

nized that her life couldn't end because he had been taken from her. Their children were young; they badly needed the stabilizing influence of a man.

So Betty's period of mourning was brief—except within her own heart and those of her children. She began to attend social functions within a few months after Joe's death. She met men, lots of men, and they liked her. She was that kind of a woman. There was nothing wrong or furtive about these associations. The men friends knew about her children, and her children knew about the men.

Six months ago, Betty married again. We spent an evening with her and her new husband recently. She was radiant, and the children were happy, well-adjusted, and plainly proud of their new "father."

The new husband was ill-at-ease at first because he knew my close relationship with Joe. But I liked him instantly, and he knew it and responded to it.

Betty has been criticized by some of our friends for "throwing herself at men" so soon after Joe's death. This is an injustice to her. She simply refused to shutter the windows of her life because of a tragic accident over which she had no control. As a result, she is brightening someone else's life as well as her own; and Joe's children are growing up with a steady male hand to adjust the throttle when it's necessary.

I probably knew Joe as well as anyone in the world did. And of this I'm sure: Joe would have wanted it this way. If he could have his say right now, it would be to bless this marriage which, in turn, is blessing all those who were dearest to him.

IT'S EASY to contrast this story with that of another life-long friend named Alice, who lost her husband during World War II. She took his death very hard. They had two children; one was an infant, the other three years old when their father was killed.

For years Alice kept her husband's belongings just as they had been, but she was finally prevailed on to dispose of them recently. There must be 15 or 20 pictures of him scattered throughout the house. The children have a weird feeling—almost fear—about him. Instead of a healthy respect for a man they never knew, they regard him as a ghost

peering over their shoulders.

Alice resists violently any suggestions that she go out with a man; she regards this as an affront to her husband. This is her business, of course, but the children, raised in a purely female home, are going to have some problems adjusting to life. They have been coddled and spoiled, and they need a restraining hand badly. This has been suggested to Alice obliquely, but it hasn't registered yet. And it's probably too late now for her to change.

I know other young widows—and even some older ones—who have refused to marry again or even to encourage any friendship with men. They usually cite two reasons for feeling this way:

1. By marrying again or being companionable with other men, they are somehow being irreverent to the memory of their first husband;

2. They want to make sure that the tragedy of a husband's death can never happen to them again.

The first argument is a lot of hokum. And if the widow had ever discussed this point with her husband before his death, I think he would probably have told her so. I can't think of a single man of my acquaintance who would be repelled by the thought of his widow marrying again. Mostly this is a fairy story that the girls tell themselves after their husbands are gone.

As for the second reason, this would be tantamount to refusing ever to play golf again after seeing a golfer struck by lightning. To deprive yourself of this pleasure for a lifetime on the decidedly remote possibility that lightning might strike again would be both wasteful and foolish. Yet there are women I know who have put up with a lifetime of loneliness for just that reason!

I'd never want this to happen to Jean. The years we've had together are ours; nothing of them can ever be taken away from us. The same is true of our children. Our time with them has been fruitful and exciting—and that's the way our memories of these days will always be. But there's no reason to build a fence around these joyous experiences and write finis to them, no matter what happens. Life goes on, and so do joy and happiness; and they must be shared with someone to be really fulfilling.

Shared how?

A wife's life is geared to a man

and all the things that go along with him. Think for a minute about what happens when you're away from home for a few days on a business trip.

Meals suddenly become sketchier. Without the man of the house to cook for, the wife tends to feed the kids the things they order—like hamburgers and hot dogs—and one little segment of her personality and creativity goes by the boards.

A good play or motion picture comes to town, one that she wants to see very badly, but she stays home because she doesn't want to go alone. And a chance for intellectual stimulation is missed, perhaps forever.

A good friend from out-of-town calls and wants to come out—but doesn't when he learns that you're away.

Your wife comes home from a civic meeting, bursting with zeal and overflowing with ideas for creating a better community. But there's no one to sound them out on or thresh them over with—and somehow the ideas don't seem so important the next morning when she phones her women friends.

A group in the neighborhood gets together for an impromptu cook-out and bridge party. As a temporary "widow," your wife just doesn't fit into the picture. They need couples—not individuals, no matter how well liked—for the party.

Then there are those peaceful, solemn hours in the evening when the kids are in bed and the house is quiet. When you're home, perhaps you and your wife may be reading or working or watching television without saying a word to each other. Yet, you are sharing your presence—a subtle sort of satisfaction that is scarcely recognizable until it is missed. In its stead can come a loneliness that erodes an individual who has much to share—and no one with whom to share it.

THESE THINGS are true not so much because of the individual characteristics of a husband, but simply because he is a husband. The individual characteristics are, of course, peculiarly his and can't be replaced. But his function as a husband can be—and should be.

If I weren't around to take care of it myself, I'd want a man to have a hand in raising my children. A well-adjusted child draws

equally from his mother and father in making his peace with the world and finding his place in it. Jean knows the importance of this as well as I do.

My son needs someone to bet on football games with, to hit him fly balls, and to discuss God with him so he knows that God belongs in a man's world as well as a woman's. And my daughters need a bumbling, masculine hand to button their dresses, and a father's spacious and protective lap to crawl into when masculine strength is needed.

I plan to be around to supply these things. But if I weren't, I'd trust Jean completely to supply the right kind of father for our children.

There's something else, too, something tremendously important: my wife has a great deal to give. She's loaded with love and humor, good companionship and broad interests—things that can be expressed in many ways but most often and most effectively with a husband. What a pitiful waste it would be if these talents, so wonderfully developed and matured, should have no outlet.

The loss wouldn't be just Jean's, either. Some man, somewhere, who needs what she has to give would also lose. So would my children. And so, too, would all the people with whom Jean associates and all the activities to which she gives her energy and talent. For that energy is at its keenest edge and that talent at its creative best when she is fulfilling her role as a woman—completely and rewardingly.

I have no fears about ever being replaced in Jean's affections. I feel my place is secure with her, just as hers is with me. But I also feel that Jean's capacity for loving doesn't stop with me. That would be a stultifying limitation to put on her. No, there's plenty of room in Jean's affections, plenty of love for her to lavish without drawing off any of the special affection that has been mine during our wonderful marriage.

I've never discussed this with Jean, and chances are I never will. But I think she knows how I feel, and I think she feels the same way.

I fully expect to continue to grow with my wife and my family—grow in love and maturity and wisdom. I'm not anticipating an early demise. But if anything ever *should* happen to me, I hope Jean marries again!

