

Family Planning Can Be 'Natural'

By BONITA BALDWIN

Mary Beth O'Hara is not out to convert anyone, she said recently at her home. "I just want to live morally. I agree with the Pope, but even if he changed his position tomorrow, I'd still feel this way." The O'Haras' stand on natural family planning has been lonely in past years. "Sometimes it seems like it's just you and the Pope."

Mrs. O'Hara estimated that there are now 200 small groups practicing "responsible parenthood" (the term birth control is not used) across the U.S. Currently these groups work in isolation. Mrs. O'Hara expressed hope that the new Natural Family Planning Federation of America will be instrumental in uniting these groups, thus eliminating one major reason why natural

family planning is not practiced: lack of information and training. Mrs. O'Hara claimed that young couples are not fairly presented with the option of natural family planning by clergy, teachers, or doctors, who themselves lack adequate information.

Increased information also would correct another reason why couples avoid natural family planning: the failure of calendar rhythm. Mrs. O'Hara explained that the sympto-thermic method is not calendar rhythm. It is based on the natural fertile and infertile cycles of a woman's body which, with training, are readily observed in the course of a month. Unlike calendar, "which everyone knew didn't work," the sympto-thermic method quickly detects irregularities in the woman's

cycle. Pregnancy can be either effected or delayed.

The abstinence involved is another deterrent to the method's use, according to Mrs. O'Hara, but she said that she has heard many couples say that abstinence has enhanced their relationship. "You develop a tremendous respect for one another. You have to be creative and think of more ways to show your love."

Mrs. O'Hara has observed that many couples using the method seem to radiate a special happiness. She attributes much of the happiness in her own marriage to the working together and sacrifices that are required if the

method is to succeed. Natural family planning is the only birth control method that involves both husband and wife. "Success depends on the motivation of both parties."

Mrs. O'Hara cited still another reason for the unpopularity of natural family planning methods. Americans, members of a technological society, seek technological solutions to problems. Natural answers aren't sought and their effectiveness is doubted.

Perhaps this attitude explains why women concerned with liberation so readily submit to artificial contraceptive methods,

which Mrs. O'Hara said, "put women down by implying it is beyond their control to understand their own bodies and control pregnancy." She wondered too how women can take the risk involved in intrauterine devices and oral contraceptives. Women have been known to die from side effects of both. "Besides," Mrs. O'Hara added, "no method is 100 per cent sure."

Couples interested in more information should contact:

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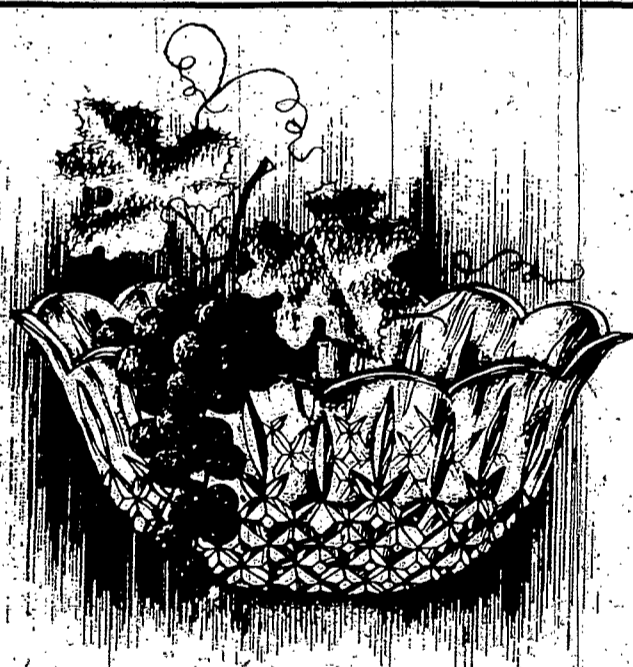
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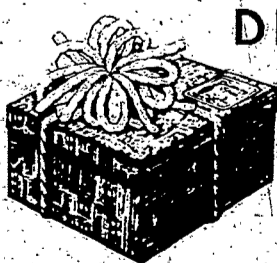
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