

By **JOHN S. GLEASON, Jr.**

NATIONAL COMMANDER,
THE AMERICAN LEGION

A MUCH-BELOVED AMERICAN comedian gave his greatest performance one night recently, before millions of viewers. It was a special production about his career. But this time there were no laughs.

Instead he sat alone, talking seriously to his unseen audience, from a front row of the otherwise deserted TV theatre where formerly he staged many of his uproarious triumphs.

As he talked, his arm was around an invisible partner in the empty seat beside him. This, he told the viewers, was where she used to sit and watch him. For the meteoric rise that made him the nation's Mr. Television, he gave her full credit.

The comedian was, of course, Milton Berle, and the invisible lady at his side was his late mother, Sandra.

The role of motherhood and its effect on our lives and our world, our successes and failures, has become almost taboo in modern conversation. Sophisticates are supposed to brush aside a tribute like Berle's as sticky sentimentality.

Yet the role of woman — and of the mother most of all — in shaping and guiding the lives of individuals and nations has been recognized across time, not only by the simple and unsophisticated, but also by the powerful and the wise.

And today — regardless of the cynics' cheapening of so many fundamental truths — it is becoming increasingly imperative for Americans to recognize the new importance of the role of motherhood in our rapidly changing social structure.

We must understand, in fact, the growing role of women in every field, and above all the importance of making sure that our daughters receive sound training, equally with our sons, in the complex ideas and challenges of our age.

In my own life, most of what I learned that was good I learned from my mother. I am sure that in this I speak for millions of men. The greatest leaders of our world have voiced in warm and grateful words this same truth.

"All that I am, or hope to be," a President of the United States declared, "I owe to my angel mother."

His name was Lincoln.

Great artists, musicians, world-renowned composers like Robert Schumann and Franz Liszt, have told of their debt — and gratitude — to their mothers. One of the most influential thinkers of modern times declared:

"I shall never forget my mother, for it was she who planted and nurtured the first seeds of good in me. She opened my heart to the impressions of nature; she awakened my understanding and extended my horizon, and her precepts exerted an everlasting influence upon the course of my life."

That was Immanuel Kant, the great 18th century philosopher and intellectual.

It was the American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson who declared that — regardless of textbooks and teachers and experience — "a man is what his mother makes him."

If the influences of motherhood rated such concern in the past, how much more concern must they command today, in a world where women have taken over wholly new and exciting and increasingly significant roles?

How much greater, then, is the need of our young women, our girls, our beribboned little monarchs, for our help and



Standards and ideals mothers live by rub off on their sons from infancy.

training in meeting the challenges which they — as grown women and wives and mothers of just a few years from now — will face?

For on this rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed little girl, skipping rope as we pass her on the street, may rest, in greater measure than most of us have anticipated, the future of our nation and our freedom.

J. Edgar Hoover, in a statement on this subject to the Girls Clubs of America, pointed out that it is the duty of every community to furnish constructive assistance to our girls "who will, in turn — as citizens, and as homemakers and mothers — furnish leadership for the youth of tomorrow."

When we see these girls in their gay outfits, especially the very young ones, it is sometimes hard to visualize what this feminine "small fry," sewing or knitting or camping or selling cookies, really symbolizes.

For she is tomorrow. She stands for the future. And what it will be like depends to a startling degree on what she comes to understand and to believe.

In our great concern that our boys capture the most priceless ideals and visions of our heritage, how well do we realize that little Miss Pigtales — as the wife and mother of tomorrow — is the most important depository of that heritage that we ever did or ever will have?

Any survey of our society will show the scope of our concern for our young men and the multiplicity of organizations and individuals whose inspiring work helps our boys and young men find their way.

By comparison, interest in the planning of programs for our girls has been extremely limited at best.

There are, of course, many groups at work that have the vision. The Girls Clubs, the Camp Fire Girls, the Girl Scouts

ARE WHAT THEIR MOTHERS MAKE THEM

... THE OLDEST APPROACH TO SO-CALLED
"YOUTH PROBLEMS" RATES MORE ATTENTION
TODAY, SAYS THE LEGION'S COMMANDER.

of America and similar organizations reach out to vast numbers of girls from the seven and eight year olds to grown young womanhood. The American Legion Auxiliary's Girls' State and Girls' Nation, parallel what The American Legion does with its Boys' State and Boys' Nation.

But the long range view requires that we place much greater emphasis than we now do on these and similar organizations, if only because the little girl of today is the mother of our son's son tomorrow — and what he thinks and



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becomes she will most largely determine.

"A mother's heart," Henry Ward Beecher wrote a century back, "is the child's classroom."

Since Beecher wrote those words, there has been a feminine revolution. Women have taken on new roles in careers and citizenship once assumed only by men.

Delegates to Girls' Nation are impressed by spirit of sacrifice to God and country as they visit tomb of the Unknown Soldier. American Legion Auxiliary each year gives thousands of girls of high school age a living experience in the meaning of American ideals and aspirations with its Girls' State and Girls' Nation programs.



The double role of women today only puts more stress on the attention we should give to the training and inspiration of our girls. That women have taken on new, emancipated stations in life has not reduced the importance of their function as wives and mothers a bit. But it has produced its full quota of disturbing aspects.

How much of our present day delinquency, for example, is due to the home that is motherless because both parents work?

How often do we today find the woman who has no time for her historic role, no time to be a mother, no time to learn the values she must inculcate in her children, no time for moral instruction, or even for love?

How often has this happened because those deathless duties of womanhood were played down in her presence when she was a little girl?

This is the dark side of the coin but it cannot be disregarded. Values do become distorted. Standards are swept away.

Recently I heard of one woman who had no time for such things until one evening at a cocktail party she became so entranced by the leftwing spoutings of a young man that she handed him a check on the spot for his "cause" —



Girl Scouts (above), Campfire Girls, Girls' Clubs, churches and other groups help inspire the mothers of tomorrow's young men in their formative years.

which she didn't understand but which sounded terribly worthwhile.

She did not even guess that she was feeding a Red front with her check, that her misplaced generosity could conceivably endanger the future of her own child and country.

Because womanhood now has two roles in life, it is doubly more difficult, more demanding and more full of pitfalls for the unwary than manhood —

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all say that their hobby has brought them many fine new friendships. One woman said that although she had won many top prizes, her finest prize was the new lease on life that contesting and all its associations had brought her.

A man wrote that he had even won his wife through a contest. It seems his description of his ideal "dream sweetheart" won him a diamond ring as first prize in a newspaper contest. Soon after,

he received a letter from a young lady who said that she answered the description. They began corresponding and later met and were married. Now they both are serious contesters and attend all the conventions together.

One thing is sure. Once you've won a contest, you'll be a contest addict. And soon you'll be like all the other hobbyists. When you need a new range or a car or a new fur coat, you won't buy it.

You'll just enter a contest where it's offered as a prize. You'll spend your money purchasing the products that go with the box tops. As one contester who had just won a Norge refrigerator-freezer and \$70 from Staley Starch and \$850 worth of sterling and china from Westmoreland Tableware Company wrote us: "Today's modern woman is a contest fan, rearing her family on the entry blank plan." THE END

MEN ARE WHAT THEIR MOTHERS MAKE THEM

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yet seems to receive half the attention.

Certainly, we have not fully looked this aspect of the emerging role of American womanhood in the face.

"Let France have good mothers and she will have good sons," Napoleon declared.

America, so worried about some of its sons, might well reduce its worries in the long run by better supporting the several national groups that are doing a notable and often magnificent job guiding and inspiring girls.

One of the newest, the Girls Clubs of America, founded only in 1945, has already become a factor in the training of American girlhood in our era of transition.

The Girls Clubs number 75 self-governing clubs in American cities. Already serving tens of thousands of girls, their programs accent values centuries old—training in homemaking skills, cooking, sewing, baby care, menu planning, food buying—in addition to sports and crafts and community services.

"Among our girls are some who find in the club the only place they know to learn the honored skills of the homemaker," say Girls Clubs officials.

"Back of the Girls Clubs," they state, "is a plan to supplement the home, church and school in fostering maximum development of girls. The future of every community — every bit of America — rests to a great extent with its mothers of tomorrow."

It is interesting to note that the chairman of the board of this group is a woman who is not only a homemaker herself, but also a business leader—department store executive Dorothy Shaver.

The purpose of the Camp Fire Girls is to "perpetuate the ideals of the home and to stimulate and aid in the formation of habits making for health and character"—and, its leaders state, femininity as well.

In Fort Worth, Texas, Bluebirds—seven to nine year olds—found a way to fight the brutalities of Soviet Communism working with their older Camp Fire sisters.

Door to door and house to house, they collected seven and a half tons of

clothes for needy children here and abroad—and for refugees fleeing Russian barbarity in Hungary.

In what clearer way could one dramatize to the children the nature of our foe—or the way in which we will finally overcome him, the way of God?

The largest girls' service organization, the Girl Scouts of America, reaches some 3,000,000 girls in the Brownie and Girl Scout programs.

More than 12,500,000 have belonged to the movement since its founding 46 years ago. More than 99 percent of its 750,000 men and women leaders are volunteers.

Any movement of this nature and scope has tremendous influence and it is a vital obligation for all of us to watch this work, to participate in it where possible and advisable, and to point out where a mistake may be made or a wrong path taken.

It is equally important to point out the achievements of each group. In 1958, for example, the whole Girl Scout program has been devoted to the concept of service to our country and self-reliance. The slogan for this program: "You can count on her."

There are Brownies—the seven to ten year olds—making hospital trays, in this program, and teen-age Girl Scouts rolling bandages, working with the Red Cross and "adopting" older people and crippled children to visit and cheer, helping the blind, and performing menial but vital tasks in medical care centers.

In Texas, Brownies are making games and toys for a child care center. In Johnstown, Pa., they work with Marine veterans of the 34th Special Infantry Company, repairing and gift-wrapping toys for needy children.

In a hundred ways they are proving and thus learning that they can be counted on as girls and women to serve their community and nation.

One of the best jobs Girl Scout leadership has achieved has been in Chicago, where thousands of girls, particularly those difficult to reach in the teeming, less-chance areas of that metropolis, have been reached and guided toward true womanhood. The summer camping

program of the Girl Scouts for city girls is of great significance all by itself, for getting girls who only know the city streets out into the countryside, where they can see and feel the beauty of life and green things can affect them more profoundly than many adults imagine.

The Catholic Daughters of America is devoted to recreation and civic programs for Catholic girls.

The Girls Friendly Society of the USA, a national Episcopal group, concentrates on home, religion and promotion of the ideals of brotherhood.

But although these organizations are providing real guidance and inspiration for millions of girls, there are millions more that are not reached.

There are believed to be ten thousand little girls in New York City who want to be Brownies in the Girl Scout movement, but who cannot because there are not enough leaders or facilities. Similar examples could be cited in many other American communities.

Yet these young women are more important to us than many of America's adults may have fully realized, in our anxiety to help our boys.

Martha Allen, national director of the Camp Fire Girls, says that we have all tended to emphasize social poise, to the point where character building and the development of ideals, principles and inspiring visions are considered old fashioned; and that these attitudes are rubbing off on our sons and daughters, too.

On this simple fact, she suspects, rests a great deal of what we like to call our "youth problems."

But—"Life at this hour," she says, "demands more of us than social poise and social skill. It demands responsibility and sacrifice, intelligence, courage, stamina. It also demands knowledge and achievement. We need these qualities for the maintenance of a good society, in fact for its survival."

To which I would only add that if we do more than we are doing to develop responsibility, sacrifice, intelligence, courage and stamina, knowledge and achievement in our girls, they will do more than we ever can to develop those traits in their sons. THE END