries* to *Mr. Roberts*, free concerts at the jazz club, and trail walks.

And there are always community projects.

And there is always politics.

As a marriage grows, perhaps the most important aid to communication is the sharing of mutual projects, whether of politics or interior decoration; but politics is better. Sure, you *can* talk meaningfully while handing each other paintbrushes; but the goal

you're working toward (a coral wall) is rather limited. You need one that can bolster your entire sense of self. If you both work for a political candidate, for example, you feel personally valuable, and yet at the same time you feel outside yourself, part of a process larger than yourself. Propped up by all this, communication—even the revealing of some real or imagined personal fault—just does not present such a serious problem.

There are seldom instant results, of course. Getting to know someone is a slow process, and it is a risky business. "Getting to know someone," Eldridge Cleaver wrote in *Soul on Ice*, "entering that new world, is an ultimate, irretrievable leap into the unknown. The prospect is terrifying . . . the emotions are overwhelming. The two people are reluctant really to strip themselves naked in front of each other, because in doing so they make themselves vulnerable and give enormous power over themselves, one to the other. How often they inflict pain . . . Better to maintain shallow, superficial affairs; that way the scars are not too deep. No blood is hacked from the soul . . ."

This, then, is the fear. If you *know* someone, you have a certain power over him. Because if you know him, you know what will hurt him. And we all fear the various hurts that self-revelation makes us vulnerable to: pity, condescension, insult.

Why bother, then? If people seem naturally to resist communicating with each other, why *bother*? Why not let it alone?

Because communication is necessary to a good marriage, that's why. If you do not know what is in a man's mind, then you are not really sharing his life, nor he yours.

It's important to *know* what happens to each other, day by day. Because that's life, after all: not what happens on birthdays and anniversaries, but what happens—what you learn and how you change—*today*, May 12, and *tomorrow*, May 13. *That's* life. And many couples miss it. They're so involved with fun

and games and this and that, and the bridge club and the overtime, and the kids and the PTA, that they truly never, never know what's going on in each other's thinking. And you have to know. You have to communicate.

Now, if you don't go after this kind of communication, you simply will not build intimacy. And I'm talking about *all* aspects of intimacy, including the sexual. (As Dr. Meador plainly put it, "You talk more; you make love more.")

And if you don't work for that kind of communication, the results can be rather sad. You can find yourself inwardly busy hiding things, afraid to be alone, afraid to be together, always needing people around to applaud the act you're putting on. You can find yourself very busy making up lies to yourself and thinking up convincing ways to tell those lies. And you can get used to that. But you can go a little bit crazy from it.

It's better to take a chance, to say what's in your mind, to encourage your husband to do the same. And, if real communication has been a rarity to your past experience or his, try some of the techniques we've talked about to encourage the initial sharing.

(Virginia Satir would probably like to interrupt at this point. As a noted marriage counselor and an originator of the encounter group, and as a believer in increased marital intimacy through communication, she is wary of the word "technique." You can create conditions for intimacy, for communication, she pointed out to me. But she feels it's best not to think of these as "techniques." Her feeling is that one can end up making a game, with limited goals, out of the very serious business of communication.)

If the techniques in this chapter are used simply get-him-to-talk ploys, they can go sour rather than going good. It all depends on the degree of your love and the sincerity of your intention. Your intention can't be merely to know what's going on out of wifely nosiness. It can't be to know what's going on so you'll have ammunition for future wifely fights

and games. You have to want to know what really is and be prepared to accept departures from the image that you knew before.

But only when a man does reveal the self behind the image can there be love. We can be attracted to those who impress us, and to those who offer us something. But we can love only those we know deeply.

There is just one thing I would add: to know a person *deeply* may not mean to know that person *completely*. Total communication is a goal, an ideal. And, though it is a worthwhile goal, you shouldn't in all cases approach it too energetically. There are some husbands—and wives, for that matter—who are not comfortable with the idea of complete self-revelation. So, wait a while. If information is ripped prematurely from the mind, it may be stillborn and valueless.

Further, in any marriage there are some problems that simply cannot be talked out, because such opposite points of view are held so firmly that bitterness, and not understanding, will result.

And there are some situations it might be better to keep to oneself. These vary with each marriage, but one fairly general suggestion might be: keep to yourself details of other, or previous, love affairs. I know of one disastrous result of a California encounter group. Toby, a young wife, feeling pressured by similar revelations from other couples, told in detail about affairs she had had before her marriage. It almost meant the breakup of her marriage, because her husband was yet too possessive and insecure to accept this knowledge. Her disclosure, *if* made at all, should have waited until his possessiveness lessened.

But of course Toby's husband is not yours. And her particular situation is not yours. And I suppose what I am essentially saying is this: take these suggestions for communication, for openness and honesty and sharing, and temper them with your own judgment. You are dealing, after all, with your own marriage. And any generalizations I have made should be modified, by you, with that in mind.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Life Styles*

Childless couples are selfish and pleasure-seeking, right? Found in expensive houses, cuddled on shaggy rugs, making love and sipping champagne to Saint-Saëns, diving into private pools or basking by Lake Michigan or the Mediterranean. Whizzing by in tiny, just-for-two cars. Always on the way someplace—to a film, a benefit, a spa, a ballet, a party. Seen in airports (because we do a lot of traveling) or in shops (because we do a lot of spending). "Girls living in the perpetual adolescence of a Disneyland with *Playboy* husbands," in the indignant opinion of one wife with children.

Please, that's not quite it. I hope that, in trying to counteract some of the unfounded stereotypes of childless couples as "barren" or "different," I have not set up new stereotypes of sybaritic twosomes.

Barren we are definitely not. (Show me any one hundred mothers my age, picked at random, and I will show you ninety-nine of those hundred whose lives are barren compared to *mine*.)

But neither are we selfish, sybaritic, or adolescent.

Maybe some of it seems like adolescence because we have not committed ourselves to the *usual* adult pattern of continual obligation. But there are other commitments.

We've mentioned Rex and Diane Roupe of Des Moines before. I'd like to tell you a bit more about them. Just by way of background, they were married in 1957, having known each other through high school and college. He's a lawyer; she's had several careers and is now directing a national project for

Goodwill Industries. (She was, by the way, Iowa's Outstanding Young Woman of 1970.)

They have no children. "It wasn't even a conscious decision, or anything we discussed," Diane recalls. "Our life was always so full and so varied that it was right and natural *not* to have children. We've had wonderful years, and we've both been fortunate in being able to use our abilities to good ends.

"Right now, I'm putting together a training program that will help those who learn occupational skills at Goodwill. There's something very awe-inspiring about helping others, about learning to appreciate a person for what he *has* and *can* do, without avoiding or glossing over what he does not have and cannot do.

"The real courage of handicapped people who try with all their hearts to do the simple things we take for granted—well, this courage, when seen, has to inspire those who see it. And it's a mutually rewarding alliance we want to see between the volunteers and those who are in Goodwill's vocational programs.

"Now, the difference between what I'm doing, and what the typical housewife-mother does, is the difference between growing wings and dusting shelves! I suppose all work is rewarding, in its way, but I think that housework has a built-in disadvantage: it must always be re-done. Little is truly or permanently changed or made better. There is a need to repeat tasks, on a day-to-day basis, and this can lead to a sense of frustration. Even the raising of children can fail to be a creative task, because a wife can become so bound to housework that she loses touch with the world.

"A little-known British woman, Lady Allenby, wrote something that I believe holds the key to a sense of purpose; almost a century ago, she said, 'Realize that we are all a part of the machine that is Society, and matter less to ourselves than to the world in general, and you and your marriage will be happier.'

"Rex and I prefer to be part of the world. When we meet people, talk to them, exchange ideas, help

people—often things *do* change, permanently, because of what we've said or done. It gives a sense of purpose. It is an exciting thing."

"Rex and I feel very strongly, I guess, that we are each born to do certain things on this earth and that reproducing the species is not necessarily one of these. The world has three billion people now. Perhaps one billion are cared for in any way at all. Should one bring *more* people into a world such as this? Or should one try to help those already born who need care?

"For Rex, and for me, the giving of our talents to the community as a whole is more important. We shall be able to say, when this life is over, 'We gave the best of what we had to this world.'"

Rex and Diane are a departure from the hedonistic stereotype.

So is Stephanie Mills, a beautiful San Francisco girl working one year, in a college-girl skirt and sweater, for Planned Parenthood in Oakland; and sitting the next year, in a plain peasant dress, at the editor's desk of *Earth Times* magazine. Her commitment was heard around the world in 1969 when, in her valedictory address at Mills College in California, she said simply that she would never have any children. "Commitment is seldom comfortable, I guess," she told me as we talked in her office, "and I've been subjected to every kind of harassment . . . But regardless of how comfortable or uncomfortable it is, it's important and it's necessary. ['Until the so-called silent majority wakes up and realizes that its world just might end,' must continue to argue for childlessness," she had said earlier, in an interview with *Look* magazine.] And it's exciting to see a movement growing; to toss a pebble into the water and see the waves spread; to talk to younger girls [she was twenty-one then] who say they feel the same way I do . . ."

There was a phone call, and she continued.

"Some people think it's strange that I, just on my own, could make the "no children" decision. 'You're not married,' people say; 'how will your husband feel about it?'

"Well, girls like me simply do not marry men whose idea of pleasure in life is driving in a station wagon full of kids to a crowded national park to stand in line and look at a redwood. To remain childless—well, it's a perfectly logical decision for a single girl to make. Kind of like a liberal chick saying she doesn't believe in racism, and therefore can't marry a racist."

"Unless she reforms him, maybe."

"Right. Unless she reforms him."

A tall boy walked into her office—jeans, sandals, hair . . . "I'm Mike Goodwin's brother, Jerry," he said, Stephanie looked blank. "OK, well, forget that; I thought somebody was going to tell you. Well, listen, I'm a photographer, and I've been teaching marine biology on the bay for eight years, and I've got eight years' worth of ecological photographs, and I—well, look, if you can use them at all, I'll bring them in. Or if there's anything particular you *want* pictures of, I'll take them . . . No charge."

"Yeah, that's just the kind of thing we're looking for. Why don't you just make some selections and bring them in . . ."

They talked for a few minutes, and he left, just as her phone rang and a man who looked like Jean-Paul Belmondo walked (no, blasted) through the door yelling, "Stef, what happened to the Cambodia notes?"

"Yeah, Bob, I'm glad you called," she was saying into the phone as Belmondo was ravaging her desk. "No, we *do* want the oil company follow-up, but it's been pushed back to next issue . . . I'm sorry nobody called you about it. Right; see you soon."

She and Belmondo talked for a few minutes about Cambodia.

*Earth Times*, I might explain, was a magazine of outrage against a number of things: war, fraud in government, fraud in advertising, pesticide poisoning, air and water pollution, and apathy, to name a few.

Ultimately, it was defeated by that last adversary. "*Earth Times* will cease publication effective with Issue #4," read a letter that reached me just last week. "Thank you for your support. Unfortunately,

we find that our subscriptions are not adequate to maintain the required investment in *Earth Times* . . ."

Stephanie will find something else, of course. If someone is interested in saving a bit of what's left of the world, there are lots of places to start.

And the man she marries will be similarly committed. Stephanie Mills will marry, probably, a marine biologist or a consumer crusader. And she and her husband will not be a childless couple of the hedonistic type.

Now, I will not deny that there might be a bit of a basis for thinking of some of us as pleasure-oriented or hedonistic or selfish. I cannot deny that many of us are interested in our *selves*, as people living a life, in the world, and wanting to see as much of that world, and make as much of that life, as we can.

And there can be elements of material self-indulgence within that attitude.

Carole Tucker has a tendency to dismiss the conventional. Not for her the sparkling-type wedding ring that, big, little, teeny or gaudy, everybody else is showing off. Hers is antique gold, with four garnets, rather reminiscent of a harem band and patterned after a ring her grandmother wore: a ring she and Jack selected together, something fine and uniquely self-expressive.

It might also, I suppose, be called self-indulgent.

And the Brandens, it must be admitted, live in Greek-modern house (with pool) overlooking Beve Hills.

And Gail Blaisdell drives a Fiat and does not look the prices on the menu when Paul takes her to din at Tio Pepe in Baltimore or the Sans Souci Washington.

And we've mentioned Marcia and Wally befo. "Wally urges me to be extravagant and buy thin that are expensive and nice. He's very proud that I' attractive to other men and loves to take me places meet his colleagues . . ."

Marcia spends just under 100% of her salary < clothes.

That, too, is self-indulgent, I guess.



Helen Gurley Brown has Puccis, a masseur, and a maid to cook dinner, as well as a few other luxuries I will leave you to imagine. Ann and Bruce Berman have a fantastic house by a lake, and they flew to London last winter. And a Minnesota lawyer I know, married for ten years with no children, "dates" his wife; they live together in a fun-fun lifestyle that is close to that typefied in *Playboy* magazine.

But that is *not* the whole story.

A more complete profile of all these couples needs to be presented.

Carole and Jack Tucker, besides playing tennis, enjoying fine food and wine, and driving to Palm Springs, are devoted to a number of good causes. *Teen* magazine has carried immensely valuable articles: on conservation, for example; and on the tragedy and beauty of today's young American Indians.

Patrecia and Nathaniel Branden work at helping people to understand themselves; and they work hard. Nathaniel is one of Los Angeles' busiest practicing psychotherapists; and, aside from her work in the theater, Patrecia assists him in his therapy groups. Even on rare vacations, they are avid about finding professional people in the area. "One of our greatest sources of enjoyment," explains Nathaniel, "is discussing various aspects of psychology and new methods to make psychotherapy more effective."

Relevant to this is the fact that Nathaniel's book, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, stresses the fallacy of regarding your work as something to be paced through so that you can enjoy yourself afterwards. Work cannot be divorced from life. With the Brandens, it certainly is not. Nathaniel is not joking when he says, "Very little other than sex or music has sufficient esthetic or emotional pull to draw us from work or work-related activities, such as discussing our respective careers and professional activities."

The Brandens almost embody the old saying that true work is one with true leisure.

And our friends the Blaisdells. They are extravagant. They are also altruistic. Paul recently requested a leave of absence from Johns Hopkins in order to

work on a project dealing with the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay. Gail has two inner-city "little sisters." I was with her one day when we took them on a tour of downtown. They had never seen a fountain; they had never been in a store with an "alligator" (escalator); and they are always hungry. First on the agenda, on Gail's afternoons with them, is food. But they are hungry in other ways, too. And it is good that there is someone like Gail to help them.

Helen and David Brown contribute freely to conservation causes. And under Helen's editorial direction *Cosmopolitan* has ruled that real fur is gauche and outré. And, in the early spring of 1969 (a full year before I learned the word "ecology") *Cosmo* ran a short fiction illustrating the devastating effects of sulfur dioxide in the air.

Although Ann Berman might seem at first to be simply a hip-sophisticate boutique owner (she says, "I'd never own a car! They pollute!" and adds, "I take cabs instead," and you have to know her to be sure she's kidding), she and Bruce know what the political scene is, both locally and nationally. Not infrequently you'll see them at political benefits.

Like Ann and Bruce, Wally and Marcia have ideas that they believe in and work for. The thought of more Marcias to work for all the "Mr. Simmses" in business and industry seems in itself sufficient reason for girls to devote themselves to the office instead of the house.

Now, let's talk about Marcia's spending for a minute. I freely admit that spending nearly all your money on clothes seems a bit unjustifiable in this troubled world. But I would defend her doing so for two reasons. First, I see nothing wrong with self-indulgence if it doesn't have any negative social consequences for anybody else. (There are, by contrast, brands of self-indulgence that are destructive. In case it hasn't come across, I think that indulging yourself with a large family is a destructive kind of self-indulgence. But the surface materialism of fashion, while it does nothing particularly good for the world,

doesn't really hurt anybody, either.) Second, and of more importance: I think it's pretty obvious that Marcia's devotion to *au courant* clothing is just a phase. ("The day I decide that scrapping my Puccis will stop the war machine, out they go.") She has *ideals*, too, that will sustain her as a person long after she passes the fashion-plate stage.

And I think that's true of most of us. If, in this book, most of the childless couples I've interviewed and told you about at length seem too materialistic, it may be because most of us are still relatively young; and our values are still emerging. And I think that, for us, and for many others without children, real values have a good chance of emerging. When most couples with children vaguely realize that materialism can be a dead end, that endlessly chic fashions and fine wines can get boring, they have no chance to look for something deeper. By that time, they are pulled into a *new* system of status-y materialism, this time based on the children.

Before you criticize Marcia too harshly for self-indulgence, you have to remember that most wives with children spend all their money and energy within the family circle. The results, for now, are the same in that neither Marcia nor her counterpart with two kids is giving much in the way of money to the total community. But Marcia *will* eventually, and probably fairly soon; and *that* is the difference. She is building an involvement with the total community right now.

I haven't found that to be invariably true of childless couples—but I've seen it often enough to consider it typical. I'm sorry to have to limit myself to such inexact phrases, but I did not set out to do a statistical study.

There will be future studies on childless couples, I'm sure (once people realize something exists, it is studied; and there are going to be more and more of us in existence), and these studies will indicate that we are hedonistic, altruistic, optimistic, misanthropic, liberal, conservative, today-oriented, tomorrow-oriented, or whatever. And I think it will all be very

interesting. I did not have the time, funds, or statistical expertise, or I might have done a few massive studies myself!

But for the time being I will just say that if one generalization can be made about childless couples with near-complete accuracy, it is this: we like life. That's almost inevitable. Because, *if* you are childless and you *don't* like your life, you can easily change whatever it is about your life that is not satisfying. (You can move from Toledo to New York or from New York to the Catskills. You can throw up your job and find something else entirely. If you are childless, you even have the ultimate freedom: to think it over and decide whether, or not, to have children. For couples who already have children, the choice is no longer there.) And, after you change your life, you like life again, see?

And you are doing good for the world by not having children; you can take credit for that, even if you decide to remain childless purely for reasons of personal advantage. Personal advantages and the larger societal good do coincide, in this case.

So stay free. At least consider the option of childlessness. For the first time in history, the option is easily yours to take. And the rewards are almost limitless. Marital enrichment, personal independence, and the chance to live a creative, full, and free life are those I value most.

## AFTERWORD

It seems to me that things are a bit different in April of 1972 than they were a year ago—when the first edition of *The Baby Trap* was published.

Another Earth Day has passed, with its hopefully-heard messages of environmental problems (caused and/or compounded by population growth).

Thousands of Americans have read of an M.I.T. study which warns that Man cannot hope to survive if population stabilization, and numerous environmental reforms, are not effective by 1975.

Awareness of our nation's population problem has reached the U. S. Senate—where a resolution calling for population stabilization by voluntary means has co-sponsors who range politically from Barry Goldwater to George McGovern. The same awareness has even begun to reach the high schools: the State of Delaware, for example, has decided that pregnancy testing is a realistic function of high school Student Health Services. (Certainly this decision comes none too soon—not when 200,000 high school girls become pregnant each year; not when, in one major city, the first baby of 1972 was born out of wedlock to a sixteen-year-old girl.)

*The Baby Trap* has been followed by a very important book written by two young psychologists, Anna and Arnold Silverman: *The Case Against Having Children*. And a book called *Mother's Day Is Over* (authored by a mother of two) is in process. Perhaps many are beginning to look realistically at the problems posed by parenthood.

There is no easy way to measure whether respect for child-free couples is increasing meaningfully.

But—once in a while, now, when we tell new acquaintances we are not going to have children, we hear a response such as “How wonderful!”

Problems still exist.

Television, a major shaper of attitudes, still presents us with a 3-child family, a 5-child family, and a 6-child family (all in prime evening time). Daytime soap operas still center around pregnancies, and commercials still manage to suggest that life with kids is paradise. Some ladies' magazines are worse. And, too often, the best-laid plans for sex-education courses degenerate from contraception to chromosomes—and nobody tells little fourteen and sixteen-year-olds that Cokes don't work as douches. The question, “Why don't you have children?” is *still* more socially acceptable than the question “Why do you have a child?”

Can anything further be done to change attitudes in our applehood-and-mother pie culture?

Yes.

Many child-free couples and single persons who read *The Baby Trap* last year suggested an organization to support the rights and interests of non-parents.

Parents have, in the past, formed many coalitions. We have the Leading Families of America (previously, Large Families of America); there are Parent-Teacher associations; divorced and widowed parents can join Parents Without Partners; and there is even a special organization for parents of twins (to name just a few).

Many of these groups influence legislation and social standards and have impact on the lives of non-parents. “Why *not* a special group formed for the benefit of those who do not have children?” was the question of many.

It seemed, to those who asked the question, that such an organization could serve several useful purposes:

- 1) An organization for non-parents could work to obtain fair economic treatment for child-free couples and single persons. Presently, those with-

out children are taxed inequitably (to the tune of many thousands of dollars over a working lifetime); childless wives must pay for unneeded maternity benefits under most insurance plans; single secretaries and bachelors help pay bills for other peoples' children when they stay at "Family Plan" motels, travel with an airline that accommodates young children at no extra charge, or see the latest film at a theater which offers reduced rates for children. These are just a few examples; in many other ways, the child-free pay substantially—and inequitably—for the many services needed to provide for a growing population.

- 2) An organization for non-parents could protest media images of the childless which are unsuitable, stereotyped, and inaccurate—in much the same way that other organizations have worked to change the image of minority groups and the images of women.
- 3) Such an organization could emphasize to the general public the creative lifestyles of child-free couples and the great public service done by those who do *not* add to our burgeoning population and the consequent drain on our economic and environmental resources.
- 4) Such an organization could cooperate with Planned Parenthood, Zero Population Growth, Coalition For A National Population Policy, and other groups now working towards our most vital national goal: a continually lowered birth rate.
- 5) The simple existence of such a group should prove mutually supportive to those who have chosen to be childless, providing us with a new sense of pride and undoubtedly influencing a society which, until now, has questioned and at times rejected those without children. The sim-

ple existence of such a group could help to make "non-parenthood" not only a word, but an option.

With these goals in mind, the NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR NON-PARENTS was formed in January, 1972. The initial founders were: a midwestern financial executive (a single man), the author of this book and her husband (a childless couple), and a Washington psychiatrist (a father of two).

Suzanne Keller of Princeton, who has advocated cash rewards for child-free wives to help stop "this endless army of maternity" joined the Honorary Board of Directors—as did Dr. Wayne Davis of the University of Kentucky, Edward Pohlman of the University of the Pacific, and several television and screen favorites, including Hugh Downs.

In Palo Alto, Mrs. Shirley Radl, mother of two and former Executive Director of Zero Population Growth, cleared space in her home for two typewriters, one mimeograph machine, and six volunteers—and offered her services as Executive Director.

As word of N.O.N. spread, inquiries and some donations were received, even before membership procedures had been set up. The Executive Committee began to plan publicity, formal fund-raising, an extensive membership drive, and the creation of two new national holidays: Non-Mother's Day, May 7 and Non-Father's Day, June 11.

Interestingly, about half of the original officers and board members of N.O.N. are parents. This is all to the good. We would, in fact, hope that many who *are* parents will be equally interested in seeing equitable treatment given to the 40 percent of our population which, at any given time, is *not* involved in the rearing of children.

Perhaps this hope will be realized.

Dr. Wayne Davis wrote, "I would be pleased to join N.O.N., even though the unfair tax laws are of direct benefit to me, with my family of a wife and three children. I am opposed to the unjust treatment of the childless. I would rather pay my rightful share of

taxes than to have our unmarried secretary pay more than her rightful share."

We hope that other parents will share the feelings of Dr. Davis.

Frankly, we hope that you who have read this book, whether you are a parent or a non-parent, will join us in seeking to secure the goals of N.O.N.

Having read *The Baby Trap*, it would be easy to absorb its message and put it aside. It would be almost as easy to return the membership blank below, and make your involvement with the situation of the child-free a continuing experience.

We welcome you warmly, should you join us.

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National Organization For Non-Parents  
220 Miramonte  
Palo Alto, California 94306

I would like to join N.O.N. and be advised of your various activities and of others in my area who are also members. My annual membership fee of \$10 is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City & State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Optional Information Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of children, if any \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELLEN PECK's experiences as a junior high school teacher led her to blow the cobwebs off boy-girl relations in *HOW TO GET A TEEN-AGE BOY AND WHAT TO DO WITH HIM WHEN YOU GET HIM*, which in turn led to a widely-syndicated newspaper column continuing her hip, no-nonsense advice to girls on the bewildering road to maturity. Now, as her loyal followers approach adulthood, she takes a sharp and shocking look at the snare that society has set for them—*THE BABY TRAP*. Ellen Peck lives in Baltimore with her husband, who is a public relations man, and zero children.



# Stop

**Before you  
even *think*  
of having  
a baby, you  
must read  
this book.**

**IT COULD KEEP YOU FROM  
MAKING THE BIGGEST  
MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE!**