



Insuring a woman's life
makes sense in this age
when the loss of a wife
and mother can bring
financial disaster to a family

By OSCAR SCHISGALL

Another woman told me: "Last year my sister-in-law died at the age of 32. She carried no insurance at all. I saw what happened to my brother who was left with three small kids. He had to hire a combination housekeeper and governess. Most of the women he hired couldn't stand the long hours and hard work that only a mother will accept, so he had to find new help every few months. In between, he had to pay for temporary help and baby sitters. He told me it was costing him about \$6,000 a year above the household expenses he had while his wife was alive.

"We, too, have three children. My husband just couldn't afford an extra \$6,000 a year on what he earns. So if anything happens to me, I want to be sure there's a fund that will look after their needs."

Next I talked to a woman of 39 who had never married. She was an office manager and earned a good salary. Though she had carried a small life-insurance policy for many years ("to take care of my funeral expenses, if you want the truth"), she had just increased the amount to a considerable sum—almost \$40,000.

"I'm trying to be realistic," she said. "The chances are I may never marry. There's nobody around who'll look after me in my later years—unless you consider Social Security a girl's best friend. But Social Security won't be enough, and our office has no pension plan. So I bought the kind of policy that will have a high cash value when I'm in my 60s. I can turn that cash value into an annuity and have a fair income from it. And when I die—well, I love my nieces and nephews, and I won't mind leaving them a nice sum to remember me by."

So it goes. Every woman has her own good reasons for investing in life insurance. As a matter of fact, the 1,500 life-insurance companies in the United States are so confident of women's future participation that many of them are now concentrating on policies which insure husband and wife simultaneously. Children come under such plans, too. Each child, no matter how many there are, begins life with a \$1,000 policy.

This new type of family service (each company gives it its own name) provides, through a single premium payment every month, virtually every type of insurance a family requires: fire, theft, liability, and so on.

It is the comprehensiveness of the concept, as well as its simplicity and its appreciation of women's value, that has made it flourish.

True, women still have far to go. With more than \$600 billion of life insurance now in force in the United States, women have only \$100 billion of that amount—only 1/6th the total. But the differential is being lessened every day. For the first time in its history, the Institute of Life Insurance, an association of life-insurance companies, has recognized the trend by creating a Women's Division.

How much life insurance should the average woman carry? Each family must decide that for itself, but here is some helpful advice:

THE WOMEN'S BUREAU of the Department of Labor has said that the average woman may expect to work 25 years of her life. It also points out that the average full-time feminine worker earns \$3,300 a year. That means she may expect to earn \$82,500 during her lifetime.

Is it the full loss of this amount against which she ought to insure her family? Obviously no such generalizations are possible. I have talked to many families in the \$5,000- to \$7,500-a-year bracket, and usually the woman's contribution to this total is somewhere around \$1,500 a year (because so many married women work only part-time).

Therefore a fairer evaluation of a woman's earning capacity, in these cases, would be to multiply the number of working years ahead by about \$1,500. In most of the cases I investigated, the expected lifetime income of these wives was about \$30,000. It was this potential income they wanted to protect by as much insurance as they could afford. A similar amount seems logical for wives who do not work outside the home.

One of the oddities of the past—or was it one of the failures?—was that few women became insurance agents, and almost none made their way into the top echelons of insurance executives. The result was that little feminine thinking was applied to the problems of insurance.

Today, it is still predominantly a masculine business, but much attention is focused on women's needs—and this generation is finally discovering that a woman can be every bit as valuable as a man.