

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Sarah Child

I was thinking the other day that one of the most valuable lessons I learned as a reporter was how to find out things.

I'm not talking about exposes but simply answers to questions that come up in day-to-day living.

Take a for instance. On a recent torrid Sunday I wanted to make some shortcake for the family so that the sandwiches I planned to serve would not seem too skimpy a weekend meal.

With the temperature in the kitchen up past 90 degrees I didn't want to turn on the oven. I had an electric skillet but because I had bought it at a scratch and dent sale, the booklet that was supposed to accompany it had been lost in the store.

Undaunted I baked the shortcake anyway. The electric skillet I plugged in in the relative coolness of the back porch. It came out fairly well scorching only a little on one side.

Since it was Sunday most of my sources were cut off, my neighbor to our right being away and other places of information closed for the weekend.

Early the next day I called the home economics department of Rochester Gas & Electric and asked how to do it right. Not only did I get the right information (The temperature should have been no higher than 280 degrees) but I also got the address of the manufacturer so I could write away for a cookbook of my own.

Had the gas and electric company not had the information my next try would have been the local county extension service. Its home economics department there is every bit as eager to answer questions as is their agricultural department which

incidentally I called later in the week to ask what to do about an injury to a Norway maple I'd bought and planted.

As helpful as these three places are, none is as versatile as the information department of our public library which goes ecstatic with delight at the prospect of helping you find the answer to a real toughie.

In the last two months they have come up with the president's names and addresses of three manufacturers to whom I wished to complain. They furnished the interesting information (for a talk I was giving on women and mental health) that nearly twice as many women as men have emotional problems — this according to study made at Cornell University. Several years ago they even helped me choose a name for our third child or rather helped me decide against a name because of its origin.

Another good source of information particularly for current events is the city desk (or sports desk) of the local daily paper. I had answered enough questions myself during stints on rewrite. Unless they're terribly busy they'll be pleasantly helpful.

But these are not my best sources for learning new things. My best sources are my husband, my children, neighbors, relatives, friends, clerks in stores, strangers in the street, mechanics in garages, to wit, anybody you come in contact with.

On a recent Saturday I was at a garage sale when I noticed a house across the street with a healthy, vigorous section of pachysandra. There was a woman in the front yard watering a tree and I wandered over and complimented her on her foundation planting.

The pachysandra was beautiful, I told her, and it looked like it was facing west. I explained I had wanted to plant some in front of our house which faces west but several nurserymen had advised me against it, saying that the setting summer sun would be too hot for it.

The lady of the house said that her house faced east not west — I was confused about the direction. However, she had more pachysandra at the rear of her house which did face west and it was every bit as healthy as the greenery in front.

I went home subsequently bought some pachysandra, and it is at present flourishing in our front yard — facing west. So much for the experts.

Of course not everybody feels comfortable marching up to strangers for a little chit-chat. My husband is one of these and if he is with me when I strike up a conversation he will pretend ignorance as to my identity.

As for me I cannot recommend it heartily enough. Oh sure every once in a while you bump into a stuffed shirt. But for the most part the majority of people are delighted to enlighten you. And sometimes your helpful strangers turn into a double bonus — they become friends. So next time you want to know something — don't just stand there. Ask somebody.

Family Planning Methods Explained

By PAT PETRASKE

With proper motivation and careful observance of procedures, natural family planning methods can be as effective as artificial birth control means.

Interested couples who wanted to learn of a safe, effective and acceptable method of spacing children were told this last week by Dr. Joseph Ricotta of the Buffalo Family Life Clinic. He lectured at Becket Hall on "The Successful Practice of Family Planning."

He explained that while theoretically the pill is 99 per cent effective and intra-uterine devices are considered 96 per cent effective, in actual practical use their success is rated around 86 per cent, which is also the success rate of the natural method. The latter has been sought after by Catholics because it is the only method of regulating conception accepted by the Church.

The lecture, which included a presentation by representatives of the Connecticut Natural Family Planning Association, was sponsored by an ad hoc Natural Family Planning Committee under the diocese's Office of Family Life, said Father Robert Collins, director. The priest stated that several couples were trying to revive interest in methods that were taught twelve years ago at a clinic sponsored by St. Mary's Hospital. The clinic died for lack of business, he said.

Natural family planning begins with a consideration of the complex biological rhythms, detectable in all living organisms. The key to its success is to determine the time of ovulation in a woman so that a couple may remain continent during this fertile period. Ricotta pointed out that so far the indicators of ovulation are imprecise.

His clinic in Buffalo used

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techniques he developed in Hawaii and the Philippines. Sympto-thermic is the word for his method.

Rhythm, technically called calendar rhythm, is considered "too hazardous" by Ricotta. A report by the Human Life Foundation noted that "less than half of American women would find success with such an approach."

The sympto-thermic method of fertility regulation uses a combination of techniques including temperature readings and the observance of several additional systems such as changes in mucus secretions and the cervix, occurrence of mid-cycle pain and an increase in libido.

Ricotta's clinical and scientific approach was balanced with a discussion by John and Nancy Ball of the Connecticut Natural Family Planning Association, who employ a "couple-to-couple"

approach in teaching planning methods. For them "It is more than a technique but a way for a couple to enrich their lives."

The couple-to-couple approach involves counseling in the homes and an offering of understanding and support. It stresses the vital element of marriage, conscious parental responsibility, which is the duty of both the husband and wife, the Balls explained.

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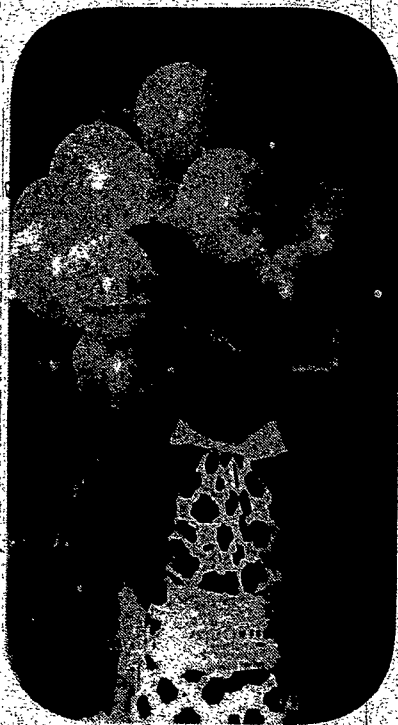
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Clowning Around

Sister Mary Louise Hefferman of St. Ambrose turns out to be quite a clown. She is shown as the "balloon man" at the recent parish festival.

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