

SARAH CHILD
**All In
The Family**



I first read "We Took to the Woods" by Louise Dickinson Rich when I was about 13.

My high school librarian recommended it saying it was one of her favorites. It has become one of mine, too. And every few years I reread it mainly because the author has made the idea of living in the Maine woods sound so attractive.

Far from civilization, the Riches had as their only neighbors a couple who ran a guide service and, from time to time, a logging crew. But even these "neighbors" were miles away.

Locked in by waterways which were un-navigable during Spring and Fall when the rivers and ponds were neither completely free of ice nor yet frozen hard enough to traverse, the Rich family had to be sufficient unto themselves for long periods of time.

Efficient planning for food-stuffs, particularly, was a necessity. For as the author pointed out should she forget to put evaporated milk on her monthly shopping list it might mean weeks of drinking their coffee black. Borrowing from the neighbors was out. Although the friends would cheerfully lend whatever they had, the bor-

rowers knew it would ultimately place their neighbors in the same deprived situation.

Mrs. Rich lived and wrote this story in the 1930s but as a housewife attempting to survive in the suburbs I feel a kinship with her that 40 years and the advent of powdered coffee creamers cannot blight.

It was I who wanted to rear our family in the suburbs. My husband, born and bred in the city, agreed reluctantly that a green environment for the children was probably more important than being able to walk to a corner store, catch a bus easily or feel secure in the glow of streetlights.

There are times when I know I was wrong. Actually, what I had wanted was a close approximation of the small town life I had known and the suburbs seemed closer to that than the urban bustle.

It is not. There are no walks to the drug store, or any other place for that matter. With the two-year-old in tow the only place we can go on foot is to the elementary school.

The nearest supermarket is 10 minutes away by car. Forget napkins or allspice or ice cream and the need is quickly diminished in light of a 20-minute round trip.

Forget bread or soap powder or baby aspirin and a real crisis may loom. There are no suitable substitutes.

Borrow from a neighbor? Certainly. But even I tend to blush when borrowing more than two items from one neighbor in a single week.

We are a one-car family and there is much conniving and manipulating before scheduling dentist's appointments, coffee klatches or even a trip to the dry-cleaners.

Heavy snow and cold weather immobilize the suburbanite's car and thus the suburbanite. Sometimes the housebound woman does not see a face not belonging to her family for a week at a time. It may be the reason why after the year's first heavy snowfall I spent 10 minutes asking the paperboy how he was. And didn't even care that I confused him so much he charged me for two weeks instead of one.

Legion Hears Missioner

Hornell — Father Aedan McGrath, a Columban Father, conducted a day of recollection on Sunday, Dec. 10 at St. Ann's Church. Services, sponsored by the Legion of Mary of St. Ann's Church and their auxiliary members.

This marked Father McGrath's second visit to Hornell. Last December he gave a talk in St. Ann's School as part of a special observance marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Legion of Mary.

It was primarily for Father McGrath's efforts in establishing the Legion of Mary in China that he was imprisoned by the Communists.

The Legion of Mary, dedicated to the spread of Christian ideals and personal sanctification, was the chief target of Communist persecution in the 1950's. Membership in the organization was punishable by imprisonment which often resulted in death.

Father McGrath was arrested in Shanghai in September of 1951. For the next 27 months, he was confined to a cell so tiny that he could scarcely stand upright. The cell was unheated in winter and stifling hot in summer, yet Father McGrath refused to sign the paper which might have released him.

The paper accused members of the Legion of conducting secret counter-reactionary and evil activities against the government, the people and Soviet Russia and demanded immediate resignation from the organization.

Refusal to sign the "confession" resulted in imprisonment and dispossession of property for thousands of Chinese. It caused Father McGrath to be imprisoned.

Father was expelled from China in 1954 and returned to his native Ireland for reassignment. He started a program of expansion of the Legion of Mary in England where he remained until coming to the United States a few years ago. He has gained a wide reputation for his talks on "Christianity versus Communism" and for his retreats and days of recollection.

Mental Health Commentary

By THE DE PAUL CLINIC

The peace negotiations to end the Vietnam war, hopefully, will see our POWs released soon. About 1,250 of our men are missing. The Defense Department lists 540 US POWs including 425 in North Vietnam, about 100 held by the Viet Cong and a few in Laos. Some of the more than 700 men missing in action may increase the total to be returned. Most have been prisoners for more than three years; one has been a prisoner for eight years.

Dr. Richard Wilbur, Asst. Secretary of Defense for Health and Environment, has described a plan for returning our POWs called "Operation Egress Recap." This plan, based on the experience of returned POWs of WW II and the Korean War, is designed to help them recover from the unhappy effects of their long confinement.

The men will be returned to medical facilities in South Vietnam where they will have a physical examination and whatever medical treatment is urgently indicated for such conditions as malaria and other infections.

They will, then, be sent by hospital plane to reception centers in the Philippine Islands, Okinawa and Guam where each man will meet his attending physician and be assigned a fellow officer or enlisted man who will be a companion during his return home. Further medical and psychiatric care is planned as well as an appraisal of the changes in his family such as deaths, illness, divorces, etc. The stay in the reception center is expected to vary from three days to two weeks. Then the long flight to the west coast by hospital plane on which each man will have both a chair and a bunk.

Back in the United States, most are expected to be transferred to a military or Veterans Administration Hospital where they will be on "Hospital Status" and given whatever medical and psychiatric care they need as well as counseling regarding financing, family matters and whatever long term problems they will be facing. After prolonged confinement, men need time and help to compose themselves, shift from a prison mentality, handle emotional reunions with family and make important decisions about their future.

Many of those POWs who have already returned from North Vietnam think in Vietnamese rather than English and will even respond in that language when spoken to in English. They tend to be tired, irritable, forgetful and suspicious. These are some of the problems the "decompression process" hopes to minimize.

The reunion with family, especially wife and children, can be a highly emotionally charged experience for all concerned. For some, it may be a joyous experience with renewed hope for a happy future together. For others, it will not be a happy time. For all, there can be expected to be a period of readjustment since all concerned will have changed in varying degrees. The returned soldier can be expected to be different and will be trying to readjust himself to the return to his family and also, to the changes in the family.

Wives will have been raising the children alone for several years without the help of a father. She, too, may have changed in weight and disposition. The children may feel strange towards the returning hero and see him as an intruder, rather than the longed for father of their dreams. Problems in the family relationships are a possibility which can be dealt with better when they are anticipated and when early professional assistance is available and used. The understanding and support of those of us on the fringe of the families of these men who have given so much of themselves can help. Certainly, our health delivery systems and our economy owe them the best opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Questions on children's mental health should be mailed to: Mental Health Commentary, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, 14604.

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