



DOES FATHER REALLY KNOW BEST?

The son of a famous author wonders if any father can guide his children wisely in this fast-changing world; he finds the answer in the one thing that never changes

By WILL OURSLER

IN THE DARKNESS a child sleeps and a father in a doorway watches.

It is a moment of tenderness and, in this instance, a moment of pain. For the father is recalling a bitter dispute with his daughter weeks before, growing out of her budding teen-age "romance" with a man eight years her senior.

She was only 14, this child who slept so peacefully now as the father watched. She had been so sure of herself, so sure she knew all the answers.

He had told her then—as so many fathers have had to do—that he had to act in her best interests, to guard her from whatever might harm her, and she had cried out that she hated him.

"Sometimes we have to do unpopular things," he had said, "to protect those we love, because they may be too young to understand. This is a moment like that."

She had not understood or believed. She had resented deeply his breaking up her "affair" with this 22-year-old man. For a week she had hardly spoken to her father.

But he had prevented anything serious or tragic from happening. And now she had found a new flame, a 16-year-old youth in the class ahead of her in school, and the older man apparently was forgotten.

Tonight he had heard her speak casually of him as "that fellow I used to think was the only guy in the world. Wasn't that the craziest?"

So he had been right in this instance, and yet, as he stood watching, he felt also the loneliness and helplessness of the parent in so many cases. For the battle and the outcome and her resentment, or lack of resentment, were only shifting aspects of today's curious warfare that is being waged on the home front.

Today, home and family—especially Dad—appear to be caught up in the whirlpool of modern times, the swirling pace that is certainly unequalled in all history.

Joe F. of a northern California suburb is a typical example. He is almost 17. His father is a sound, hard-working businessman. There is much love in the family. No animosity, no real trouble.

But between Joe and Dad there is little in common—except concern. Joe doesn't work hard enough, he is out too much, he takes on too many school activities. When Dad talks about it, Joe doesn't even listen.

TONIGHT he is out in the family car. All the lads in the neighborhood take their family cars to dances and parties. At 4 in the morning Joe is calling his frantic parents.

Dad answers. Joe is 50 miles away with the crowd. He'll stay at a friend's—a fellow named Henry. "I've had a couple of drinks, Dad," he admits. "I'd better not drive . . ."

It is futile to argue. The boy shouldn't be out this late, but it is safer to let the all-night party go on than to let his son drive back.

And besides, everyone else in the neighborhood has the same problem. None of them has solved it. Dad knows best? Sure. But who listens?

The principal of one of the top preparatory schools in the East told me: "Certainly there is a gap between the generations. Learning has changed, education has changed, science has changed, new concepts have come into being.

"Fathers we talk to are usually too busy making a living to keep up with the new methods, new approaches, new discoveries.

"Dad is too busy paying the bills and keeping



the family fed and clothed and housed properly."

"You've had your chance, Dad, you and your generation," I recently heard one boy declare. "You could have straightened everything out, but now the world's in a worse mess than ever. Who knows what's going to happen—or why?"

To be sure, such an attitude does not mirror every home. But almost all with sons or daughters to worry over in these times know some aspect of it. It is a symbol of the clash and uncertainty of our age.

All about us we see a triumph of confusion in the midst of changing concepts; onrushing new discoveries of the mid-20th century universe seem to say to our youngsters, "Forget this old fogie in the armchair. The planets of outer space and civilizations Dad never dreamed of are waiting."

But the hunger and the need and the bonds of

(Continued)

COVER:

Our cover girl, photographed by L. Willinger of Shostal, thinks every day should be Father's Day—and her dad seems to like the idea. For some thoughtful reading on this Father's Day, see the article above.

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