

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.

Herbert R. - We should stick it out for the children's sake.

Mona R. - There's no love left, so it's not a good home.

Herbert R. - I admit my marriage holds no attraction for me. Mona and I married right after the war, 14 years ago. We hardly knew each other. Just wanted to settle down. Now we have two kids, a girl of 13 and a boy who's 10. And I'm just the guy who pays the bills. Mona's an iceberg to me and she has the kids treating me like a jerk.

But I believe in sticking to a bargain, even a bad one. O.K., we have nothing in common. We can't even agree on where to take a walk! She wants the shop windows, I want the park. So one of us always comes back alone. Even so, there are the children. For their sake, Mona should keep this home together. It's better for them to have a father around, even if they don't appreciate me.

Maybe we can get some help to find some good in each other and make this miserable life more bearable.

Mona R. - Our marriage was a terrible mistake. Now it's just an empty shell. This is no life for any of us and it certainly isn't a happy home for the children.

I try to be civil to Herbert in front of the children. But when we're alone there's either complete silence or angry, hateful words. And we're alone a lot because our friends are tired of acting like umpires between us when we argue.

At first I thought we could make a go of it, even though we couldn't see eye-to-eye on anything from house furnishings to cheeses. We kept busy fixing up a home, caring for the baby. Then we moved and the second one came along. But after a while we had to take a good look at each other. Then I knew I had married a narrow-minded bore. And I realized he had no feeling for me.

Why keep up the farce? Maybe we can each find our real mate yet. Meanwhile the children should not be the excuse for chaining the wrong people together.

The Council: Since the reason for discord and the imminent separation of the R.'s is incompatibility rather than a "third party," we're inclined to agree with Herbert's proposal that they stick it out and seek counseling.

Staying together "for the children's sake" often, by dint of sincere effort, can lead to staying together for many other reasons. Surely there was some spark of friendship between Herbert and Mona which led them into marriage. A counselor might help them think back to the days when each pledged to lead the other to a happier life. Despite the clinkers and ashes, there may be a chance of re-igniting that spark.

It sounds like an uphill job all the way. It will require, as Dr. Paul Popenoe counsels all husbands and wives, not going 50-50 but going 100-100 to achieve a satisfactory marriage. But think of the prize!

A 15th and 20th wedding anniversary may loom on the immediate horizon instead of a doubtful first one with a new mate. Fourteen years in Herbert's and Mona's lives will be rescued from the ash heap. Adolescent children will have the emotional support of a united family, headed by a father and mother who have discovered the good qualities in each other and have accepted the quirks as part of the "for better or for worse" deal.

For Mona to consider separation and divorce, without seeking ways to repair her marriage, indicates that she doesn't know her own powers for changing her relationship with Herbert for the better.

Also, that she doesn't realize how tragic and serious a step divorce often is. Recently a judge suggested that the principals to a divorce wear black because it is a "sort of funeral."

Moribund as this marriage seems, Herbert and Mona should be able to revive it, both for the children's sake and - as they may well find years hence - for their own. (Copyright 1960, General Features Corp.)

Older office workers are as productive as younger ones, according to a Labor Department report.

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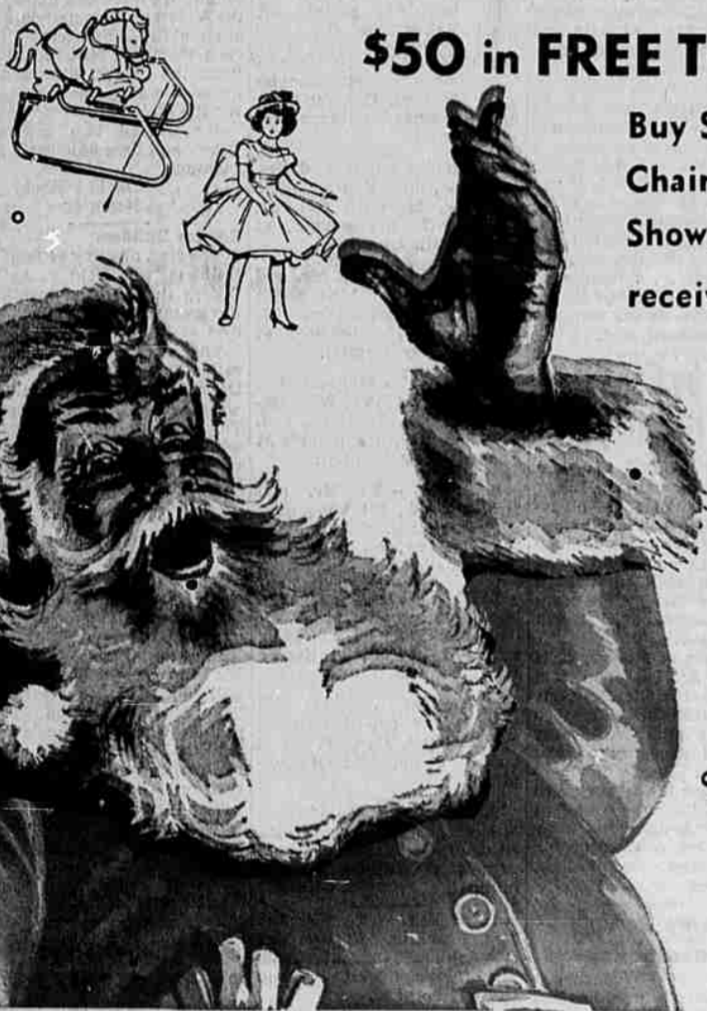
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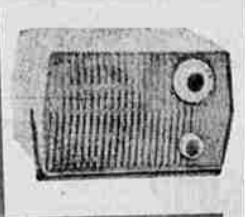
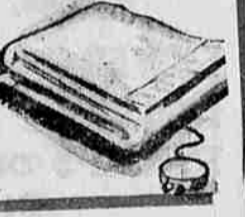
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