

The Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual report. The Family Council does not give advice; it merely reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Eunice K.—I don't want to visit my in-laws.
Henry K.—But they mean well.

Eunice K.—My husband and I have been married two years and are quite happy. Our one and only problem is in-law trouble.

My own home life was quite happy. I was an only child and my parents doted on me without spoiling me. My husband was one of a family of six. All the others were girls and they have always pampered him. He turned out fine in spite of them, but they insist upon feeling that they can still run his life.

My sisters-in-law and my mother-in-law keep calling us long distance to find out if Henry is being properly cared for. They send me long lists of instructions about what to do for him. You'd think he's a hothouse plant. When we visit her, my mother-in-law has constant criticisms about

the way I dress or act and tells me Henry likes so-and-so. As a result I don't feel like visiting her anymore.

Henry K.—It's true that my mother and sisters make too much of me. I've always known that and told Eunice about it before we were married. But she doesn't understand that they also want to make a fuss over her because she is my wife. She takes it as criticism if they give her advice but I happen to know that they only mean to help both of us.

Eunice claims my mother and sisters don't know a thing about homemaking or how to dress well. She says she knows a lot more than they do. She may be right, but I say it's not important enough to make a fuss about. As far as I'm concerned Eunice is fine the way she is—except I don't think she ought to get up her fighting blood against my family. They mean well, even if they are a little annoying at times.

My family will be very offended if Eunice doesn't come to visit. Why hurt them?

The Council: In spite of the fact that Eunice was an only child, she seems to have gotten from somewhere the sharp sense of rivalry which is more common with the offspring of bigger families. At the same time we think it likely that she has been "spoiled" in the sense she cannot easily accept a position of partial importance. Although she is Number One with her husband, she is irritated by her awareness of the hovering females in the background of Henry's life.

We don't want to overlook the fact that hovering females can be irritating. One doting mother and five equally doting sisters are rich fare, and a young wife might easily have some bad moments when confronted with such a situation.

However, there are many different ways of handling the problem and Eunice seems to be taking the most childish one. She knows very well that she is offending the family and making her husband

unhappy by her refusal to pay the customary family visits. She is creating ugliness and bad feeling, and her husband is the person who will suffer most by it.

At bottom, Eunice must have a poor opinion of herself or she would not be so quick to sense criticism and resent it. She should try to be more objective—to correct her own

failings and slough off any implied criticism that may be unjustified. Eunice needs to learn to laugh at her own sulky reaction to a commonplace family problem. (Copyright 1959, General Features Corp.)

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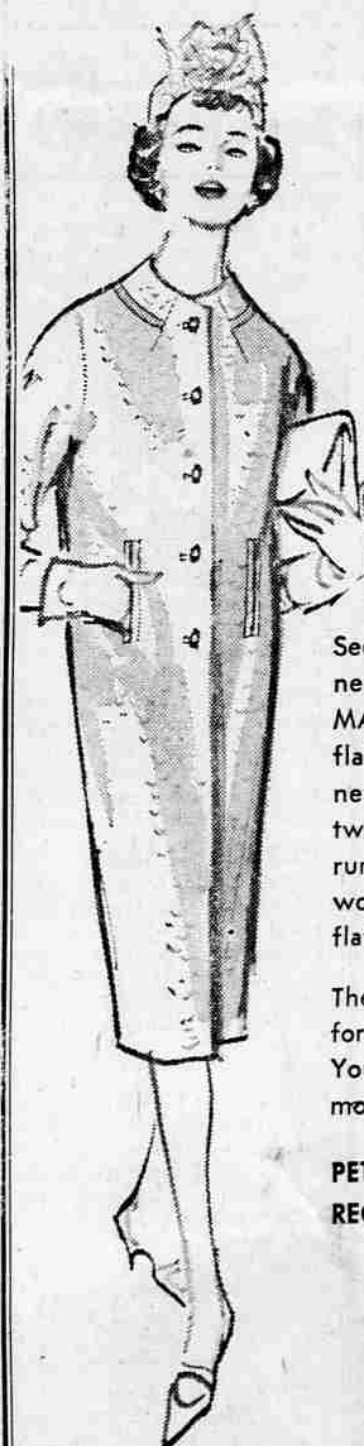
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