

THE Household MAGAZINE

YOUR HOME
YOUR FAMILY
YOUR COMMUNITY
AND YOU

JULY, 1941 ★ VOL. 41, NO. 7

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Cover photograph in color, by Horace Hime of Frank Lewis, Inc.

THE HOUSEHOLD MAGAZINE is published monthly by Capper Publications, Inc., Topeka, Kansas, U. S. A. Arthur Capper, President and Publisher; H. S. Blake, Vice-President and General Manager; Philip Zach, Second Vice-President and Director of Advertising; M. L. Crowther, Advertising Manager; James M. Rankin, Director of Circulation. Subscription price 50 cents a year, \$1 for three years in the 48 states of the United States; elsewhere \$1.25 a year. Single copies, 5 cents. Notify Subscription Department, THE HOUSEHOLD MAGAZINE, Topeka, Kan., promptly of change of address, giving old and new address. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, Topeka, Kan., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Manuscripts and other material submitted to the magazine should be accompanied by stamped, addressed envelope. Due care is exercised in handling everything submitted, but the magazine assumes no responsibility for loss or damage. Printed in U. S. A. Copyright, 1941, Capper Publications, Inc.

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Come home, Father—
all is forgiven—
we need you

SOMERSET MAUGHAM says the trouble with France was that family ties, especially between mothers and sons, were too close.

His observation should remind us that the average family in the United States is a matriarchy. Perhaps it is time to take Father out of his rôle as stooge in the family circle and restore him to a position of influence.

The subjugation of Papa begins when the first child is an infant. When Father volunteers to give baby his oil rub, inadvertently dripping olive oil on the nursery floor, Mother tartly directs, "Go back to your newspaper. You wouldn't know about this."

If he rocks the child, Mama protests, "Don't do that. It is bad for him." Should the father dare to suggest that his mother rocked each of her six babies, he is informed that his mother's methods are both "dated" and unscientific.

American mothers appear to believe that rearing a child involves mystic rites, the secrets of which are revealed exclusively to the female of the species.

In the routine of the home, with Father away the greater part of the child's waking hours, it is natural for the association between mother and child to be close. Mother reads the stories, sings the songs, teaches the nursery rhymes, hears the prayers, heals the hurts, and kisses away the tears.

When the child is naughty, however, Mother promptly warns: "Just wait until your Daddy gets home. I'll have him spank you." Which she does and he does, Father thereby becoming the goat. He is the one whom the child associates with punishment, injustice—and a heavy hand.

Through the formative years, the typical father has little to say about the way his youngsters are raised. Most of his suggestions are either quietly ignored or contemptuously dismissed as old-fashioned. He is seldom consulted about family affairs unless Bill needs money for new skates or Mother gives him the unpleasant task of laying down the law to Joan about getting in by midnight.

Many a father can paraphrase Will Rogers and say, "All I know about my family is what I see in the newspapers."

The football coach, the band director, the Boy Scout leader, the Sunday school teacher, often know his son better than he does. So far as influence is concerned, he becomes in effect a father *in absentia*.

The truth is that Father is likely to have sound judgment about most phases of child guidance. He may not know the lingo of modern experts, but he knows human nature and he remembers his own childhood.

He has many interesting abilities which he would like to share with his family. When it comes to games, hobbies, outdoor sports, and general family fun, Dad is the natural leader if given a chance. Dad should also have an opportunity to win his children by the direct route to the heart as mothers often do—through good cookery. Many a father has a way with tricky candy recipes and he can fry a mean hamburger, too.

Families of this country were not always dominated by mothers. Not so long ago Father was the head of the family and no two ways about it. His word was law; his judgments were respected; his talents were recognized. If mothers in those days did not have a fair share in the control of the home, we appear now to have drifted to the opposite extreme.

There is some truth in the old statement that it takes a man to raise a man. With all respect to mothers, of whom I am one, I submit that this nation was built by men whose fathers profoundly influenced them, both by precept and example. To preserve the nation, perhaps fathers must begin to assert themselves in the home.

If many men have let themselves become interested in business, golf, lodges, and civic clubs to the exclusion of their families, it is not so much from choice as from the simple fact that they were driven to it. Men want a chance to know their children better. They want their children to know them, intimately, with affection and respect as they knew their own fathers.

It is high time to give Dad a chance to strut his stuff. Bill will learn that the man who pays the bills is "a grand guy, with some darned good ideas and the right slant on life, too."

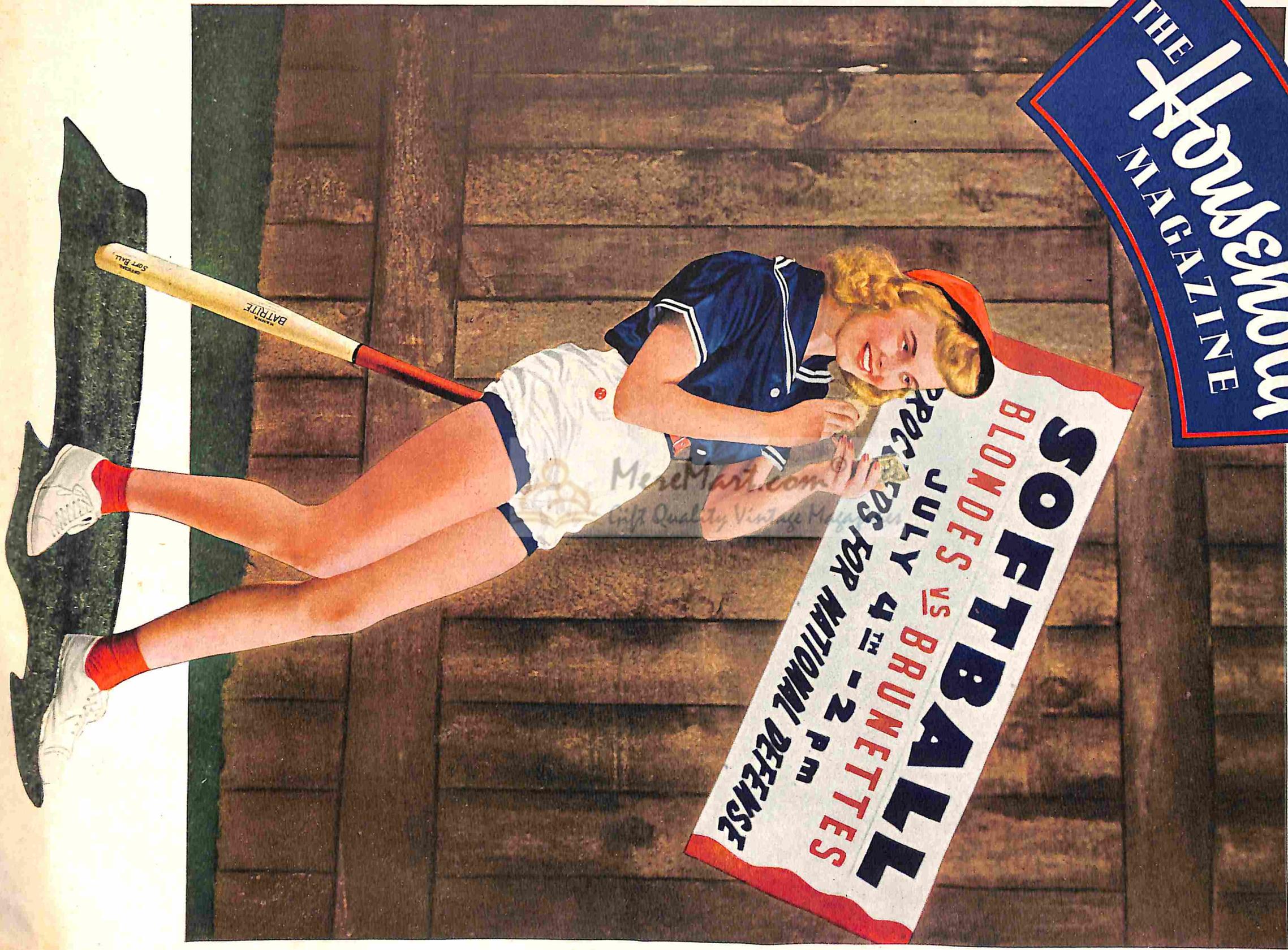
Joan will discover that Dad understands some things about which Mother is awfully obtuse. "He helps you think things through and you can talk to him frankly without him scolding or acting shocked," as one daughter said of her father after she learned to know him well.

Father is a grand guy. Isn't it time to get acquainted with him?

BY DOROTHY NOTT SWITZER

THE *Home* *World* MAGAZINE

JULY 1941 • ARTHUR CAPPER PUBLISHER • 5¢



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