

# Abigail Van Buren Delights Journalists with Wit, Advice

By KATHY COOK  
Emerald Women's Editor

"I don't think the kids are any worse than they've ever been; it's the adults who are delinquent."

That was the capsule comment of popular columnist Abigail Van Buren, who appeared in person to answer the many questions of college and high school women's editors Monday in Portland.

The chic Abby, in real life a 39-year-old San Mateo, Calif., housewife, captivated her young audience with an assortment of opinions, anecdotes and witty replies on a wide range of topics.

### 'Kids the Same'

Attired in a sleek black sheath Abby told her listeners that "kids stay the same. If we have any problems in the conducts of the youth, it's because the adults have relaxed their standards."

Abby had quick and ready answers for all inquirers. One high school girl asked this mother of high schoolers if her children's friends came to her for advice.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "But first of all they come over to get a look at me. I don't know if they think I'm a freak or something, but they always look first, then we sit down and talk."

### Family Avid Readers

"My own family takes me about the least seriously of anyone—sometimes my kids come home from school wondering what 'Abby' had to say," she said with a twinkle in her eye.

"I guess I'll have to start reading your column, Mom," her concerned son said one day, "all

For a flattering face frame (white worn around the face is always flattering) choose a wide bib of chalky fresh water pearls. Use these to fill in your new standaway necklines.

the kids read it and talk about what Abby is saying and I never know what's going on."

Abby operates from her home with a large staff of secretaries and consultants. Receiving more than 7,000 letters a week, she replies to each one, either by direct mail or in the 80 papers using her syndicated column.

### Friends Consulted

Among her consultants are a Jewish rabbi, a Catholic priest and a Methodist minister. "I also rely on a large group of friends for advice," she confided. "I have a friend who is a psychologist and I'm always giving him a buzz."

"One of the things I have to decide when I read a letter is whether to cry on the writer's shoulder or to give him a kick in the pants," remarked Abby.

She added that "it doesn't do a person any good if you always 'cry along with him' on a problem." "I tell them what I think," she asserted.

### Daily Tally Told

Sketching her column's usual format, Abby told of her daily list: an older's plea, a teen-age letter, an "odd ball" and an "unfaithful husband letter — along with a "confidential."

"I get at least a hundred letters a week from moon-struck teen-age girls who claim they are madly in love with boys they see in the hall who don't always speak first," Abby recalled. "Should I say hi! first, or wait for him?" they wonder."

Her stock reply was, "Of course you should speak first!"

### Marital Trouble 'Popular'

Marital problems are her most frequent complaint, followed by teenage crises, such as "my mother doesn't understand me."

"I'm the baby in the group" and "all the kids do things I can't," ranked high in Abby's "frequent" department.

"I also get hundreds of letters from non-signers," Abby disclosed. She starts these letters with such names as "To Betty Bank Clerk" or "Dear Harriet Hypochondriac."

Her work doesn't interfere with her homemaking life, Abby insisted. "I get up at 6, eat with my husband, then have a second breakfast with the children at 7:45," she related.

### Work Ends at 3

"At 8:30, my secretary arrives and we work until noon. I have lunch on a tray and work until 3, when the kids get home from school. That's it, I'm through with work!"

Abby started her career by writing for the San Francisco Chronicle. Two weeks after she began her column, she was syndicated. "The New York Daily Mirror saw my column and then everybody wanted it," she exclaimed.

"Dear Abby" appeared just six weeks after Ann Landers, Miss Van Buren's sister in real life, started her similar column in Chicago.

### 'Still Friends'

"Yes, we're still friends," Abby chuckled. "The only competition we have is from our syndicates—they don't like the idea that we're sisters!"

Abby told her listeners that "I get my real satisfaction from helping people; I'm like that."

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"If I weren't writing my column, I'd be working for the polio foundation or training grey ladies," she said.

Psychiatry is listed among Abby's writing aids to "be able to give the best advice I can."

### Sincerely Rewarding

"The thing that really makes my work worthwhile," Abby reflected, "is when I get a letter from a reader who sincerely wants advice, like the one from a 17-year-old Palo Alto boy."

The boy, in trouble with a 19-

year-old-girl, sent a stamped, self-addressed envelope for my reply, she explained.

"A couple of days later, his father called me and thanked me personally for the help I'd given his son. He said if there was ever anything he could do to help me, just to say the word," she reported.

"Letters like this one make the job gratifying," Abby concluded, as she whirled away to another in a series of speaking appearances in the Portland area.



HERE ARE TWO Spring-Summer creations by the Emilio Schuberth Fashion House of Rome. Left is a cocktail dress of white chenille printed with flower basket motifs with a undergown of violet faille. Hat is of violet faille with a flower decoration. Right is an evening dress of pink organdie embroidered with white corals.

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