

# The Importance of People

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## The Rise and Decline of the Worry Family

*The lease of last year's tenant of this space has been renewed. He, however, has insisted upon subletting the property and is moving into a renovated barn on the premises from which his voice may occasionally be heard. Applicants for one month's sub-lease on this column will be warmly welcomed. Apply to the undersigned at the University of Illinois, Urbana. No restrictive covenants; no discrimination against either celebrities or unknowns; members of all educational classes considered. The occupant for the first month is Edith Cobane, who first wrote the delightful tale of "The Worry Family" as a student in one of C. W. Hunnicutt's courses at Syracuse University. It seems that a Miss Jones had tenants too. . . .*

William Van Til

THIS IS THE STORY of Wilbur and Wilma Worry. The Worrays were a congenial couple who lived in the back of Miss Jones' head, directly behind the part of her brain that attended to Long Division.

Miss Jones was a good sort, very sincere and very attentive to her duties. She taught in Room 28, which is in the northeast corner on the second floor.

Miss Jones had provided Wilbur and Wilma with room and board for quite a number of years. At first, Wilbur and Wilma didn't presume too much on Miss Jones' hospitality. They were content with disturbing whispers. Then they began to hold occasional noisy parties that kept Miss Jones awake half the night. Eventually, Wilbur and Wilma really made themselves at home. They gossiped incessantly about Miss Jones' professional problems. Completely relaxed, they put their feet up on the sofa, tables, and other pieces of mental furniture that belonged to Miss Jones. The Worrays felt well in control of any situation that might arise.

### Enter the New Supervisor

Wilbur was highly concerned about Promotional Increments, Merit Rat-

ings, and Professional Advancement. Wilma, being a bit more practical and a little less far-seeing, thought constantly about the New Supervisor. The N. S. was a young sprout. He was full of new ideas and modern philosophy. Wilma couldn't see how Miss Jones was going to get along with the N. S. Wilbur encouraged his spouse to keep hard at work, because the two of them could really do a fine job on Miss Jones. They became so vehement that Miss Jones heard them talking right in the middle of Silent Reading. She was quite embarrassed lest they leave their room and come to the front door to get a better view. It was nobody's business but her own who lived in her head, but one has to consider what people, especially the N. S., might think. So Miss Jones locked Wilbur and Wilma in the back room, and managed to present an unruffled facade for the public to view.

Wilbur and Wilma were quite annoyed at this state of affairs. They felt that Miss Jones should show proper consideration and allow them self-expression. They felt rather hurt at her disavowal of her tenants, but they busied themselves with plans for the future.

For Wilma, eternally feminine, had decided to raise a family. Wilbur was fully in accord with this idea. They were blissfully happy when their first child appeared. In great delight, they christened him Peter. Peter was a Peptic Ulcer.

A hardy child from birth, Peter was a constant source of joy and comfort to his admiring parents. They tended him carefully, supplying him with nourishment and giving him plenty of good healthy exercise. Every time Miss Jones glimpsed the N. S., or heard his name, Wilbur and Wilma encouraged Peter to do a few back-flips along with some bounding on the springs of the sofa.

Miss Jones was quite upset about Peter's rowdy activities. She tried dieting. She went to doctors. She even ignored Peter in the hope that he might go away. But not Peter. He was very happy to have such attentive parents and such a cozy home. He thrived mightily, and soon became a Chronic Condition.

Here we come to the sad part of this tale. It was mainly the New Supervisor's fault. If he had tended to his business, Wilbur, Wilma, and Peter might have lived happily ever after with Miss Jones. Miss Jones herself might not have been happy. But, after all, as everybody knows, School Teachers get their reward in the hereafter.

The New Supervisor had to go and act like a human being. Wilbur and Wilma were startled when he dropped into Room 28 for a friendly chat after school. He didn't even mention Miss Jones' traditional methods. And poor Peter—he moped for hours when the N. S. praised Miss Jones for some of the good things she was doing.

Miss Jones thawed. Warmed by the N. S.'s attitude, she even conceded that there might be something in this modern education. The N. S. agreed with

her. He implied delicately that she was just the teacher who could handle new methods expertly. "After all," he said, "you have had a great deal of experience. Your knowledge of this community will help the newer teachers as they get acquainted with the social backgrounds of the youngsters. Perhaps we all can get together in the near future to talk about some of these children who are hard to understand. Will you help us?"

Miss Jones went home that night and had a good, stiff talk with Wilbur and Wilma. She said that they had become entirely too annoying as tenants. She said she didn't see any point in being bothered with all this fuss and feathers. She stated that she thought she could get along without them.

Wilbur and Wilma put up quite a battle, especially since they had Peter to consider. They interrupted Miss Jones' efforts frequently at first. But they found it harder and harder to be heard during the sessions when Miss Jones helped the N. S. They hardly murmured after the group meetings in which Miss Jones and the other teachers thought together about why some children behaved as they did. Amazingly enough, the more Miss Jones talked with others about children and their problems, the better she understood herself. All this proved extremely hard on the little Worry family.

It is difficult for a person of sentiment to write the final words of this tale with an unhappy ending. Peter, despite his early promise, died an untimely death. Wilbur and Wilma are now a tired old couple with scarcely strength to putter about. The hard-hearted Miss Jones doesn't miss her tenants one bit, because she and the New Supervisor have a great deal of work to do.

—Edith Cobane

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