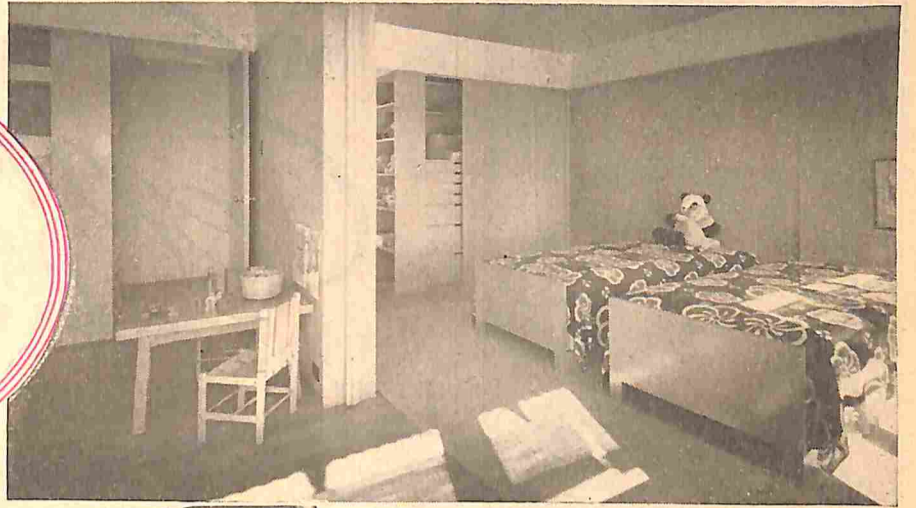


OUR HOMES AND OUR CHILDREN

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A nursery divided by sliding doors into play room and sleeping room. In later years they will function as two individual rooms. The walls are of insulation board to allow pictures, maps, and photographs to be pinned up. Notice the ample built-in storage facilities. Harwell Hamilton Harris, designer.

JIMMY, stop that pounding this instant. Can't you see I'm trying to read? My goodness, a body can't get a bit of peace and quiet in this house."

But a boy must pound and you must read, so what do you do?

"Sue, pick up your dolls and furniture and put them away. I must set the table for dinner. Yes, I know it took you a long time to arrange them but you can get them all out again tomorrow."

Not very encouraging to the child—is it? —to have to undo her afternoon's efforts? But you must have dinner and there is no other place to play, so the child is frustrated.

These are examples of seemingly simple everyday problems that arise in any home with children. Yet the very fact that they are so universal, so commonplace, hints that our homes may be at fault.

Let's take a critical look at the usual American home, your home or the home you hope to have. It has a living-room, a dining-room, and a kitchen. Why? Largely because of habit.

In most homes the dining-room is used only once or twice a day. Many families use it only when company comes, all other meals being taken in the kitchen. Certainly the use of an entire room for just one purpose for but a few hours a week is not economy.

So, in many homes where the children make the walls bulge (and even one child can make a pretty sizable bulge) the dining-room has become a play space. It is usually sunny and cheerful, has a good table for games and work, and, what is most important, is close to the family, the mother in the kitchen or the father reading in the living-room.

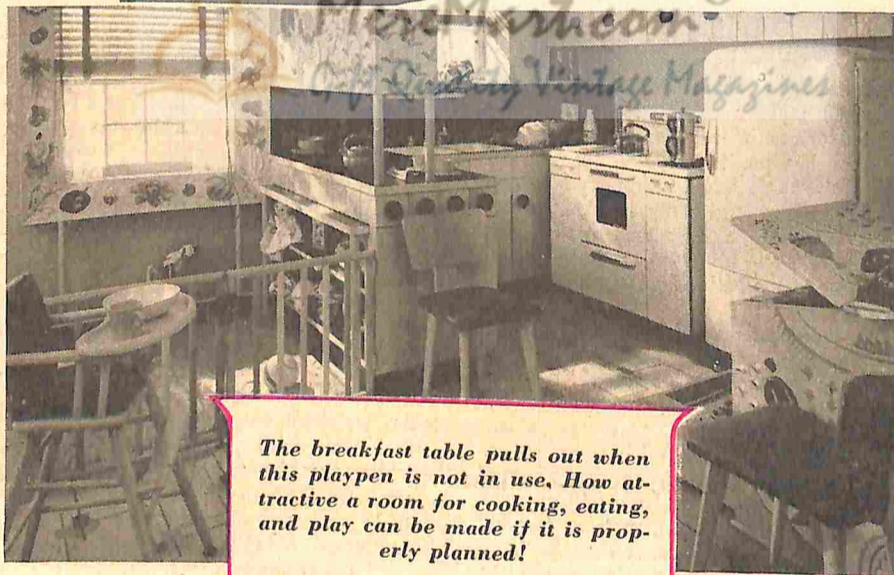
Starting out as a dining-room, it becomes a general-purpose room. Mother sometimes uses the table for sewing. Father uses it to spread out work that he has brought home from the office. Wouldn't it be better to design this room as an all-purpose room in the first place, so that it could do its job really well?

We can do many different things in the same space, if we do them at different times. Or we can carry on many activities at the same time, if we have different spaces for each activity. So in designing a house we not only consider arrangement of space but also the scheduling of time. It is the successful juggling of space and time that produces a good house.

The home is not a show place—it is a grow place. Yes, your family happiness, and the very success which your children may attain, are largely dependent upon the house you live in. In a recent talk Winston Churchill said that we shape our buildings and consequently our buildings shape us. Automobile, the movies, the radio, and saving electrical appliances, to say of the eight-hour day and women's freedom, have made small change in the typical American home. Yet certainly our family and its activities are different from the family you lived in as a child.



The openness of the kitchen-dining space allows this area to be used for play space. The dining table folds against the wall as a decorative element. The living or quiet area would be at the other end of the house.



The breakfast table pulls out when this playpen is not in use. How attractive a room for cooking, eating, and play can be made if it is properly planned!

In the old days the children withdrew into an all-pervading hush the minute Father with his stiff collar and mutton-chop whiskers came up the front steps. No longer does the family dance attendance at the beck and call of the lord and master!

Children are given their wings much earlier in life than previously. It used to be that a baby remained bottle-fed until his second birthday. Now most babies eat with a spoon and drink from a cup before the age of one. Few children have the fear of the world that was the curse of the erstwhile apron-string children.

Now the child may go to nursery school at the age of two or three and is completely thrilled at the prospect each morning and bubbling over with enthusiasm and happiness upon his

return. Teachers are his friends. School is fun!

There are many instances where children dislike returning to their homes after a pleasant day at school. At school they are taught the use of their hands and the use of tools at the tender age of three. Having learned thus to control their bodies, they no longer have the timidity that manual clumsiness would give them.

In many homes so much importance is given to the wallpaper and furniture that children up to school age are not permitted to use pencils, crayons, or scissors for fear of their spoiling something. This hampers early formative years upon which future abilities are built.

The child in the conventional American home upon his return from school finds the

house all "picked up." Should he attempt to play indoors he is cautioned by his mother to make no mess or noise. How many times have you heard a mother say, "Why can't you sit quietly and read a book?"

If the child wants to do things he is not going to read a book. If he wants to read a book it is because his interest has been whetted so that the book becomes an enjoyable experience. Truly the child should have a place to sit quietly and comfortably with proper lighting for reading. It occurs to very few parents that the reason their children do not read is because it is not comfortable for them to read.

A plaything holds a baby's interest for only a few minutes. As the child grows older, he will play with one toy for an hour or an afternoon. Then the interest will carry over from one day to the next. He will begin where he left off the day before. This wholesome development of a child's mind is a natural thing. If he must pick up his toys every afternoon before getting ready for the evening meal, nervousness and dissatisfaction may result and parents find they have a "problem child." The toy train, the highway system with trucks and automobiles and houses and stores and factories, which the child envisions clearly in his arrangement of blocks and toys, is a complete world for the child, and to be told peremptorily to "pick up" is an invasion of the rights of the individual. Too often, the mother glibly says, "You can take them all out again tomorrow and put them right back where they were." But that is a complete negation of the mental processes that bring about the logical development of the child's mind.

But where are we to live? We, the parents who have provided this home and brought the family into being, certainly are not to be completely overruled by the rights and privileges of the children!

Mother should be able to do her house-keeping, prepare meals, sew, and perform the countless other duties that are necessary in the well-ordered home, without too much interference from children and their playthings. Yet all the while she must be able to oversee their play.

Father should be able to come to a restful home after his day's work to rest, read, or pursue his hobby, undisturbed. If he is to be an exemplary father, sated with patience and rich with pearls of wisdom which he can hand to the children at the proper moment, he certainly must not be forced to live in an environment of noise and muss.

And how, you ask, is this to be accomplished in a typical American house? The answer is that we must cease planning houses as if children were temporary. Children grow up [Continued on Page 14]

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