



WIFE INSURANCE:

What is the Dollar Value of a Lady?

NOT SO MANY years ago—I remember it clearly—my mother suggested that perhaps she ought to buy a life-insurance policy. My father was instantly outraged.

"Why?" he demanded. "Haven't I always taken care of you and the children? I never expected you to contribute money to the family's support. Why should you carry insurance?"

His reaction sounds unrealistic now, but it was not unique. A generation or two ago, insurance for women was a rarity—except for small policies bought "to cover funeral expenses." The theory was that only the breadwinner of the family needed full protection, and the breadwinner, of course, was generally the man.

But the harsh economics of our time—plus the greatly increased number of women holding jobs outside the home—have brought about a sharp change in attitude.

In 12 million American families, both husbands and wives work. So do their grown children, including daughters. Therefore, some 25 million women are breadwinners today. They earn \$55 billion a year—an average of \$2,200 for each woman. Certainly the loss of this income would inflict hardships on countless families.

The same holds true for wives who don't work outside the home. Such a wife's worth is seldom considered—unless her services are lost. Then her husband suddenly discovers that it takes thousands of dollars a year to replace her dedicated, around-the-clock services with hired housekeepers and baby sitters. As a result, wives who don't work—as well as those who do—are increasingly coming to rely on life insurance as a safeguard for their families' future.

The extent to which this has caught on is dramatized by simple figures: in the early 1940s, life insurance carried by women amounted to \$10 billion; now it totals more than \$100 billion.

One factor in this growth is the extraordinary rise of group life insurance: practically any woman who works can now participate in such a plan. "Group" gives women an opportunity to buy life insurance at a

low rate; and if they leave their jobs for any reason—say to rear a family—they usually find it foolish to abandon what they already own. So they convert their group protection to individual policies.

But apart from this, there have been many psychological reasons that have made women insure their lives.

To begin with, our women live in the most heavily insured country in the world. Hard as it is to believe, we Americans spend \$38 billion a year on our life-insurance premiums. (This does not include the additional billions we spend on health, fire, accident, automobile, and other kinds of protection.)

Our life premiums actually amount to more than half of the \$68 billion we pay in Federal income taxes! You hear a vast amount of griping over the high income tax; but we have become so insurance-minded that we take this cost in our stride.

BESIDES LIFE INSURANCE, women have insured themselves in many other ways, too. After all, in a country where some 10 million persons are injured in accidents every year, it's obvious that a woman can be hurt as seriously as a man; that a woman's surgery can cost as much as a man's; and that fire destroys all possessions alike.

In these types of insurance, women are now covered almost as fully as men. More than 81 million Americans own some form of health-and-accident insurance, and here the women are not far behind the men.

It is only in the matter of life insurance that the ladies have been laggard in the past; and here, as we have seen, they are finally asserting themselves. To find out why, I talked to many women who had acquired life policies in recent weeks. I asked for their basic reasons.

One woman said: "My husband and I have two small children. If there is one thing we are sure of, it's that, by the time they grow up, any young person without a college education is going to be at a disadvantage. I don't want my kids to miss an education, no matter what happens to my husband or me. We both carry life-insurance policies that will guarantee college costs. That was my primary reason for buying life insurance."