

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 case history. The Council reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Tom S. - I'm sick of her nagging.

Beverly S. - I only want people to respect him.

Tom S.-My wife and I have been married 25 years and have four fine children. We have had a happy married life, but recently we have had arguments over one particular thing.

We have been doing a lot of socializing in the past year and Beverly has taken to criticizing me on every step. She says I clown too much or I bore people with my stories and jokes. I enjoy telling a good story and I notice that everyone but Beverly laughs.

I like to live things up and I see no harm in that. Sometimes a story may be a little off-color, but I never tell one that hasn't some real humor in it. I'm sick of being nagged every time we come home from a party.

Beverly S. - Tom just doesn't know when people are laughing at him, not with him, and I can't get him to see the difference.

The reason we have been socializing in the past year is that Tom has been raised to an executive position in his firm. This has brought us into contact with a different group of people. This crowd is sophisticated and most of them are well educated. None of the other men acts the way Tom does.

Tom should realize that I criticize him for his own good. I want people to respect him. He wants to be the life of the party. I think some of these people encourage him because they want him to make a fool of himself. The others listen because they are polite.

The Council: Tom and Beverly apparently are both a little insecure in their new social environment and Beverly's criticism is doing neither of them much good.

If Tom has the ability to rise to an executive position in his firm, the chances are that his judgment is fairly good and that he knows how to get along with people. If he goes too far in his attempts to be the life of the party, it may be out of uneasiness.

If this is true, Beverly's sharp criticism could undermine his confidence further and lead to more of the behavior she finds so objectionable.

However, it is entirely possible that the "sophisticated" and well-educated people who have Beverly on her mettle find Tom a lot of fun and genuinely enjoy his humor. In a large crowd, the individuals who don't particularly enjoy him can always steer clear.

Beverly can best help the situation by developing her own social abilities. Instead of watching her husband to see if he is making a fool of himself at parties, she should develop the habit of creating the kind of conversation she would like with the individuals she prefers. She can win the respect and friendship of desirable couples on her own. When she feels more secure she will worry less about her husband's behavior.

Tom may develop more social refinement through repeated pleasant contacts with his new crowd. Nagging at home will only cast a shadow on the future contacts.

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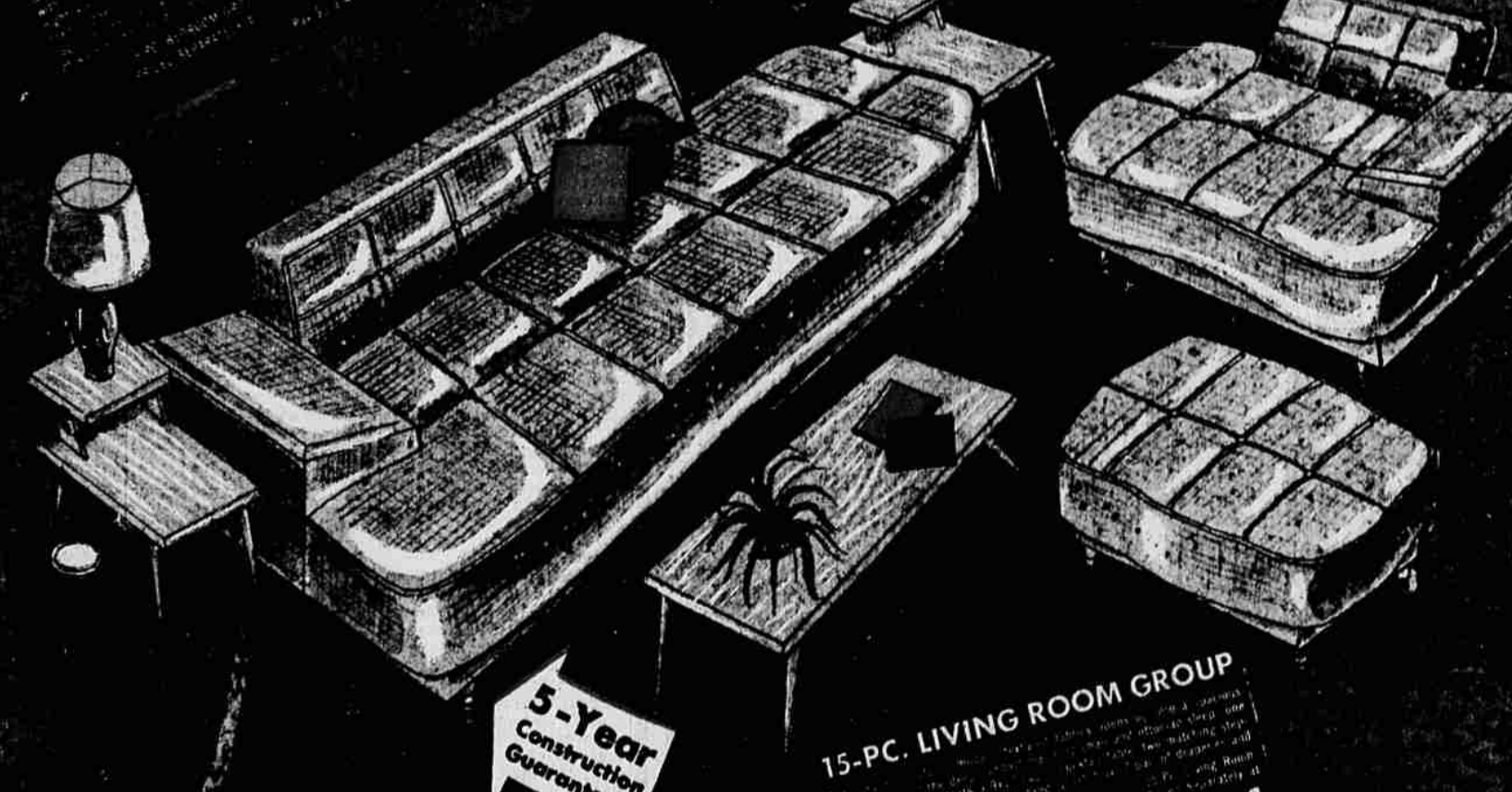
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