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If Marriage Is in Your Future This Article Was Written For You

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NOW pronounce you man and wife."

Simply, beautifully, a new family is formed. You may be wearing a sparkling diamond on that important third finger or his fraternity pin may shine proudly on your sweater. Perhaps you haven't even met him, but someday with the man of your choice you'll form a family.

A strong family — you hope because the strength of a nation depends upon the strength of the family. The family is the fundamental unit upon which all governments are formed. The welfare and security of the family is vital to every government in the world. Yet, the American family life is threatened with disintegration!

Although we need much more information on family needs and habits, we are like the hill-billy farmer, "We ain't farmin' half as good as we know how now." In May, delegates from every state in the Union, Alaska, and 30 foreign countries attended the National Conference on Family Life in Washington, D.C., to do something about the family. Noticeably absent from the conference were college students . . . the men and women who will form the families of tomorrow. However, their absence should not mean their ignorance of the results for by following conference suggestions we can use our home economics education to build strong, happy families in the future.

A Woman's Place

"The woman's place is in the home," declare the nation's future husbands. "We'll bring home the bacon." But the death or disability of her husband may force a woman to become the family bread-winner. Then she will be glad she has attended college and prepared herself for a worthwhile vocation, for the economic welfare of any American family depends upon the ability of its members to obtain all the necessities and luxuries which make up its standard of living. We Iowa State women are training ourselves to make our own living before marriage. We may find it desirable to work during the early stages of establishing our vine-covered cottage. True, the majority of American families rely upon the earnings of the husband alone, but 21 percent of all married women were working outside the home in April, 1947. What effect has this trend on the welfare of the family? It has been found that employment frequently equips today's homemaker to understand her family better and to contribute to a richer family life.

Good housing makes us want to marry, to learn the arts of homemaking and to bear children. Good housing is much more than just enough housing space plus five percent vacancy. The woman who makes an attractive, comfortable home encourages a rich and secure family life. Sub-standard, obsolete and overcrowded dwellings in squalid neighborhoods are too often the areas of greatest family unhappiness and divorce.

We must remember that families live outside as well as inside houses. A real neighborhood does a lot to make an inadequate house more liveable. A neighborhood should invite fun-fests with other families. Instead, too often now it is an ugly, messy conglomeration of noise, smoke and buildings. In many instances one of the chief functions of the house is to shut out the neighborhood.

Home Decisions

Inside the house, members of the Baker family want and need clean clothing. Father Baker must be respectable at the office. Joe, the fifth grader, does not want to be ashamed of himself at school. Mary, in college, longs to impress the tall, dark engineer on their coke date. How shall all be satisfied with the available resources of the family? Shall the washing be sent to the laundry or shall money be spent for a washer? If a washer, what kind? Could the public launderette down on the corner be used instead of buying the washer? Who will do the ironing and with what equipment, and when, and how well? Or shall all articles be ironed? The family might substitute certain articles and eliminate ironing of others such as grass mats or paper napkins. Making these and other decisions is home management.

Home management takes place in every home. Whether it is good or poor, there is still management, but it can be improved by conscious effort and education. Management uses the knowledge, the abilities and interests of family members as well as time, energy, money and materials. If money is limited, time and energy may be used instead of money, as in making some of the family clothing. Again, if money is limited, knowledge can be used to spare money as in the case of knowledge of low cost foods, foods in season, etc. It is here that your training in textiles and clothing, in foods and nutrition, etc. It is here that your training in textiles and clothing, in foods and nutrition, etc.
and universities take courses in home economics. Usually, however, the course is differentiated from ordinary homemaking, which men believe is the peculiar function of women. Modern homemaking is a joint enterprise. If both husband and wife possess the basic skills, there is better understanding. As home economics broadens to include more psychology, child study and family social relations, it attracts more male students.

The stampede to enroll in the marriage and family course proves the need for more of these courses. But to have such courses a larger staff is needed. Training programs for you who are education majors should include specific training for marriage and family whether you plan to enter that field or closely allied fields such as biology, social studies or psychology.

If our technical journalism students can someday produce simple readable, printed materials on subjects related to marriage and family life, one of the most serious handicaps will be ended. The general public finds no help in libraries where the only information is in college textbooks.

Memories and Hopes

Remember the day you beat your Dad in Chinese checkers? And the time your little brother knocked him out during a “boxing lesson?” Golly, you two were proud. You squared your shoulders and walked straighter for a week afterward. Besides, you and Dad were better pals after that. The need of recreation in a family should be added to the basic needs of food, sleep, shelter, clothing and religion. Just as happy experiences tie friends together, so they also tie members of a family closer with common interests, memories and hopes.

Courtship and Recreation

To young adults leisure time is for courtship; and recreation is part of the courtship. By twos and groups of twos we go to the movies, the bowling alley, college dances, the swimming pool or the picnic grounds. Any of these can be wholesome in themselves. If they are not, it is because they are offered in an environment which is unwholesome. Couples that engage in wholesome activity before marriage, generally do so after marriage.

The quavering voice of a woman pleads, “What shall I do, Mr. Anthony?” and many fascinated radio listeners think this is all there is to marriage counseling. But sincere, intelligent counseling is needed where everyone can reach it. This will take counselors. There are four main fields: child guidance, marriage and family counseling, school counseling and vocation counseling. Courses at Iowa State can help fit you for a counseling position. It is especially important that future teachers take as many courses in child study, biology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychology and sociology as possible.

If you’re majoring in nutrition, your knowledge can help strengthen the families of America and the world. Food supplies in our nation could easily be ample to provide the entire population with a high level of nutritional health. However, evidence shows that a large proportion lacks the diet needed for good health and well being. It is true that application of the science of nutrition lags far behind knowledge, but by using your knowledge you may help the peace of the family and world, for well-fed people don’t fight as quickly as hungry ones.

Midnight Oil

If you struggled through the course in human physiology and burned gallons of midnight oil learning the ins and outs of the human body, don’t despair. An education in the biology of human reproduction is the basis of healthy family life. In fact, when you are the wife and mother of a healthy, happy family you will know that none of these late-into-the-night study sessions was wasted.

You and I are in a position to get the kind of information we need. If we take advantage of our opportunities we can shed the straw hat and the jeans and the hill-billy drawl—“We’ll be farming the best way there is.”

Showered with rice and marriage license in hand, a man and a woman step out into what to them has become a changed world. Do they realize the responsibilities, the cooperation and understanding it takes to make a lasting marriage or will they continue to consider it as a never ending courtship?