



Here's the author with her son, Glen, and husband, Harry, in their new home.



Joining his parents, Glen helps make washing dishes a real family affair.



Since she left her job, Mother can sew her own curtains as Glen watches.



The Haywards built their own home and now are putting on the final touches.

But never again, says the author of this true-life experience; here's why she's convinced that her place is in the home.

"I was a working mother"

by Iris Anne Hayward

IT'S TIME someone spoke up for the forgotten element in today's back-to-work trend among mothers—the children. We all know the arguments in defense of working mothers (and I'm not referring to those women whose children are grown, or to widows and divorcees who must work to support their families).

Housewives take jobs to help the family budget; to find more freedom, stimulation, and outside contacts; to escape the monotony of household chores.

Sure, housework often seems drudgery. Changing baby's diapers becomes tiresome, the sight of dirty dishes can cause shudders, and one gets bored seeing the same faces through the long work week. But what about the children?

How does it really affect a three-year-old to have Mother leave him with a neighbor or stranger during the most important part of his day? Can anyone sincerely believe that a couple of rushed hours between supper and bedtime, a short week end filled with the crushing necessity to do seven days' housework in two, is a satisfactory substitute to a small child whose world consists almost entirely of his home and family?

We're told that a child's most important formative years are the first five. Those are the years when personality traits, emotional makeup, and mental attitudes are developed. Yet there seems to be a tendency to minimize the effects a mother's absence can have on her offspring. These effects might be overlooked, but they can't be ignored.

No one can positively know what goes on in the mind of a very young child, but I do know how having a working mother affected my own two-year-old son. I don't know how it affected him subconsciously, but I saw the visible signs, the changes that were evident even to people outside our family.

I learned the hard way that my place is at home.

When our son Glen was born, I had behind me nearly nine years' work as a secretary, both before and after

marriage. Being a full-time housewife was something new to me, but there was never any question in my mind that I should stay at home—even though I'm no fonder than the average woman of dusting, washing dishes, or doing stacks of ironing.

What finally made me decide to go back to work when Glen was 18 months old was that old demon: financial necessity. After we were married, my husband had spent several expensive years completing his education and was just starting out on the lowest-paid rung of the teaching ladder. In addition, we were building our own house, an expensive project on any single income.

I WORKED for six months, and there's no denying that it was stimulating to be back in the business world after a two years' absence, and that the extra money was more than welcome. The biggest benefit I derived from the experience, though, was the knowledge that all the money in the world wasn't enough to keep me working once I realized that I had a child at home who needed me.

As for Glen's reaction, it came as a severe jolt to have his world turned topsy-turvy. He'd by no means been kept wrapped in tissue paper. He was used to being left with baby sitters occasionally, and because he was our only child, we'd made an extra effort not to spoil him or have him rely on us too much. But leaving him five days a week, nine hours at a time, was something else again.

When I first decided to go back to work, I was determined to have a woman come into the house. It was more expensive than taking Glen out, but we were sure it would give him a greater feeling of security. It still didn't stop him from crying almost every morning when we drove away. Yes, he got over it soon after we left, but it was an upsetting way for him to start each day.

It didn't help my own peace of mind, either. The only consolation seemed to be that "he'd get over it," and "he'd get used to it." The trouble was that Glen acted