"It is within the family that we find the foundation experiences on which maturity of responsibility and initiative are built."

Not infrequently, it is pointed out that the impacts of industrialization and urbanization have made of the family a very different thing than it was in the days of our grandfathers. And it is generally assumed that these changes have been for the worse. The commercialization of erstwhile home making functions such as the baking of bread, the cultivation of kitchen gardens, and the making of clothes is supposed to have brought a weakening of moral fibre in family relationships. The fact that social and economic changes have lessened the chances that family members do chores together or play together as much as was once the case is considered to have made of the family a far less significant character-building agency.

Surely, it would be foolhardy to deny that there were more “natural” opportunities for working and playing together in yesterday’s family. If we are to derive from family experience today personal and social values commensurate with those of yesterday, considerably greater effort, more definite and conscious planning must be brought into the picture.
This, however, need not involve the setting up of special projects. In the give and take of everyday living in the family there are many opportunities to gear in those experiences which will contribute meaningfully to the development of attitudes, skills and patterns of behavior essential to an effectively functioning citizen in a democracy. Clearly, too, these opportunities present themselves long before the child is ready for school and the more organized learnings that school brings. Let us, then, turn to an examination of such attitudes, skills and patterns of behavior as they may be developed through home and family living.

**Pleasure and Satisfaction in Work**

All too often, individuals seem to develop negative attitudes toward work. For many of us, “work” as a word has an unpleasant connotation. Yet any of us who have observed young children closely cannot believe that such feelings are inborn. For even the three year old is anxious to work. Witness the eagerness with which three year old Mary or Johnny comes into the kitchen to help mother stir up the cake mixture or mix the frozen orange juice with water.

It's at this point that adult attitudes are crucial. If, realizing that from an objective point of view, Junior will be more of a hindrance than a help, we bluntly or tactfully frustrate his interest in working, we have begun to build up the all too common negative feelings. If we expect perfection or at least a level of operation far above the child's ability, we are likewise putting a damper on his natural inclination to help. There should be a minimum of criticism and correction at this stage. Approval for effort is the important thing. For if children get the feeling that the work they do is not thought of as valuable to parents but only tolerated, their interest and eagerness will rapidly dwindle.

All sorts of jobs are possible for the under-fives. They can set the table even though knife and fork may sometimes be reversed. They can empty ash trays as handily as the next person. Many a four or five year old is quite effective at answering the phone and calling the person wanted or even getting the name of the caller if mother, father or big sister is not at home. Nor are youngsters of this age necessarily awkward at drying dishes. Save for company china and glass, they can be trusted to wipe and put away the family's eating utensils.

One can hardly expect satisfaction in work to continue if only the humdrum tasks are permitted to the junior members of the family. As children grow a bit older, they can take a hand at the more creative and interesting jobs such as cooking, arranging flowers or trying their hand at simple home repairs. And it is interesting to note that if one has the opportunity of working at the more creative and interesting jobs, there's less likelihood that the humdrum ones will be avoided.

**Satisfaction in Working Together**

In the kind of world in which we now live, cooperative effort is the order of the day. Not only is it more fun but usually it is more efficient to work together. Those of us who have been camp counselors know how much...
better results we get in cabin clean-ups and other camp chores if we pitch in and work alongside the campers. And this works as well in the home as in camp.

How children do enjoy working alongside mother or father! For, in addition to the learning of skills, they get a feeling of importance, of significance, of being grown-up.

If, however, this business of working together is to be truly successful, parents need to keep a number of things in mind. First, we must be patient with what are sometimes crude efforts. Far more important it is to build in children positive attitudes toward work than to have the shelf absolutely straight or the living room in perfect condition.

Second, we must learn to steer a good course between the tendency to do the big part of the job ourselves and the mistake of placing tasks on children’s shoulders that are so difficult as almost certainly to result in failure.

Third, we must realize that when children are young, it is natural that they won’t stick to a job as thoroughly and conscientiously as we might like. One advantage of the working-together approach is that there is more likelihood of their keeping at things when they know we, too, are on the job. But even with this, one must expect less persistence than from adults.

**Development of Initiative and Responsibility**

Few things are more important in a democratic society than initiative and responsibility on the part of individual citizens. If we are to maintain a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” we must be able to count on active participation of men and women in the affairs of the community, the state and the nation. The “let George do it” point of view which all too often characterizes many of us, is fatal to the flowering of the democratic spirit.

Here again, it is not going beyond the facts to assert that it is within the family first and foremost that we find the foundation experiences on which maturity of responsibility and initiative are built. And it should be stressed that it is from homely day by day experiences, not through verbal instruction and exhortation, that the qualities of initiative and responsibility are derived.

The direct, top-sergeant approach used all too frequently in attempts to develop responsibility in children is largely ineffective. For its use means that we are really taking the responsibility ourselves, and the child comes to depend on our pressure to get him to do things. The value of an approach that makes it natural and satisfying for him to take responsibility should be self evident. But perhaps a few simple examples are in order.

Given a little intelligent planning on the part of parents, it is possible for younger children to take no little responsibility for the care of their own rooms. If they are supplied with string bags of the sort in which potatoes and onions are packaged, all the small toys—plastic autos, lead soldiers, tops, doll dishes—which every youngster loves, the job of keeping them neatly stored is made relatively easy. For larger toys or for the small carpenter tools that may be a part of the youngsters’ treas-
ured possessions, silhouettes that fit the toy or tool can be drawn on the back of shelves so that children are fairly invited to put things in their proper place. Low hooks in the closet, easily opened bureau drawers plus a little encouragement are likely to lead to a degree of neatness and order that may astonish even grandma.

In one home, where the family does much entertaining, a “good deal” — to use the youngsters' phrase — was worked out. The ten year old son and his twelve year old sister were given a major role in meal preparation and serving. Of course, they served something of an apprenticeship before they took on such responsibility. Everyone concerned appreciated this particular project. Mother was happy to be relieved of last minute preparations, since she could spend the time with guests. The guests were impressed with the efficiency of the junior cooks and waiters. And it scarcely need be said that the children got genuine satisfaction out of doing a real job.

There would seem to be little doubt that the carry-over values of those kinds of responsibility which bring satisfaction to the individual are far greater than those derived out of a top-sergeant or ringmaster approach. And as youngsters grow through such responsibility, the next step to the encouragement of initiative is an easy one. Increasingly, parents alert to the importance of responsibility and initiative, can encourage their children to figure out better ways of doing the things they are doing. Unlike Tom Starrett's father, who said to his son, "You're old enough for me to count on you to take full responsibility for cleaning up and rearranging our basement workshop," but who then found fault with the way Tom did the job, we will encourage initiative by showing approval even though we, ourselves, might have done the job somewhat differently.

Learning To Make Choices

Closely related to the development of initiative but important enough to be examined separately, is the business of learning to make intelligent choices. Here, too, the home, from the child's earliest days, provides a learning laboratory.

In early childhood, youngsters can be permitted choice of the clothes they wear and, to a considerable extent, of the foods they eat. As they grow older, the arena for choice widens. It is perfectly possible for under-twelves, for instance, to have learned through parent help, how to take into consideration the factors that should be considered in making all kinds of decisions. Through the use of an allowance, through selection of new clothing, through active participation in a wide variety of other family-related activities, sound patterns of choice-making can be developed.

Most choices involve consideration of others' rights and privileges. Rarely, as children or adults, are we faced with choices that don't in one way or another impinge on other members of the family, our friends or our neighbors. Through the family council, which is becoming increasingly common, children, youth and adults learn how to plan together in light of not only individual but group considerations. At regular times or as the
situation demands, the family as a group works and plans together around such areas as where and how vacation time is to be spent, whether money should be used for a new television set or for rumpus room furniture.

It may, at times, seem that the "little things" in everyday family living are relatively unimportant. We see that unless nations learn to work together, they will perish. We know that labor and management must cooperate lest there be continued industrial strife. Inter-professional jealousies and rivalries plague us. Racial, religious and social prejudice make it clear that we still have far to go before we can truly call ourselves brothers.

Yet, in a very profound sense, the way we have learned or failed to learn to work together in the family has a bearing on our ability to work together in the larger arenas of human interaction. The significance of the early-established patterns cannot lightly be pushed aside. As individuals, we bring to our work and our play, to the council table and to our contacts with diverse groups, patterns of response that have come out of such simple experiences as have been all too briefly considered here.

MAURICE D. BEMENT

Working Together in the COMMUNITY

How can citizens show most effectively their genuine concern with the status of their schools? Several approaches to organization of citizens councils and committees are suggested in this article.

Citizen participation in school affairs is fashionable today. Sometimes it seems as if everyone is either talking or writing about it. The school system without a citizens committee today is as dated as milady’s last year’s hat. Too often, however, neither the laymen participants nor the educational leaders have a clear idea of just what citizen-school cooperation can accomplish or how they can best go about it.

It is possible to set up endless lists of “dos” and “don’ts” for citizens and schoolmen working in local citizens committees, but these lists have only limited utility. The person who is particularly adept at losing friends and alienating people is less likely to take such admonitions to heart than is the person who has already accepted them. It is more effective to start with first principles, to think through why citizens should participate in school af-