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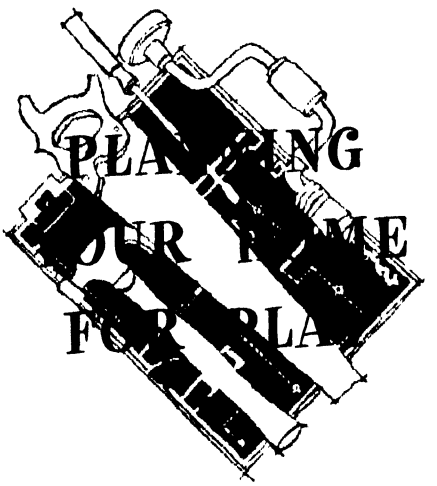
PLA NG
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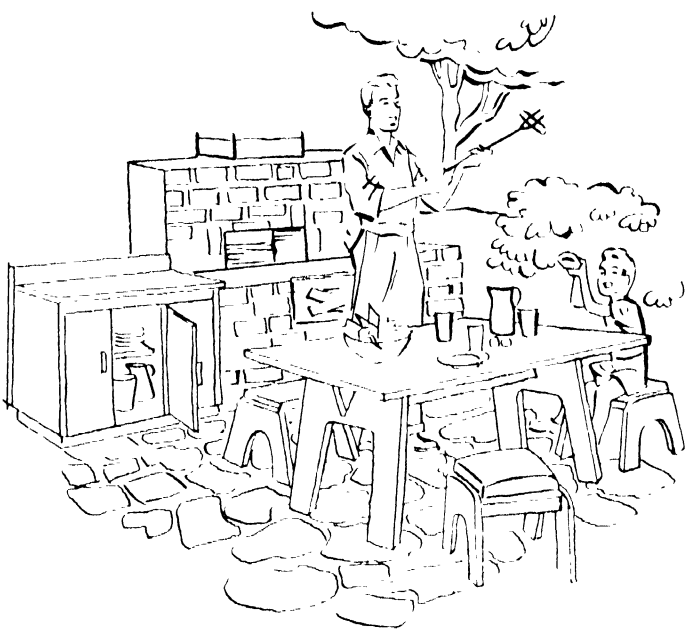
ALBERT A. OSTROW

PLANNING YOUR HOME FOR PLAY

DRAWINGS BY ANTHONY LOMBARDO



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TO

THE AMERICAN FAMILY

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THE AUTHOR WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR KIND PERMISSION to use photographs, and illustrations.

Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma, Wash., Fig. 1, 21, 43, 47.

Doughboy Industries, New Richmond, Wis., Fig. 4.

Recreation division, Canadian Welfare Council, Ottawa, Canada, Photos. 1 through 4, page 19 reprinted from *A Kit On How To Plan A Home Playground.*

The Youngstown Playground Association, Youngstown, Ohio, Photo. 5, Page 19.

Wood Conversion Company, St. Paul, Minnesota, Fig. 27, 28, 29, 30, 60, 61, 64.

M & M Woodworking Co., Portland, Oregon, Fig. 31, 36, 37.

Murphy Bed Company, New York, N. Y., Fig. 32.

U. S. Plywood Corporation, New York, N. Y., Fig. 40.

B. B. Butler Mfg. Company, Bellwood, Illinois, Fig. 41.

John B. Salterini Company, New York, N. Y., Fig. 42.

General Electric Company, New York, N. Y., Fig. 50.

New Castle Products, Inc. Modernfold Doors, New Castle, Indiana, Fig. 58, 65, 66.

Today's Woman—the Magazine for Young Wives, New York, N. Y., Fig. 59.

Johns-Manville Corporation, New York, N. Y., Fig. 62.

Anderson Corporation, Bayport, Minnesota, Fig. 63.

The photographs, Figs. 26 and 38 are by Jerry Cooke. The photographs for Figs. 70, 71, and 72 are by Hedrich-Blessing.

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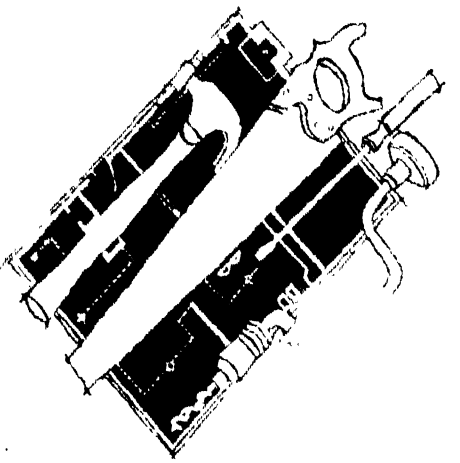
Why Plan?

1



A MOTTO, A DEDICATION, A RECOMmendation and some facts and figures sparked this book.

The motto, theme of an architectural competition, stated that "Home is a place to hang your heart." The dedication appears in a booklet describing a home recreation contest in the Oakland, California, area and expresses the indisputable belief "that a home which has and uses recreation as a regular part of its life is a happier home."

The recommendation, adopted at the Midcentury Conference on Children and Youth, urged that greater emphasis be placed upon bringing mothers and fathers into participation with their children.

As for the facts and figures, they are the kind to set you thinking if you care anything about your family's happiness and its physical, emotional and mental security. Take a look at these grim statistics regarding children's accidents, for instance. Each year, according to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, some 6,000 youngsters between the ages of 5 and 14 find death instead of fun while playing in roadways, and many thousands more are maimed or injured. Traffic accidents kill and cripple more children than all the sicknesses of childhood put together. This grisly toll could be cut sharply, points out the U.S. Children's Bureau, if parents were as concerned about the accident problem as they are about polio and other infectious diseases.

Proof of this has been demonstrated in a number of communities. In Seattle, for example, traffic accidents were drastically reduced when one worried mother initiated a positive plan of action. She got civic groups to sponsor a contest stimulating parents to develop home areas for play and give children safer surroundings in which to release energies.

Not long ago the National Safety Council warned of the harm that awaits fun-bent youngsters who play in hazardous areas. Open pits, empty houses, dumps, railroad property and other such "attractive nuisances" have a dangerous lure for the young adventurer. No one who reads the newspapers can easily forget those pitiful stories and pictures about child explorers who were trapped and suffocated in abandoned ice boxes. Many tragedies of this sort might never have occurred if more mothers and fathers had got away from a "Let George do it" attitude when it comes to providing adequate play space for restless youngsters.

Insufficient exercise, surprisingly enough, is showing up as another major threat to the well-being of children. Too great use of mechanical devices, a recent study by the National Education Association indicates, is robbing our youth of opportunities for the vigorous play they need for sound growth. Tests have shown that the nation's children get so little exercise that the lack of it is "comparable to a vitamin deficiency."

Which brings us inevitably to TV, that supposed boon to home recreation. Many of us are learning to our dismay that while TV helps keep the family at home evenings it can actually get in the way of a healthy family life if not controlled. Too often the magnetic silver screen hypnotizes parents and children into being an audience rather than an intimate group. Instead of promoting closeness it frequently causes squabbles over what programs to turn on and how long the children should be permitted to watch. Family conversation, sociability and fun are allowed to go by the boards while the marvelous electronic toy takes over.

TV's hold is particularly powerful on our susceptible young. Surveys show that kids park in front of sets anywhere from 19 hours a week upwards. In one city pollsters turned up the startling fact that many children in the sixth and seventh grades see 30 hours of

video a week, 5 more hours than they spend in the classroom. A goodly part of their viewing diet consists of murder, gory fantasy, sadistic comedy, and horror. The average child who watches TV sees death inflicted by violence no less than 40 times every week.

What if you are a parent who is disturbed by TV's impact on your youngster's tastes, emotions and health? What can you do about it? Well, you can ration viewing time and police programs strictly, moves which may lead to resentment and squabbles. You can try to steer him to shows of better quality—if you have some choice in your area. Or, best of all, you can plan substitute activities that appeal to your child's innate drive to do instead of sit.

This is important even when good programs are available. No matter how fine the shows, how instructive or wholesome, watching TV is at best a passive affair. Child or adult, one grows and develops mentally and emotionally only by using one's hands and head to develop skills, by having constructive outlets for one's energies.

Then, too, a youngster whose values have already been shaped by shared activity with loving and understanding parents is not likely to be harmed by a moderate amount of TV viewing. To such a child TV is just another medium of entertainment, like a book or a movie. It doesn't become all of his world of imagination, his major source of fun and emotional release.

Here, to take one example, is how one family—let's call them the Browns—get along with TV. Once a week—sometimes oftener—Father, Mother, Junior and Sister watch some shows together. The program for the evening is decided on at dinner and the children's preferences are taken into account. The parents see to it that at least one of the shows is the kind that stirs curiosity or contains something you can take away with you. It might be on science, history, travel, nature, recreational sports. It could be a quiz show or one that deals with music, the arts or wholesome family life.

After the set has been turned off the shows are discussed to see what ideas they have stimulated in the way of follow-up reading or activity. This is all done informally and without a suggestion of preachiness or coercion on the parents' part. Yet they manage to

get the idea across that some shows are superior to others and the reason why.

Parents and children spend at least one other evening together during the week. But on that occasion the TV set is ignored. Instead, a family game will be played, or there will be reading aloud with everyone having a turn, or a shuffleboard or darts contest in the playroom. Perhaps it will be sport in the backyard followed by snack treats prepared on the outdoor fireplace. Friends or neighbors may be invited over for a songfest or card game.

The Browns have the resources and know-how for play and—what is no less important—a home so set up that it suggests and invites fun. The house itself is a modest one with a mortgage geared to a middle-class income. You'll find no expensive play apparatus there, no fancy gadgets. Yet the spirit of play is evident almost everywhere you look.

The little bandbox of a backyard has been transformed into a playground where the youngsters can enjoy themselves after school, where grownups can find diversion of a weekend, and where the entire family can get together for fun. Parts of the basement and porch have been turned into play areas. All over the house space has been rescued from idleness and cleverly made to serve the cause of recreation and relaxation.

This sort of thinking, by the way, didn't just begin when the Browns moved into the house some two and a half years earlier. Before that they had lived in a small apartment while Papa Brown had worked to build up his paychecks and Mama Brown had dreamed of the day the family would have a place of its own. Even in that space-poor setting the Browns found ways to make room for play with ingenious adaptations and improvisations. It had been done because these parents had felt from the beginning that if the home is right, the children will be right and that a home is right only if it is the kind of place where a family can do things together and have fun.

It's a point of view that hardly can be improved on. For studies on the way personality gains health and strength always comes back to the same central theme: Parents are the most important influence in their children's lives. And what more direct and pleasant

method is there of exerting a constructive influence than through play at home? The sharing of good times, it has been proved again and again, is indispensable to family morale and unity. Without it you have little more than a group of individuals living and eating under the same roof—a family only by biological and social definition.

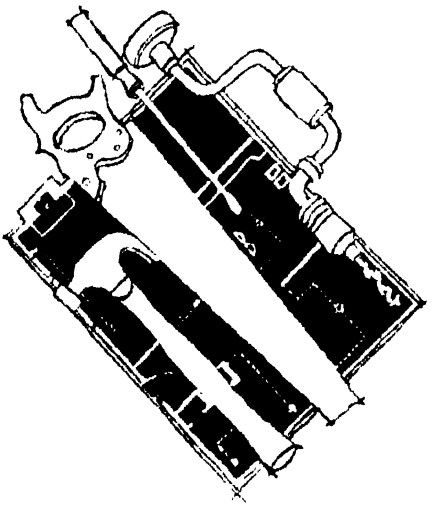
Perhaps all this is too obvious to be stated. Nevertheless, a survey of the recreational life of family groups revealed the following: The great majority of families have few interests in common . . . Most families are dissatisfied with their recreation programs . . . Most families drift along with recreation programs that require little, if any, advance or preliminary preparation . . . In more than half of the families studied the search for fun, instead of strengthening and unifying home life, was having the opposite effect.

This writer himself has commented elsewhere that ". . . a tradition of family life is as much a part of the home-making arts as cooking, shopping, decorating and the like. It may spring up spontaneously, but don't bank on that—not in these days when the pressures of the outside world are so often mistaken for the most important pursuits of our lives. The building of this tradition calls for time, effort, and patience deliberately allocated—"

In short, it takes planning. And the chapters that follow are designed to help you do such planning, to bring more fun and joy into your home. There are practical ideas and tips on making the most of what you have in the way of space whether in a house or apartment. It contains leads on activities that members of your household can indulge in to their benefit. It reminds you that not only is it necessary to take into account the needs of the present but those of the changing tomorrows.

Making a home playworthy, you will see, is a continuing process —like life itself.

How to Enjoy Your Backyard



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IF YOU ARE A HOMEOWNER AND HAVE a backyard, consider yourself lucky. With initiative, planning, a little imagination, and a modest outlay in cash and energy, you can make it a great place for fun—and, incidentally, vastly increase the value of your property. If you are a tenant in a cooperative, duplex or garden type apartment, you'll be able to adapt some of the ideas discussed in this chapter.

When we talk about a backyard, let's think not only of the part of the lot behind the house, but around the sides—any ground, for that matter, not taken up with a structure.

A properly fixed-up backyard can be a haven of play for the small fry, a place where they can build bone and muscle in outdoor exercise away from traffic hazards. It can be a relaxatorium for the grownups, a playground for all the family. During the summer months it can be a resort in miniature.

Let's say that you wisely decide you'd like to make a fun area out of your backyard. How would you go about it? First, you'd want to sit down with pencil and paper and make a scale diagram of the area available for play use. Mark such physical features as trees, garage wall, and so on.

Now here are some of the things it's good to bear in mind in your planning. If you have young children, remember that their play tastes and needs change. Some, though not all of the things that are fun for the pre-schooler and the youngster in the early

grades, become "baby" or "sissy" stuff when he gets older. Also, young children can get bored quickly with the same kind of activity. They like to switch around to new things. So avoid costly, permanently installed apparatus that might too soon be outgrown and have no usefulness.

To a child the important thing is whether he is having fun, not how much a piece of equipment costs. As you will see later, some of the best playthings for the small fry can be made from wooden boxes, cardboard cartons, lengths of lumber, and scrap materials. Water, something to dig in, something to climb, things to move, things to transform by fancy, room to romp and tumble—these are the essential elements of a child's play in the open.

Many Danish and English children have a whale of a time in so-called junk playgrounds equipped with bricks, stones, old planks, sand, sacking and the like. With these and their imagination they construct no end of things which can be torn down and rebuilt in many different ways.

Figure, too, on planning for some small area sports that will provide exercise and fun for the grownups. Most backyard athletics, such as horseshoes, badminton and clock golf, are of the kind that permit older children to join in easily.

Dining outdoors occasionally is a treat, an adventure for kids, and a happy change of pace for grownups. Think about an outdoor grill or barbecue pit (more on this later). Or at least a small level area where a table and chairs can be set up for food prepared indoors.

If there are gardening enthusiasts in the family, arrange to have some tillable area near a fence, and away from the play area. You might even set aside little individual plots for each child where he can grow and tend his own flowers or vegetables. It's a healthy experience for a youngster. In any case, you should consider doing some planting of shrubs, vines and bushes, not only to please the eye but also to act as natural screens or alcoves for dining or for lounging.

With toddlers and very young children it's most important that the backyard be fenced off so that they can't wander away. It also gives the mother a feeling of security while she is indoors tending to household duties. There are decorative fences such as woven

wood ones which not only safeguard your backyard but give you privacy as well.

In connection with safety, by the way, there are a few common-sense rules to observe. Don't leave sharp gardening implements, the lawn mower or other attractive dangers lying loose around the backyard. Provide a safe locked storage place for tools. This can be in a garage, a shed, or a low chest which also doubles as an outdoor bench. See Fig. 1 below. (Fig. 2 on page 9 shows a multi-purpose outdoor storage project. Plans for this and other backyard units can be obtained for a dime each from the Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma 2, Washington).

If the children are old enough, let them in on the planning of the backyard for play. They'll enjoy it that much more. Encourage them to work with you in making the play paraphernalia. It gives them a sense of participation and pride of achievement. They are likely to take better care of something they helped make themselves.

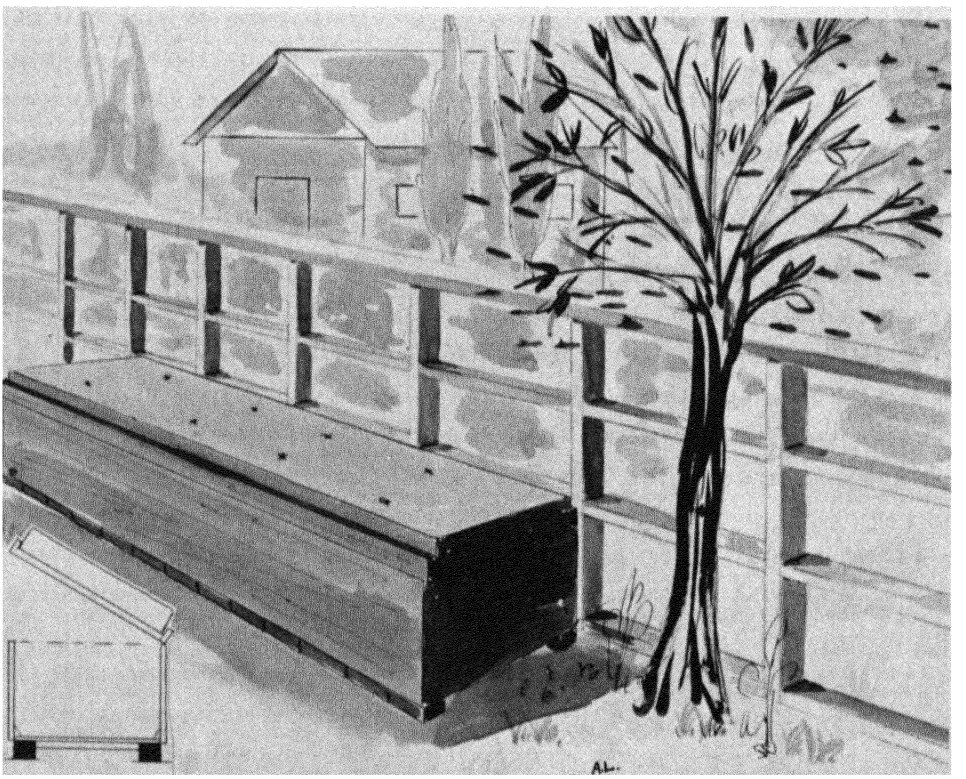


Fig. 1 —Bench and storage box in one

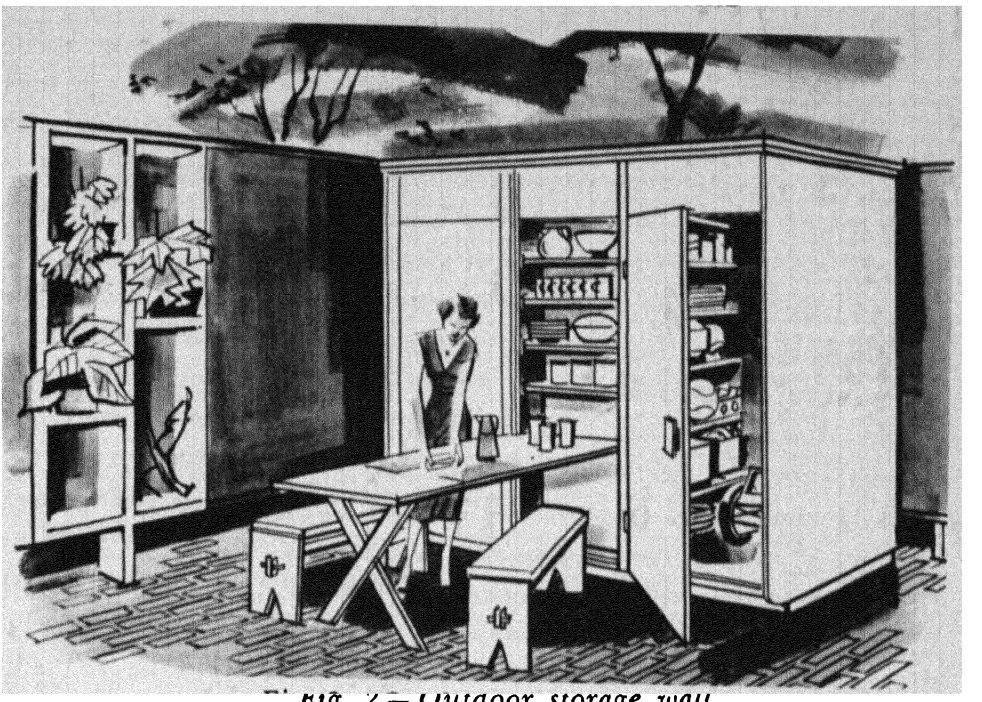


Fig. 2 — Outdoor storage wall

All-purpose master storage unit for outdoor equipment can be used as free-standing island storage wall or placed against one side of house. Unit has three sections, center door comes out to form table.

The suggestions and ideas in this chapter have proved their worth in all sections of the country. Consider them according to the needs of your family and, of course, according to the size of your yard and your budget. Be ambitious, but remember that you do not have to complete the whole job over one weekend.

One more thing. If you and your neighbors are on good terms and have like tastes and children about the same age, consider combining forces with them on a backyard program. More area means more fun. You can keep eating, planting and resting places separate.

CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIAL

Some of the wood you'll need for the projects to be described can be obtained from fruit or soap boxes, packing crates, or scrap ends around the house. If you have to buy wood, tell your lumber dealer what you want it for and what dimensions are required. You can buy it cut and ready for work at home. Plywood should be of the exterior type.

Be sure that your finished product is smooth and free from splinters or slivers. Round off edges so that they won't hurt arms or legs. If you're not too sure about what hardware to use, talk it over with the man in the hardware store. Remember that nails are more likely to pull out than screws, and that brass or enameled metal resists rusting much better than iron or steel.

Backyard apparatus and furniture needs a good paint job as protection against weathering. Use outdoor paint and take the trouble to read the maker's directions. Apply it in two or three thin coats instead of one thick one. To do a good job sandpaper before painting and lightly between coats. Choose lively and attractive colors.

Make the apparatus as strong as possible, reinforcing wherever needed. Young active muscles can give it a lot of wear. Take your time and do the job well or not at all, for a slapped-together plaything can be dangerous. See to it that parts are solidly supported so that the apparatus won't sway. Wooden supports should be tarred or treated with creosote as a protection against termites. Friction points should be kept well greased.

A SANDBOX

Sand is a versatile and valuable play element for young children, and a sandbox is almost a must in a backyard. The appeal of sand lasts for years. Children like to dig in it, build and model with it, make mud pies out of it, or just let it run through their fingers and bare toes. Give them a sandpile and they will refrain from digging up the ground elsewhere.

A sandbox can be constructed out of two 6-foot lengths of pine for the long side and 4-foot lengths for the ends. Or it can be built as a 5- or 6-foot square shape instead of as a rectangle. Planks can be nailed on either end to form ledges for the child to sit on or to use as a play surface for toys. Sometimes sandboxes are built in triangular fashion so that a child may convert it with a cross plank into a boat or pirate ship. If a box is to serve more than one child it's better to have it no less than 5 feet by 8. In any case, build it as large as you can.

It's preferable, though not necessary, to have a wooden or brick floor for the box. A cover of wood, plywood or hardboard is also

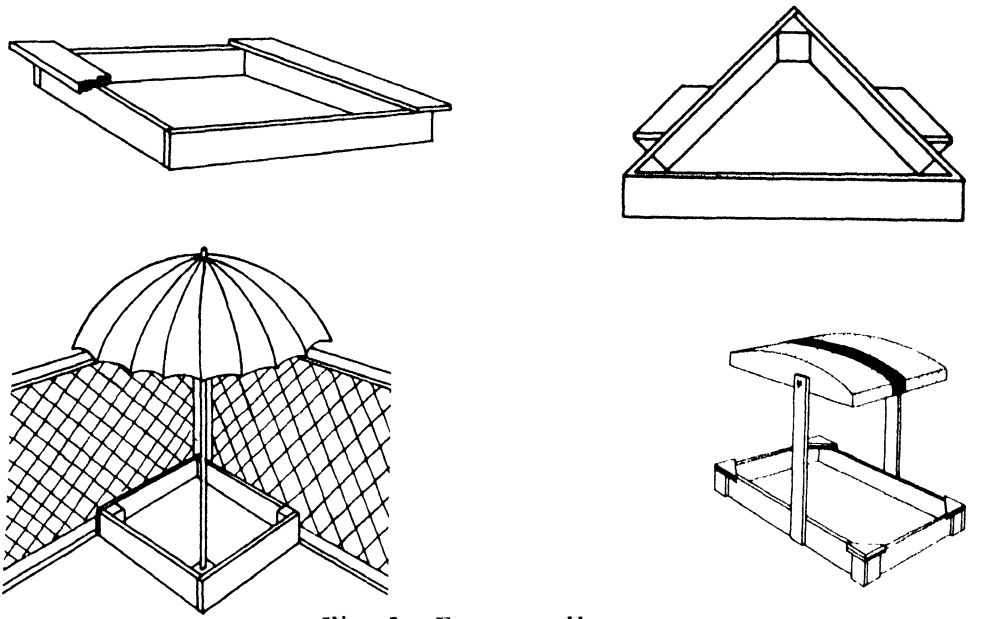


Fig. 3 —Four sandboxes

desirable. It protects the sand against the weather and animals, and can have other uses when the box is closed. For instance, you may put a diagram for a bullboard game on it. (See description on page 28). There is space, too, for a checkerboard diagram. It makes a good surface for crafts activities.

Beach or plastering sand can be used. A container of water should be handy to dampen part of the sand for mud-pie making and castle-building. Provide a pail and shovel, hollow blocks or muffin pans to use as molds, a vegetable strainer for sifting, rubber animals and so on. Help your youngster to recreate travel scenes in the sand or to dramatize stories with the aid of sticks, stones and toys. Try to locate the box in a spot that is sunny in the morning and shady in the afternoon. Or, shade it with a beach umbrella or a built-in canopy covered with awning material.

One couple prepared a sand pile for their two youngsters in this fashion. Along one side of the back porch they dug an 8 by 4 foot pit to the depth of 2½ feet. In the center of this they planted a small tree for shade. They then laid a floor of bricks (uncemented) to allow for drainage. Cobblestones were used as a border for the area and sand poured in. It made a fine sand pile. When the need for it is passed they plan to turn this area into an herb garden.

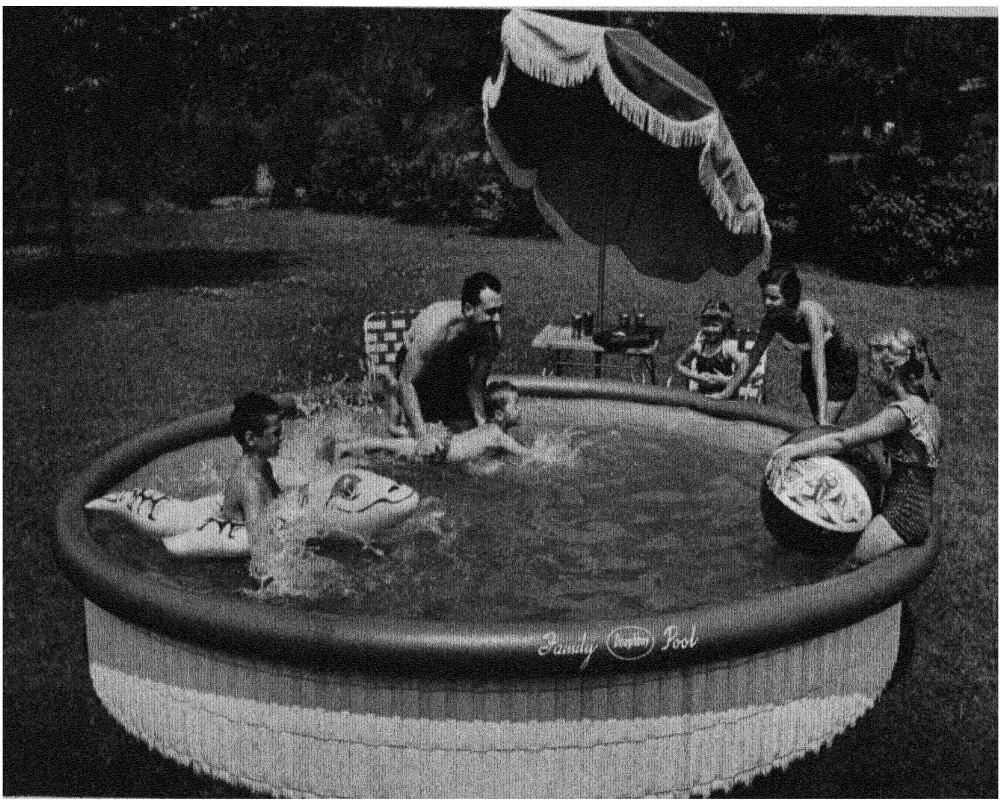


Fig. 4 – A no-dig, easily assembled family pool

WATER

Water is a second great source of backyard fun for youngsters, for all the family, in fact, during warm weather. A large wash-tub filled with water and containing toy boats does nicely for the small fry. Cans, pails and dippers enable him to splash and pour water back and forth. A soap bubble mixture made of glycerine and soap or bought in commercial form will add to his enjoyment.

Plastic and rubber wading pools are available in all sizes—some with spray and shower attachment. But you can make your own pool by constructing one in the form of a sandbox using water-proofed plywood on the interior. It can be equipped with a plug for draining. A sheet of rubber or plastic placed under the box protects against seepage.

If you have the space and the money, a real swimming pool for the family, made of vinylite plastic and measuring about 12 x 27 feet, can be installed in your backyard. An 8- x 16-foot plastic pool

is also on the market. The larger size costs around $300 and the smaller one $125—exclusive of installation.

Another pool (this one requires no digging or use of tools) consists of a circular sidewall of wood and metal and a plastic liner to hold the water. You set up the sidewall and adjust the plastic liner into position inside of it. This pool measures 12 feet across and is 2 feet deep. It can be filled with a garden hose and has special valves to permit circulation of fresh water. (See photograph, page 12.)

A pool of this kind would be wonderful for both adults and kids. Think of the pleasure and convenience of having a miniature beach right in your own backyard! You can, of course, always settle for a yard shower made up of a hose with a sprinkler attachment set on a tripod.

JUNIOR EXERCISERS

Children benefit from vigorous outdoor play. They need to use their large muscles in climbing, not only because of the exercise and challenge but because of the feeling of being on top of the world and viewing it from above for a change. They need to pile things, lift, build, push, haul, propel. They get enjoyment and gain in health and confidence as they hang, slide, swing, balance, throw, walk, bounce and chase a ball, jump rope and run.

There are various types of equipment available in the stores for most of these forms of activity, but some dandy and inexpensive substitutes are possible. Anyone who has ever watched a child sliding down an inclined cellar door or coasting down a hill on a toboggan improvised from a piece of cardboard packing case knows that it is the child and not the equipment itself that creates the fun.

COMBINATION APPARATUS

Here's how to combine several play features in easy-to-make apparatus. Take a long, smooth-grained plank. Sandpaper well and protect with a shellac or varnish finish. It can be painted first if you like. One side is heavily coated with floor wax. Screw small cleats on both ends.

Prop one end of the plank (see diagram, Fig. 5) on a sturdy wooden box, waxed side up, and you have a slide or runway for

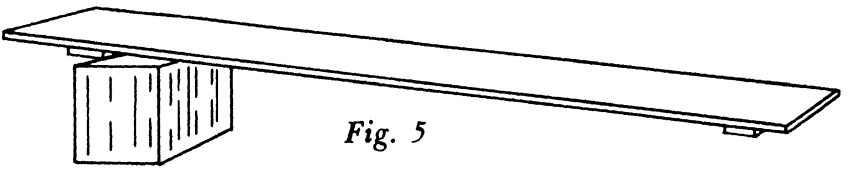


Fig. 5

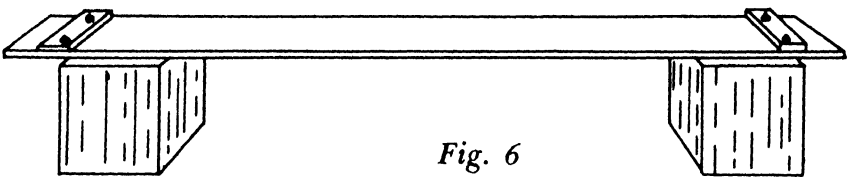


Fig. 6

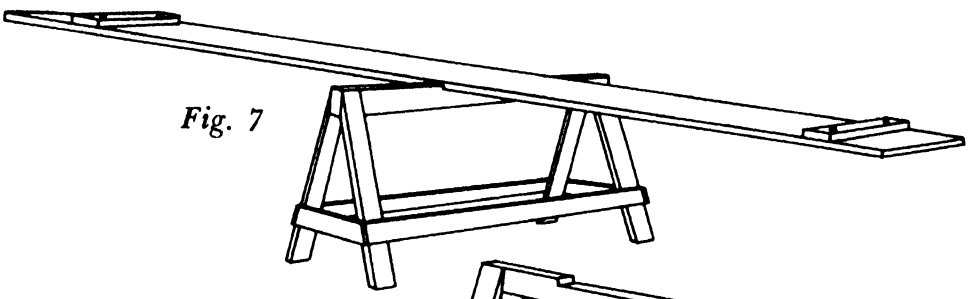


Fig. 7

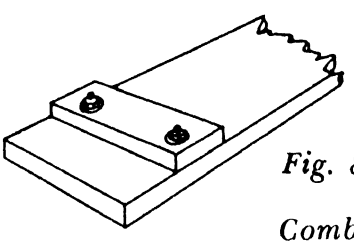


Fig. 8

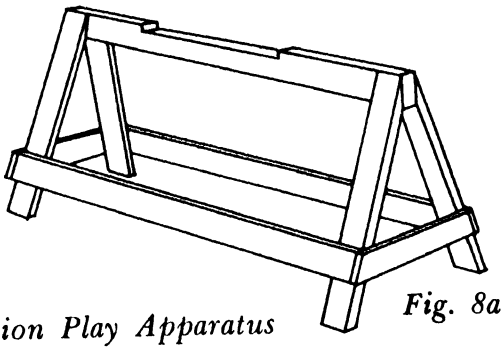


Fig. 8a

Combination Play Apparatus

wheeled toys (the higher the box, the steeper the slide). Lay it across two big blocks of wood or boxes, unwaxed side up, and there is a bridge for walking back and forth. (See Fig. 6.) You can add some more planks and boxes for a longer walkway. These need not be waxed—just smoothed and painted. Balance the plank on a sawhorse or a wooden keg laid on its side and you have a crude but serviceable teeter-totter. (See diagram, Fig. 7 above.)

If you cut a large hole in the middle of the plank and fasten a long sturdy bolt in the center of the sawhorse, you can have a combination merry-go-round and teeter-totter. Mount the board by fitting the hole on the bolt. Now two children can see-saw or swing in circles by pushing with their legs. Be sure that the sawhorse is set on even ground so that it won't tip over easily.

CLIMBING APPARATUS

There is no more popular piece of equipment in a playground than a jungle gym, none that contributes more to a child's bodily development, agility and self-confidence. He can climb the ladders, chin himself, walk along the top, pull himself along by the hands, and do other tricks. Illustrated is one example of such a piece of equipment. You can work out your own variations. (See diagram, Fig. 9 below).

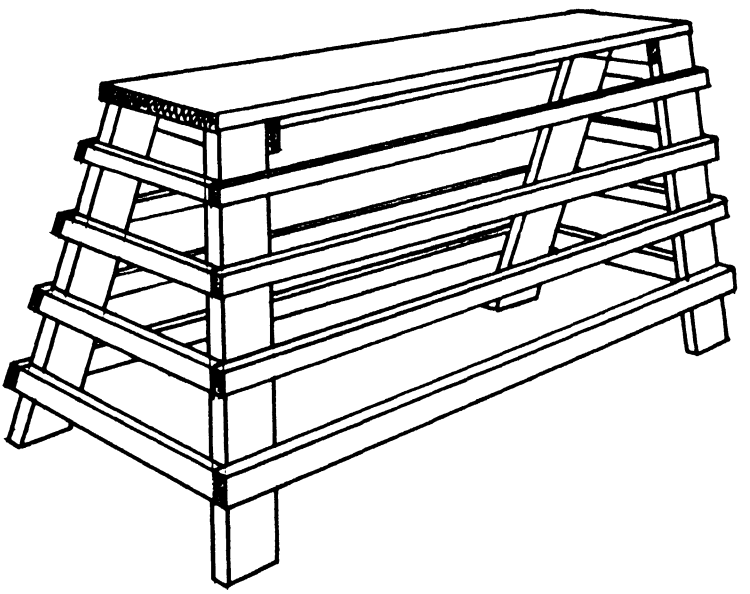


Fig. 9—Jungle Gym

SWINGS

Youngsters appreciate a place to swing. And it needn't be a regulation or garden swing either. You can hang an old tire from some solid overhead support. The tire can be used as is or you can insert a length of board for a seat. Another idea is to cut away all parts of an old truck tire except the beads and part of the tread which will form a seat. (See diagram, Fig. 11, page 16).

Make sure that the rope is well secured. The young swingster can sit inside the tire, stand inside or on top of it, or have someone twist the rope to give him a twirling ride.

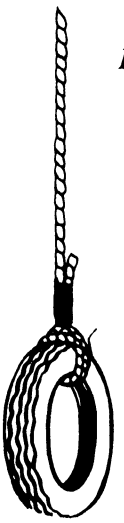


Fig. 10

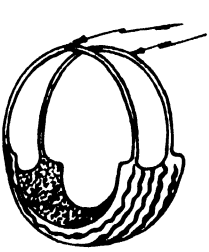


Fig. 11

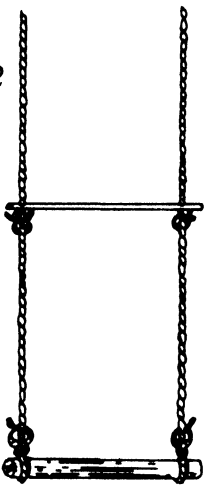


Fig. 12

Improvised Swings

MERRY-GO-ROUND

If you can get an old wagon wheel and axle, you can make a merry-go-round of it in two ways. One way is to bury an end of the axle in the ground and support it with firmly packed gravel and stones or cement. Well greased and with kid power to make it go, it serves as a merry-go-round.

For older children figure out a way of mounting the wheel horizontally on an upright. Hang ropes from the wheel knotted at the lower ends. Youngsters can hold onto the ropes, make the wheel spin by running around it, and then swing out by centrifugal force, hanging on for the ride.

Another improvisation involves an old car axle, a tire rim and a plank fastened across the rim. The axle is put in the ground as described earlier. Kids sit on the plank and push with their legs to make it turn.

PLAYHOUSES

No matter what else goes into a backyard for children, a playhouse is a near must. Unspoiled youthful fancy makes it Ali Baba's cave, a secret hideaway, a fairy castle, the cockpit of a plane, the hold of a ship, a store, or whatever the play mood of the moment calls for. If set up next to the back entrance, a playhouse can also serve as a cleanup place after mud or sand play.

One idea is to build a small wooden shed. When its days as a

playhouse end, it can serve as a storage place for garden tools and other backyard items.

A large wooden packing case can be transformed into a playhouse. Weatherproof the top with a piece of tarpaulin or roofing material. Cut a window in one side and a crawl-in entrance in another. Nail flaps of waterproof material over the entrance, put a covering on the floor to protect against ground dampness, dig rain run-offs all around, and the house is useable for rainy days too. Children love to play in such a shelter while listening to the patter of raindrops.

Fresh air playhouses have been constructed of wire netting nailed on frames. A roll-up roof of tarpaulin and roll-down sides of the same material can be lashed into place as protection against we weather.

One of the simplest ideas is draping an old card table with a sheet or waterproof cloth, cutting a hole for a window and slitting a crawl-in opening. (See page 78). Awning material might be draped over a backyard clothes dryer. And easiest of all is utilizing a fence corner as shown in the diagram below.

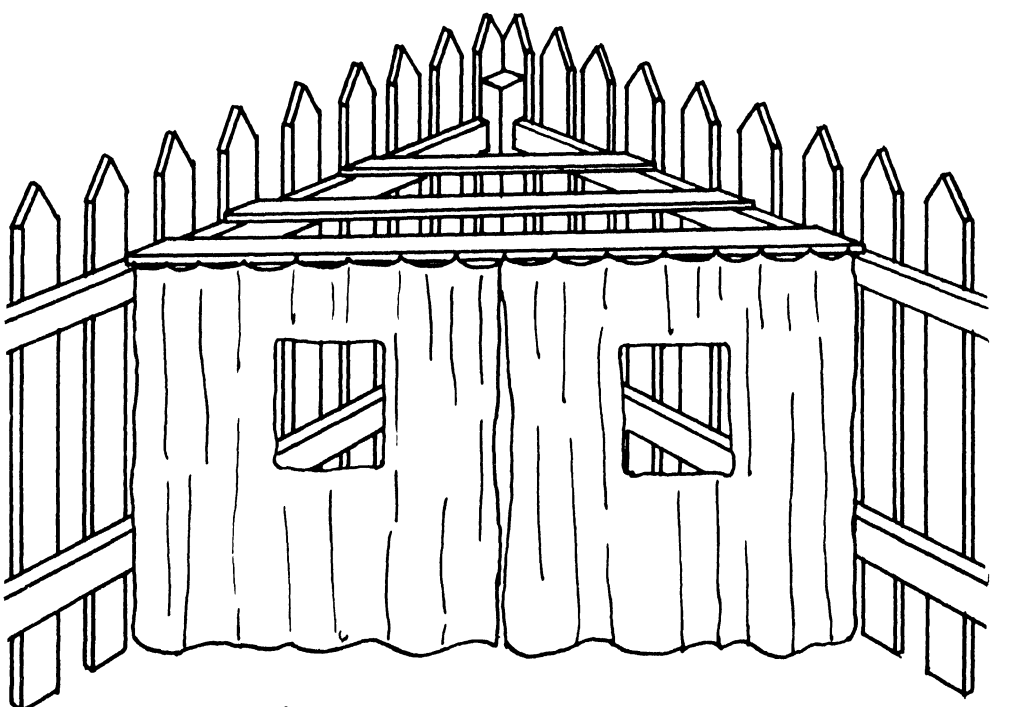


Fig. 13 — Fence-corner playhouse

OTHER PLAY-YARD IDEAS

1. A couple of barrels with the ends knocked out suit the average child perfectly as a cave, tunnel, hiding place, or the like.

2. He'll build endlessly with blocks of all sizes. Let him have some solid small ones and larger hollow ones which can be constructed out of plywood or paper board.

3. Save odds and ends of lumber from carpentry projects. Sandpaper smoothly and turn them over to the kids for building purposes. (See picture 2 on page 19).

4. He'll get pleasure out of crates and boxes of all sizes, especially if they are painted in bold reds, yellows or blues. They can be used for playing store, or as planes, boats or trains, as a doll house, and in other ways few adults can visualize.

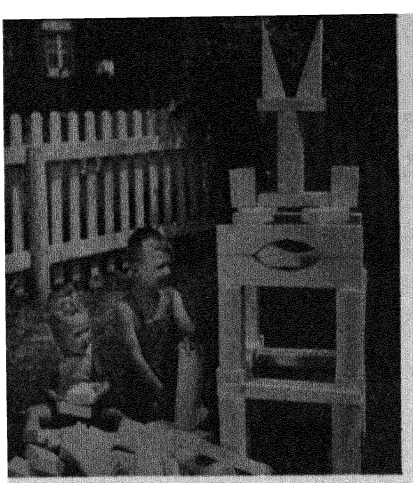
5. Ordinary tin cans in graduated sizes with the edges smoothed off and decorated in lively colors can be nested together and made to serve various play purposes . . . Square boards with bored holes and hand-whittled pegs to fit into these holes . . . Small pieces of lumber tongued and grooved so that they can be fitted together . . . Bricks to build with . . . All simple and inexpensive materials, but as rich in play value as anything you could buy.

6. He'll love to use a small wheelbarrow or wagon to cart things about the yard. It also helps to instill a sense of orderliness. You can get him to load the transport with loose toys and push or pull it to the "depot." This may be the playhouse, the tool shed, a cupboard made out of orange crates, or the plywood storage locker shown on page 8.

7. An excellent transport can be made out of a dried-fruit or soap box with casters, old skates, or wheels. Or by mounting a box on the wheel frame of that old carriage you hate to throw away. Tie a rope to it or make a rope handle for pulling. Two or three wagons made out of small boxes with a hitch-up arrangement form a train to gladden any child's heart.

8. Let a youngster have some wood, nails and a real hammer for bang-bang wood work (under close supervision of course). Some kids are ready at the age of four for this activity which prepares them for a life of handiness for tools.

9. Art play has a place outdoors as well as indoors. The messiness



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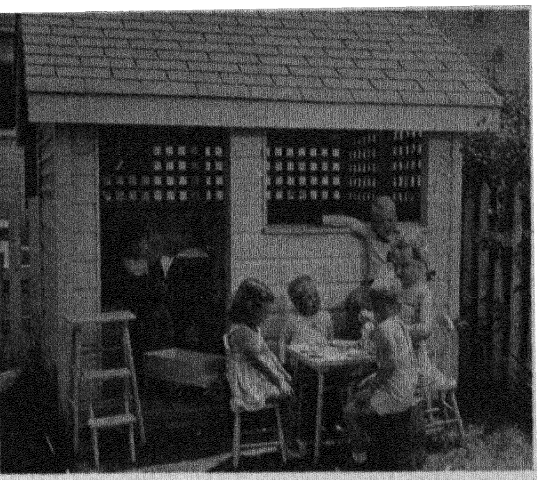

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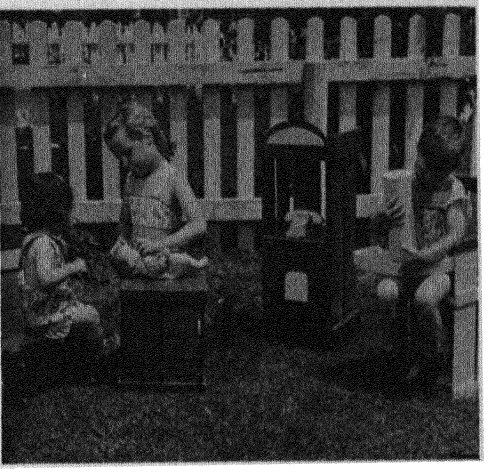
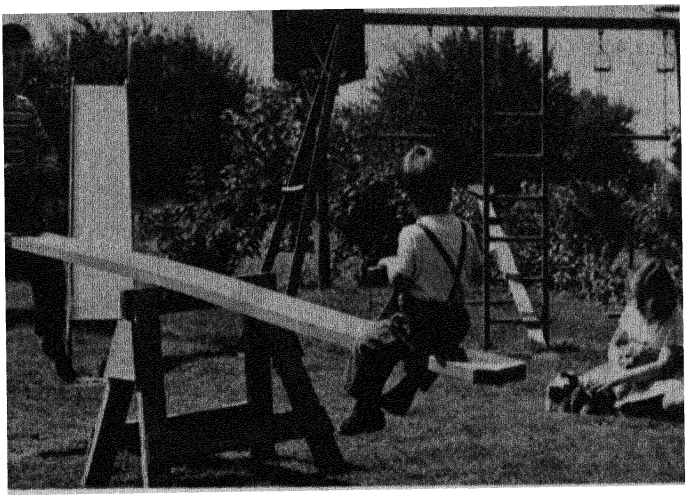




Kiddie fun
in the backyard

usually resulting from such activity means much less cleanup work for Mother when carried on in the backyard. What's more, such play provides a nice quiet change of pace from muscular activity without the child having to traipse into the house for it.

For painting you can have a home-made easel or a softwood board to thumbtack cheap newsprint or butcher shop paper on, and brushes, poster paint and a can to clean the brushes in. One of Dad's old shirts cut down and worn backwards makes a good protective smock. Clay or plasticine, properly wrapped, can be stored handily for puttering.

The youngster can work on the cover of a sandbox or at a bench and table. This table may be used also for outdoor lunches, puzzle work, and other purposes. Incidentally, when suggesting or supervising art play, let Junior express himself in his own way.

10. A strip or rectangle of paving where youngsters bicycle, skate or wheel their toys is useful in a backyard. Little girls can also bounce a ball here, or skip rope. You might draw a diagram on it for hopscotch, shuffleboard or other games. It can also serve as a sitting area for the grownups. One family built an 8-foot-wide strip of green colored concrete along the back wall of their house for this purpose. It helped keep the mud out, too.

BACKYARD SPORTS

It's surprising how often even a budding teenager will enjoy returning to the playthings of earlier years for fun. But his interest in athletics is growing, too, and while there are few families that have both the backyard space and money for a tennis court, a handball court or the like, most can manage to provide for some fun-filled small area sports. These not only furnish a means of burning up excess juvenile energy in constructive ways but provide healthful exercises for the grown-ups and often for the family together.

Some of the outstanding possibilities follow. For more complete details and other games consult your library.

FALL-GUY DUMMY

Boys are drawn to aggressive play activities, so why not give them the means to let off steam harmlessly? Pack a couple of burlap bags

with straw and old rags. These can be walloped, wrestled with, kicked, lined up as football opponents. Suspend one from a tree branch or other solid overhead support and you have a punching bag which can be hit with boxing gloves or glove-protected fists.

BASKETBALL

Tossing a basketball through a hoop is a good all-family sport and requires little space. A backboard of wood measuring 6 feet across and 4 feet wide can be attached to a tree trunk or clothesline pole. A hoop without backboard can be fastened to the garage. Instead of getting a regulation basket you can go back to the principle used by the game's founder—that is, a peach or bushel basket with the bottom knocked out.

The standard height of a goal from the ground is 10 feet, but this can be lowered for very little players. You can have shooting practice or devise games.

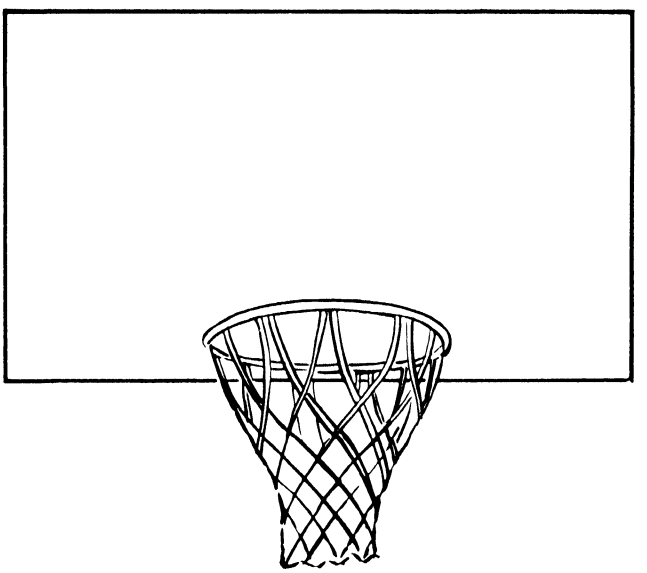


Fig. 14 — Basketball hoop

HORSESHOES

The old barnyard sport is enjoying a strong revival all over the country because it fits so naturally into a backyard. The ring of horseshoes against steel posts will probably bring the neighbors over for a look-see and invitation to play. As soon as a child is big

enough to swing a shoe, he'll want to join. The tiny ones love to watch.

Horseshoe sets consisting of two steel stakes and four shoes cost only a few dollars. For informal play, stakes are put into the ground 40 feet apart for men, 30 for women, 20 for children. (But these distances can be varied according to space available.) Stakes project about 10 inches above ground and lean slightly towards each other. Three feet in front of each stake mark a foul line. This may not be stepped over when tossing the shoes.

Singles or doubles may be played with each side alternately tossing two shoes towards the opposite stake. You play back and forth from one stake to another.

Scoring is simple. Each ringer counts 3 points, but 2 opposing ringers cancel each other. A horseshoe that leans against a stake counts 2; closest shoe to the stake counts 1; both shoes of a side closer count 2. Only 1 player scores each turn and first to reach 21 wins.

Since horseshoe stakes can be pulled up after play, that area is available for some other purpose.

QUOITS

An outdoor quoits game can be made like this: Nail a section of broom handle to a square of heavy board to form a target. Construct two of these. Cut up lengths of worn-out hose and loop into circles. Tape ends. These make nice heavy quoits that can be thrown in a wind. Toss for score, horseshoe style.

VOLLEYBALL, BADMINTON, PADDLE TENNIS, DECK TENNIS

These good games have been grouped together because it is possible—if you are not finicky about official or regulation rules—to play them on the same court. That is, one area about 60 x 30 feet (or even smaller) can be made to do for all. The ground, however, needs to be fairly level and reasonably smooth. If it is unevenly grassy, then paddle tennis, a ball bouncing game, is out.

Portable standards for a net make it possible to move it out of the way after a game is over so that the area is free for something else. You can use a volleyball net and fold it or adjust it for other games.

A steady portable standard can be made by filling an old tire casing with cement, insert a cross made of planking, fix a 10 foot length of pole upright in the center of the cross. Or a steel welded cross can be inserted into the tire as a base, and a length of pipe welded onto it. (See Fig. 15 below).

The lines can be marked with calcimine and brush. If you like, you may simply tack down tape of the sort used on some tennis courts. It can be removed after play.

When first laying out the various courts, a good trick is to mark the different boundaries with little colored pegs or golf tees. The volleyball court, for instance, might be delineated by red pegs, badminton by white ones, and so on. Just leave the pegs in the ground and when you want to change courts from one game to another the boundaries can be taped without the necessity of measuring.

VOLLEYBALL

This is a wonderful game for men, women and children. And there is room in it for friends and neighbors. You can use a regular volleyball or a beach ball.

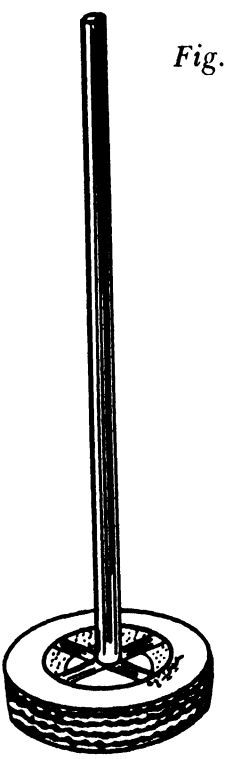


Fig. 15 — A net standard

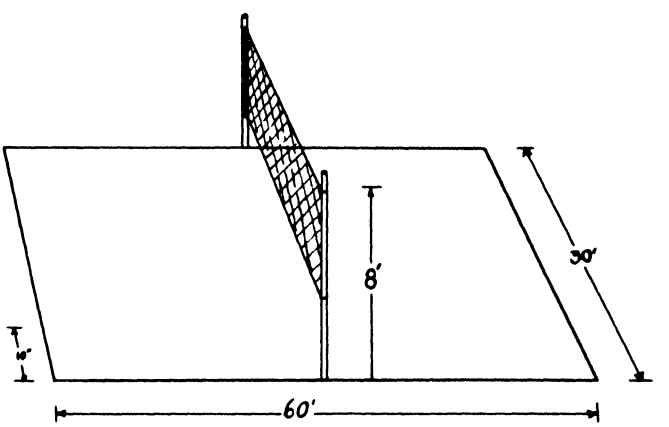


Fig. 16 — Volleyball court

A volleyball court is 60 feet by 30, standard size, but these dimensions do not have to be followed. Across the center of the court goes a net, the top of which should be about 7 to 8 feet above the ground. A 10-inch serving line is marked off on each base line at the ends from the right corner towards the center. (See Fig. 16).

BADMINTON

A tricky game that provides a real workout, not recommended for people with bad backs.

The top of the net in this game is 5 feet above the ground. The over-all dimensions of the court are 44 feet by 20. The lines are marked as shown in diagram, Fig. 17 below. The outside alleys are used only in doubles play.

Equipment is not expensive. And be sure that when you buy a "bird" (the object hit with the racket) you get the durable kind suitable for outdoor play.

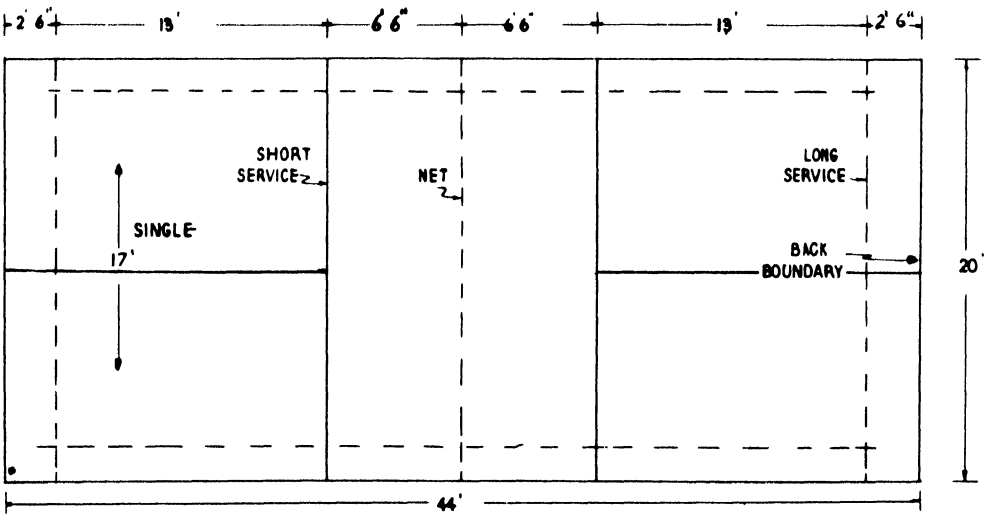


Fig. 17 — Badminton court

PADDLE TENNIS

This up-and-coming game is the next best thing to tennis and it can be played in almost all kinds of weather.

The over-all dimensions of the court may be exactly as in badminton, and marked as shown in the diagram. The outside alleys are only for doubles. You can also play it on a court measuring 39 x 22½ feet (see Fig. 18).

The top of the net is about 2 feet above the ground; some make it 2 feet 10 inches. Wooden paddles with a circular face measuring 10 inches by 7 are used. These can be made at home out of 3-ply panel board or ½ inch-thick wood. A sponge ball or old tennis ball is used. The rules for play are exactly as in regulation tennis.

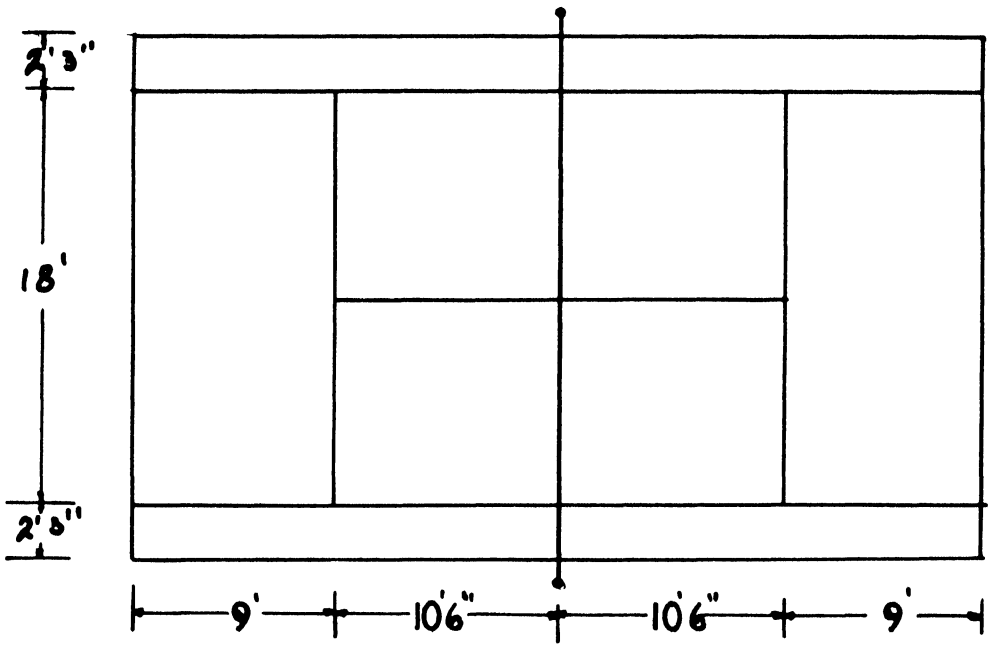


Fig. 18 — Paddle tennis court

DECK TENNIS

This standard cruise game makes a fine backyard sport. It can easily be played on windy days and equipment is simple. You can use the same court as that for paddle tennis except that there is no forecourt, and the dividing center line runs from baseline to baseline. Also, there is a no man's land area measuring 2 feet on either side of the net which players may not enter during play.

The top of the net is 5 feet 8 inches from the ground. Despite its name, no ball or bat is used but a ring made of sponge rubber which measures about 6 or 7 inches in diameter. If you can't get a standard ring you can make one yourself from half-inch manila rope wrapped with tape or rubber from an old inner tube.

The idea of the game is to toss the ring back and forth across the net. You may catch it with one hand only and must throw it back

immediately. You can't walk with it, feint, make false throwing motions You score a point when your opponent fails to catch the ring, throws it out of court or into the net, or steps into no man's land.

Instead of a ring you can use a hand shuttlecock. It's made like this: Stick long feathers into three or four corks. Wrap a big wad of cotton around the corks. Tie these all up in a piece of cloth.

CROQUET

A mildish game perhaps, but there's plenty of fun, skill and exercise in it and room for verbal jousting. The balls and mallets can be used for other games, too.

Croquet is best on a well-mowed lawn. The ground should be cleared of sticks, stones and bumps. The playing area, 60 by 30 feet, can be reduced.

Equipment consists of wooden mallets and balls, arches and wickets. Since wickets and arches must be dug into the lawn the game should not be played until the grass has had a chance to grow strong. If you want to protect plants from balls, put about a foot high wire fencing around the planting area.

Here are some other ideas on using croquet balls and mallets. You can place several coffee cans in holes in the ground arranged triangularly. Number them 10, 20, 50 and 100. Play four balls each from 15 feet away for score.

You can set up 6 arches around a marked out rectangle of ground to represent a pool table. Paste numbers on 6 balls from 1 on up and play like rotation pool. A seventh ball is designated as the cue ball. The idea is—with each player taking a turn until he misses—to knock the balls through any pocket (arch) in numbered rotation.

You can cut 10 blocks of wood from 2 by 4's. Each block is 8 inches high. Set them up on the ground or paving as you would bowling pins. Bowl croquet balls at them and score accordingly.

BOX HOCKEY

A vigorous game that takes up very little space. Children go for it in a big way and adults who try it once usually come back for more.

Equipment consists of the playing box which is 6 feet by 3 feet (see diagram, Fig. 19 below), shinny sticks or broom sticks with blocks of wood nailed on. The ball is a sponge ball or old tennis ball, old baseball or a wooden puck. Two may play, or four as partners. A larger box—10 feet by 4 feet—may also be used.

The game begins with the ball resting on the notch at the top of the center board. Opponents face off from opposite sides of the center and then slam away, never pushing, as they try to get the ball through the goal hole on opponent's side and thus score a point. Sticks may not be raised out of the box, and if you hit the ball outside, your opponent gets a free shot at your goal from the center notch. Noisy as all get out, but wonderful for that sluggish feeling.

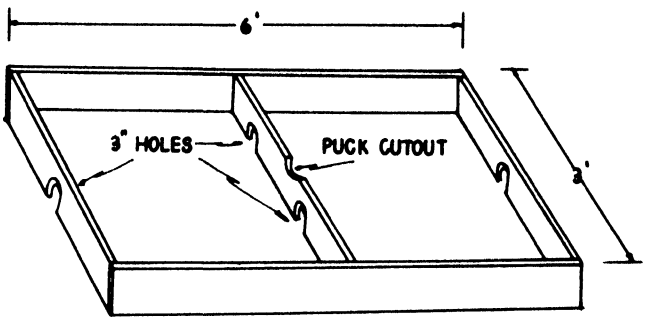


Fig. 19 — Box hockey

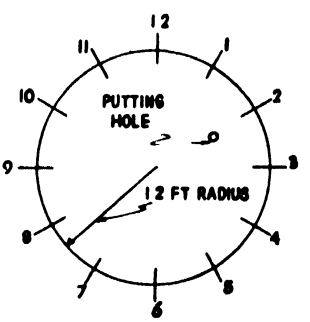


Fig. 20 — Clock golf

BACKYARD GOLF

With a golf ball and putter or the equivalent of same, you can have some real sport.

Here's one game known as Clock Golf. Draw a circle about 24 feet in diameter on the ground. Mark it off like the face of a clock, indicating the numbers on sticks stuck into the ground. Sink a small tin can into the ground inside the circle but off center so that distances will vary from the numbers.

The idea of the game is to putt a ball from the different numbers towards the tin can, counting the total number of strokes for the "course." Lowest total wins. You can make the circle larger and introduce hazards, such as pieces of discarded pipe, bricks, inclines of wood and so on.

You can have your own miniature golf course by digging various tin can holes around the yard. If you'd rather not dig holes, then

lay down tin cans at the "hole" location and play into the cans from the side. You can fix up obstacles and hazards as you please.

ARCHERY

An archery set with either regular target arrows or the safer rubber suction kind pays off in loads of fun and enjoyable competition.

Arrows can be shot up the driveway towards a target propped against a garage door or fence. With target arrows you can use a burlap sack packed with straw on which is fastened a hand-drawn paper target. The paper can be changed as needed. With suction arrows use a hand-painted target board of wood or composition board.

SHUFFLEBOARD

An excellent backyard game at any age, if you have a big enough area of concrete available. (The diagram and description are given on pages 110 and 111).

PRACTICE SET-UPS

Actual or would-be tennis or golf players can get in backyard practice or learn to make shots between visits to the court or course.

A section of fine netting or canvas hung between supports such as the standards described on page 23, and backed up by a windowless wall offers a good target for golf shots. The tennis player needs a wall and a level stretch of ground. A square of canvas fixed to the wall deadens the rebound of the ball, and marking a line on the wall or canvas at the regulation height of a net gives a player something to shoot at.

•

BEANBAG GAMES

Cut some holes in a 2 by 3 foot board which is propped against a box, a tree or a wall. Beanbags can be made out of denim or canvas with a filling of sand, pebbles or small beans. Assign numbers to the holes and let the players try to toss beanbags through them from some distance away.

BULLBOARD

A diagram for this game can be drawn on concrete or on a 2 by 3

foot board. The diagram consists of nine squares. Number the top line 2, 9, 4; second line 7, 5, 3; third line 6, 1, 8 (totaling fifteen in all directions as in the famous puzzle). Each player in turn tosses 5 discs from 15 or 20 feet away. The discs can be made out of old linoleum or they may be old rubber heels, or what not. Score for squares you land in without touching lines. Game is 100.

A variation is to toss 5 discs, and have any three of them total to 15.

HOPSCOTCH

A diagram for this game is given on page 110.

BACKYARD ICE RINK

A useable rink for little and big learners can be built if (a) winters get cold enough in your area; (b) you are willing to take the trouble; (c) you don't mind the neighbors' kids thronging your backyard.

Here's one way to go about it. Level a stretch of ground. Build a border of banking dirt about ½ foot all around. Put down a fine spray of water on a day when the temperature is below freezing. Let this layer freeze while you have some hot chocolate indoors. Then spray on another layer, and still others in the same way until you build up a couple of inches of tough smooth ice. Now you have a safe rink that won't break through.

When the surface gets too chopped up spray it in the evening and it will be smooth again in the morning after an overnight freeze.

NATURE IN THE BACKYARD

Your backyard can be a place where you go to be refreshed by contact with nature.

For that you will need grass and flowers, of course, and sweet-smelling vines and some attractive landscaping. Plant a few evergreens so that there will be something verdant to look at the year around. All of this can be arranged even when part of the backyard has been turned over to provide play space for the small fry. You can plant along the fences, in border areas, and in a corner set aside as a grown-up retreat for ease-taking or hammock-piloting.

Perhaps you'd like to set up a bird house or two, a bird feeder or

bird bath. The Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., will send you a bulletin, *Homes For Birds,* for 15¢. If you are a shutterbug, you can get some side fun out of catching shots of your feathered visitors with a fast lens and a remote control arrangement.

A garden of flowers or vegetables offers adults and children an outlet for creativity, brings them close to water and soil and affords beneficent stretching and bending exercise.

Let your youngster have a small and easily accessible corner plot (2 or 3 could share a "junior section"). Suggest some fast growing plants to cultivate—such as zinnias, marigolds, nasturtiums, radishes, bush beans, leaf lettuce. Youth is impatient and likes to see quick results. Provide him with tools he can use—cut-down adult ones or get junior-size ones. Toy tools are rarely practical.

Show him how to dig, seed and fertilize and let him be the boss from there on. Give advice and answer questions only as needed. What a thrill of accomplishment he will get from showing off *his* bright flowers and eating *his* delicious vegetables!

Grown-ups can do milder gardening in a small green house built against the side of the house, say, next to the terrace. Here potted and boxed plants can be cultivated mainly with a trowel and with a minimum of stoop and muscle work.

If you are altogether disinclined to dig and tend, then the needed touch of beauty can be added by a naturalized garden that needs hardly any care. It would include native plants, a shade tree or two, rock plants on a ledge and perhaps a reflection pool.

OUTDOOR LOUNGING AND DINING

Much of California's way of recreational outdoor family living is spreading to other parts of the country. It means backyard spots where you can lounge, dine or just dream. It means alcoves and nooks formed by greeneries . . . comfortable sitting places sheltered by trees or sun umbrellas . . . a patio or terrace where meals or refreshment can be had, where a table can be set up for a game of cards or checkers, where a few couples can dance. It means an outdoor fireplace for a picnic, snack treat or family dinner.

It's not too hard to turn a back patio into a point of relaxed contact with the out-of-doors. The patio may consist simply of a small-

ish concrete slab or some other paving. It may be open from above and shielded with decorative lattices. It may be roofed over but not enclosed, or have an awning for protection overhead. It may be entirely screened in the summer against insects and glass enclosed in the winter and heated for warmth—a kind of convertible porch.

A back patio or terrace can be pushed out into the yard to serve as an outdoor extension of the home's living and sitting area. A terrace is more practical than grass and, of course, stands up better under traffic. It is free of moisture and mud.

Building a terrace or little paved places in shady and secluded spots of the yard is not too difficult a project. You can use slate flagstones, brick, colored concrete, stone, tile or even wood material such as redwood block paving. Bear in mind that if summers are hot where you live, then your paving should be light or neutral in color so as not to absorb heat. Uneven, irregular surfaces create the least glare.

Most backyard furniture falls well within the average home craftsman's capabilities. With the right tools, material, and sensible planning, you can construct much of it yourself. For instance, a dining surface can be built to encircle or partly circle a tree. One family built a circular bench around the tree which shaded their dining area. The underpart of it was enclosed for storage use. One compartment contained plastic eating utensils. Another compartment was insulated to serve as a temporary ice-box for cold drinks and sandwich fixings.

The top of a small keg can be padded to serve as a seat. A barrel may be fitted with a table top. There are many such ideas.

If you build benches or picnic tables remember that slat style construction with open spaces permits water to drain off more quickly and causes less warping. This is not quite so important when you use exterior type plywood. The illustration on page 32 shows a plywood set of outdoor furniture you shouldn't find too hard to tackle. The table legs are demountable for easy storage.

Wheeled outdoor furniture is desirable for its easy mobility. If you already have furniture why not figure out a way to put wheels on it? One of the most useful outdoor pieces is a wheelbarrow type chaise lounge. You can trundle it here and there, into

Fig. 21 — Backyard barbecue

the sunshine and out. One cushioned settee unit that can be rolled to wherever you want it even has a canopy to admit the sun or protect you against it, the ultimate in reminders that there is a time to stay put and take it easy.

The trend towards moving more and more of family life into the open in season has set the think-tanks of furniture designers perking overtime. The cumbersome rustic pieces of other days built to withstand all sorts of weather are getting competition from furniture that can do double duty in and out-of-doors. These are often light enough to be carried around by young children.

They are built of strong but lightweight metals. They use cane, string, canvas, rattan, denim, terry-cloth, gay water-resistant fabrics. In one delight of a lawn rocker the framework is tubular steel

and the body is supported by resilient expanded metal shaped to fit body contours. Canvas rolls can be put on most of these pieces to provide upholstery.

THE FAMILY EATS OUTDOORS

Eating an occasional meal outdoors is one of those family experiences that children treasure and even grownups find a stimulating change of pace.

Outdoor repasts are usually of two kinds. One is al fresco dining with food prepared in the kitchen but served on a patio or terrace. The other is barbecue fashion with the cooking itself being done outside. The first adds zest and variety to family routine, the second romance and a touch of adventure. In both the food somehow tickles the palate more than ordinarily; appetite and anticipation are keener.

Either way you'll want to have a pleasant and reasonably comfortable dining area which is screened from the gaze of outsiders. This can be provided by planting bushes or trees so as to form an alcove, or corner. It can also be done by building windbreaks of plywood. Or you might use folding garden screens to secure a measure of privacy.

The nearer your dining area is to the kitchen the more transport bother you save yourself. If you set it up on the back patio, you can also take advantage of the various screening possibilities that can be worked out there. You might, for instance, use bamboo shades which can be lowered from a roof or some overhanging support. A strategically placed trellis is another good bet. So is a grid fence built with wide enough shelf space to hold potted plants.

If the food is coming right out of the kitchen stove, then your main problem is to have some convenient way to get it to the table. There are food and beverage carts for the purpose. One good idea is a large removable tray which can be wheeled about on an undercarriage and has a high rim to keep things from slipping off. You'd be surprised how quickly and easily the makings of a meal can be transported in a wheelbarrow.

The U. S. Department of Commerce issues a bulletin called "You Can Make It" which gives instructions for putting together

a sturdy wooden wheelbarrow. This same publication, incidentally, contains directions for making many other pieces of useful outdoor equipment for the backyard. Plans for constructing a drop-leaf garden table on wheels that also doubles as a work surface can be had from the U. S. Gypsum Company, free. Stock lumber, a few pieces of hardware, and wheels that can be cut from plywood make up the materials.

You'll want to arrange things so that there will be places to dispose of used dishes or utensils. A little pre-planning can take a lot of the discomfort out of eating in the open. There's no reason why you can't have your meals picnic fashion. Use paper dishes and cups. Place a large cardboard container or bushel basket near the table. Dump refuse into it. Everyone can relax comfortably afterwards without worring about dish-washing.

If you set up your dining area away from the house keep in mind that there may be a wind and insect problem to contend with. A shield of the kind earlier mentioned may give you protection against wind. But bugs are another matter. One family licked that particular headache by putting up a screened enclosure, consisting of a wood framework covered with netting. A certain amount of protection can be obtained by hanging up bug-repelling lamps.

OUTDOOR FIREPLACES

Now about a fireplace. There are dozens of possible designs, some of them pretty fancy affairs that run into real money. One outdoor grill, for instance, is the outside part of a massive stone masonry chimney. On the other side in the house is a fireplace.

But you can do with much less. Veteran outdoor cooks will tell you that it is possible to get along pretty well with simple firehousings. For around six dollars you can buy a charcoal brazier that has an all-metal grill and an adjustable bottom draft. It will handle hamburger, steak, chicken and one-pot meals quite adequately. It's designed to fold flat for storage, has its own carton case, and is the kind of thing you might use in your basement as well.

It's easy to build your own outdoor fireplace. The diagrams

show some possibilities. One is made up of two sticks, a steak grill, and charcoal. Another is constructed of cinder blocks and a grate. Still another is a set-up built of fire or ordinary brick. Joining the bricks with mortar would make it more permanent. You can also substitute stones for bricks in an easy-to-build fireplace.

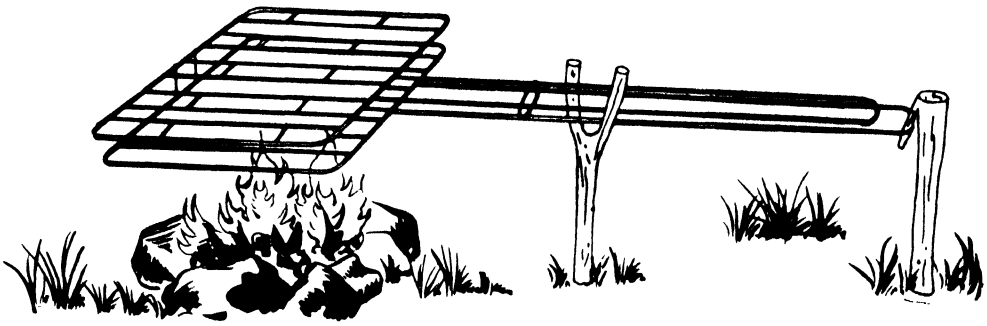


Fig. 22

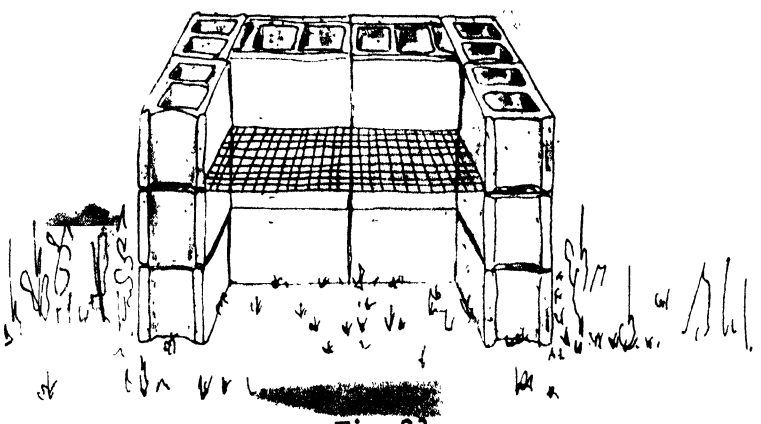


Fig. 23

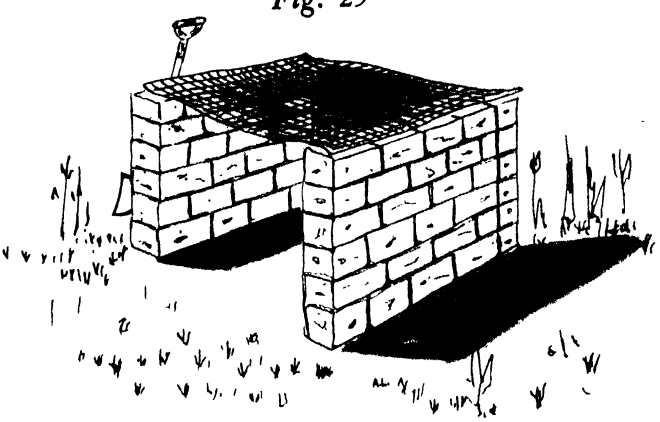


Fig. 24

Three simple outdoor fireplaces

Here are three sources of information on building your own outdoor fireplace. Free specifications for a charcoal barbecue may be obtained from the Director of the Tennessee Division of State Parks, Nashville, Tennessee. The Donley Brothers Company, Cleveland 5, Ohio, publishes a 50c booklet, *Successful Fireplaces and how to Build Them.* For a dime the Hancock Iron Works, Pontiac, Michigan, will send you plans called *How to Build Your Outdoor Fireplace.*

Here are some things to remember when building a fireplace:

1. Face your fireplace into prevailing winds to carry away smoke.

2. Pick a well-drained site. If it is on a rise, it will also give you a better draft. Build the floor of the firebox so that it slopes forward slightly in order to carry off rain water.

3. See to it that you have surfaces available on which can be placed cooking paraphernalia and hot dishes. This could be a cart, a folding table, or stone ledges.

4. The closer you locate the fireplace to a source of water, the better. Have a pipe and faucet run to the backyard when building your home, with a shut-off valve inside the house for winter protection against freezing. (This will come in handy in other ways, such as filling up backyard pools and in gardening). Or, you can connect up a hose and faucet extension to an outside outlet and fix it into place alongside your fireplace.

5. If you're going to use wood for burning, don't locate the fireplace under your favorite tree. Wood smoke harms leaves. The precaution isn't necessary with charcoal.

6. Mild weather during spring or fall is a good time to build a cemented brick fireplace. In summer, mortar has a tendency to dry out and in winter it may stain brick or freeze.

7. If you are in a Northern area it is advisable, though not absolutely necessary, to have a 2-foot concrete footing under a permanent fireplace to prevent frost damage.

8. Place sand or gravel about an open ground fire to prevent the spread of flames.

9. If youngsters are going to get in on the cooking act, you should rig up a fire screen of some sort to protect against flying sparks.

OUTDOOR EDIBLES

When you cook on a backyard fire, have the food fit the occasion. Make it a real adventure and change. Prepare things that go naturally with the outdoors — barbecues, meat broils, roasted corn, clam bake or fish bake, and so on. Avoid elaborate and lengthy preparations that keep your gastric juices boiling impatiently. If it's going to take some time to rustle up the main course, have some snackables on hand to ease the wait.

Remember that marshmallows and wieners are not the only things you can prepare on a stick over an open fire. Meat may be roasted kabob style — that is, pieces of lamb or steak skewered on a stick with green pepper, bits of tomato, and onion. A meal prepared this way takes little time, and by providing the young ones with long and safe skewers, you can involve them in the fun of preparation. Books on grill and outdoor cookery will provide you with plenty of ideas.

A DESIGN FOR YOUR FAMILY

Perhaps you won't have the room to include all the suggestions discussed in this chapter. Perhaps you won't be able to allocate as much space as you would wish for certain activities. Yet you can get a great deal more play and relaxation use out of your outdoor area than you think. Decide what is best for your family and don't wait too long to do something about it.

Here is a roundup of tips:

1. Measure off your overall useable area and plot it in scale on graph paper. Decide what is going into the yard and where and mark it down on your plan. Let the older children have a voice in this.

2. Get an idea of what the various improvements will cost and see whether you can afford them before going ahead. Remember that you can build some of the things yourself with the family's help. They will be better appreciated and taken care of, too.

3. Keep in mind that pre-schoolers and even children at later ages can be perfectly happy with odds and ends of things and scrap wood and need but a few basic backyard playthings.

4. Think of how else you might use the same space or equip-

ment now or in the future. A merry-go-round wheel, for instance, may be converted into a playhouse by draping it with a sheet. Or it can be used as a base for an outdoor dining table. Today's wooden playhouse can eventually be a tool house. Frames for swings or climbing bars can be supports for vines later on.

5. You can't expect kids to pick up all their playthings when they are through with them for the day. But if you provide a transport and a storage place they are more likely to want to keep the yard orderly. The storage place may be part of a lath house where garden tools are hung up out of their reach. Or a playhouse or a corner of the garage.

6. With very young children fences provide better protection against their wandering than hedges. Here's an idea. Perhaps you can plan your fencing so that it safeguards, affords privacy, and also serves as climbing or play apparatus for kids.

7. Allow a level space or strip (paved if possible) for tricycles and other wheeled toys. It can also be used for game diagrams or as a sitting area for grownups.

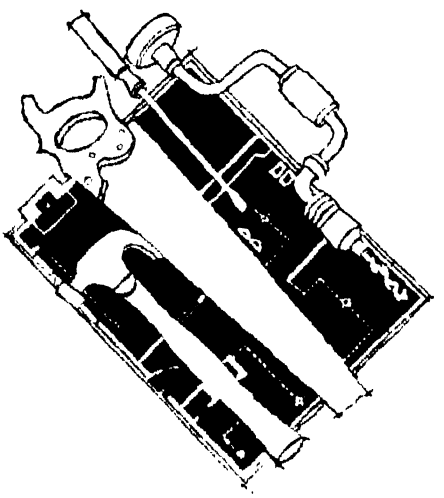
8. Plant with the age and activity of your young ones in mind. If they are likely to trample exposed growing things, plant hardy varieties or protect your plants with low fences or hedges. Or elevate them out of the way.

9. Plan with safety constantly in mind . . . The play area for small children should be so located that Mother can keep an eye on them while at work inside the house . . . Play apparatus like swings, slides, and so on should be checked for actual or possible defects regularly . . . Heavy equipment or such things as marble bird baths should be firmly anchored so that they can't be pulled over.

SOURCES

Construction details for the set of outdoor furniture and units shown in the photographs on pages 9 and 32 may be obtained from Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma 2, Washington. Cost — 10c each.

Fun Downstairs



3

"LET'S GO DOWNSTAIRS AND HAVE SOME fun."

When you hear that in a home it means that what might have been just a dimly-lit, cheerless cellar housing the furnace, worn-out furniture, and assorted junk has been transformed into a play area. Likely it is a gayly decorated room where members of the household can lounge in relaxed comfort or find the answer to various play needs individually or together as a group. Such a basement was once described by a happy teenager as "Having your own vacation place handy whenever you want it."

If your basement doesn't measure up to that description, then consider these arguments for fixing it up as a family activity room.

A basement is the coolest part of the house in the summer, though warmest in the winter . . . It is generally inexpensive to improve. A good part of the work can be done by the family itself. A basement saves wear and tear on other rooms. Noisy play in the basement is least likely to interfere with normal household routine or social life elsewhere in the house.

All of these are important factors, the last named being perhaps most important. In one family, for instance, it was decided to turn the dining room adjacent to the parlor into a rumpus area and use the basement exclusively as a utility and storage area. The two boys would be able to entertain friends in the playroom while the parents took over the parlor for their own social life. The rooms could

be shut off from each other by folding doors. The rumpus room could be reached from the back entrance without the necessity of having young visitors tramp through the front hall.

The rather large bug in this seemingly logical scheme showed up shortly after the rumpus room had been paneled, furnished and decorated. The youngsters had some friends over for a session of jive one evening. The parents had some neighbors in for bridge. Naturally, the jive didn't suffer. But the bridge game—well, it was a losing cause from the moment the first platter was spun in the neighboring room. The idea of a rumpus area had been fine, but the choice of locale, it became all too obvious that evening, couldn't have been more wrong.

A basement room needn't be elaborate or showy. It need only be cheerful, attractive, and appropriately set up for the job it has to do. This rumpus, whoopee, recreation, play, relaxation, game room—or whatever you choose to call it—is a place where you can let go and be yourself. Even more than a backyard, because it is useful the year around and affords complete privacy, a finished basement can be the focal point of the family's play life.

Before you make any move toward developing your basement into a recreational area, however, you must consider its liveability. If water leaks in from the outside, then, of course, you'll be wasting your time fixing it up until or unless you can overcome that serious problem. If dampness is only a result of moisture condensation on pipes or walls, then the answer is a simple one. Adequate ventilation, dehumidifyers, protective material wrapped about cold water pipes will cut down or eliminate moisture.

Assuming that the problem of outside water leakage is under control, the next step is to consider just how you plan to utilize the space. And that will depend entirely, of course, on the needs and size of your family, the age of your children, your favorite hobbies, the frequency with which you entertain, and other such factors.

Here again charts come in handy to help crystallize your thinking. There should be two of these. The first would consist of a plan worked out to scale on a graph sheet indicating the location of the installations—furnace, laundry, and so on; doors and windows, stairway, plumbing, wiring and other details. You'll want to plan for

easy access to fuse boxes, meters, water valves and the like.

The second chart would be a kind of interest and activities plot for the family along the lines described on page 64. What are Dad's favorite recreations and pursuits? Mother's? Sister's? Brother's? If there are pre-schoolers and early grade schoolers, take note of how active they are, how many friends they have, and other matters pertaining to their play habits.

There are a few other things you'll need to get straightened out on. You can jot down the answers on the second chart. Make up your mind, for example, whether the TV is to go into the basement. Many people have found that arrangement a delightful one. With the set downstairs, the rest of the house is blessedly quiet and uncluttered.

Decide, too, whether the downstairs room is going to be used on a convertible basis—as a guest room, for example. Will it be a relaxation room for the adults a certain number of nights a week and a whoopee area for teenagers other nights? Do you want to plan things so that there will be separate areas for adult and children's activities with the understanding that one is not to intrude on the other's play domain? Would you want to plan it so that it can be converted from a children's playroom during the day to a grownup entertainment room at night?

Perhaps you'd like to transform your available basement space into an out-and-out family hobby room where only kindred souls may enter by invitation. One family consisting of father, mother, son and daughter have turned their basement playroom into a "hangar" where the group can pursue its absorbing pastime of model-plane making. The hangar contains a drill press, circular saw, jigsaw and work benches for every member of the family.

Homes are now being built with a rumpus room on one level and a full basement a few steps down on a lower level. Both are accessible through a back door or garage entrance.

The good points of such a set-up are these: The rumpus room can be turned into a playroom for young ones and their frisky friends. The lower level may then be fixed up for adult play use and for storage. Thus, each generation has its own place to play. The fuss and muss created by half of the small fry of the neighbor-

hood trooping into the house is confined to one area, floored and decorated to withstand the impact of such invasions. The kids' rumpus room can also be used as a scout den, for parties, and later for teenage shindigs.

The arrangement may be reversed, with the rumpus room planned as a grownup retreat and part of the basement turned into a stamping ground for youngsters.

A KIDDIE SET-UP

Basement space reserved for healthy growth need only be roughly but safely finished. Have some solid colored linoleum or other inexpensive floor covering. Hopscotch or other game diagrams can be drawn on the floor. Put in a couple of fruit or soap boxes, planks, and some of the other knock-about stuff and odds and ends mentioned in the chapter on backyard playgrounds. You might put casters on a wooden box to make a wagon. A sandbox could go in a corner. In another corner, fix up a playhouse or tent. A packing case or giant carton with a cut-out entrance and windows will do well enough for this purpose. Put down a roll-up floor mat for youngsters to jump and tumble on. They need this kind of play. Try to put up a swing, also. You'll be glad to have a set-up like this for the kids to blow off steam when the weather is bad outside.

Orange crates stacked together serve nicely as storage shelves for playthings. Or, you might build or buy easy-to-get-at unpainted toy shelves. If you have old furniture that is suitable, cut it down to pint size, and refinish it with bright colors. Nail together lengths of board for play seats or tables.

Tape or tack up strips of butcher paper to provide a surface for painting and crayoning. If the walls are bare, brighten them with rollicking cutouts—clowns, cowboys, pirates, or fairy tale figures. Such temporary decorations can be changed easily at will.

HOW ONE COUPLE PLANNED

When the parents of infant twin girls decided to finish their basement they proceeded as follows: Roughly half of the space was converted into a play and entertainment room. The rest was divided into storage, utility and hobby areas.

Into one of these spaces went laundry equipment, a wall-hinged ironing board, convenient cupboards for laundry supplies and other appurtenances to take steps, labor, and lugging out of wash-day chores. It was agreed that the laundry room would not be partitioned off from the playroom until the children grew older. In that way, while Mother was at work downstairs, the twins could play in a kiddie corner within easy sight and reach. Portable bamboo screens were used to shut off the utility area when the parents entertained in the basement.

Space was allocated for the father's wood-working and photography interests. Here, too, cabinets and shelves were built to store paints, brushes and other things needed for household maintenance. And from here it was no trouble at all to get to the important gas, electricity and water installations.

Our couple had some fairly definite ideas about how their basement should look. Not only that but they worked out estimates on the cost of material. They figured out how much of the work they could do with their own hands and how much help they could get from friends and neighbors. They made an inventory of the old pieces of furniture they had that might with refinishing find a new and useful life in the basement. In the end they wound up with a room which was to become the heart of that home's happiness.

Here are some of the other things they had to decide about, and you would need to if you went ahead and turned your basement into a play area:

THE STAIRWAY

They made their stairway attractive and safe. A good many home accidents, they had heard, occur on steps. Furthermore, the basement stairways they had seen in most of the homes they visited did not invite stepping down into the playroom.

They had their stairway remodeled so that it was semi-closed and had risers and a firm handrail. A safety gate was installed at the top of the steps to protect the children. They built a small snack bar into the back of their stairway with an extra deep shelf to serve as a counter. You might want to use the same space for other purposes.

A highly useful treatment of a stairway is shown on page 44.

Notice the large bottom compartments for storage of games equipment, portable radio, and photograph albums. The center compartment has a drop leaf which can be used for small hobby work, refreshments or desk work. There are open shelves too for trophies, books, outstanding items of a hobby collection. Craft materials might be stored inside of the drop-leaf compartment.

TREATING THE WALLS

They applied knotty pine to a height of 47 inches, and insulated wall planking the rest of the way up to the ceiling. It comes tongue and grooved so that you can slip it together to conceal the fastening nail heads. It's very cheap, about 6¢ a foot.

Or, you can apply gypsum wallboard, brick veneer, hardboard, plywood, or any other material that appeals to you. Wall coverings

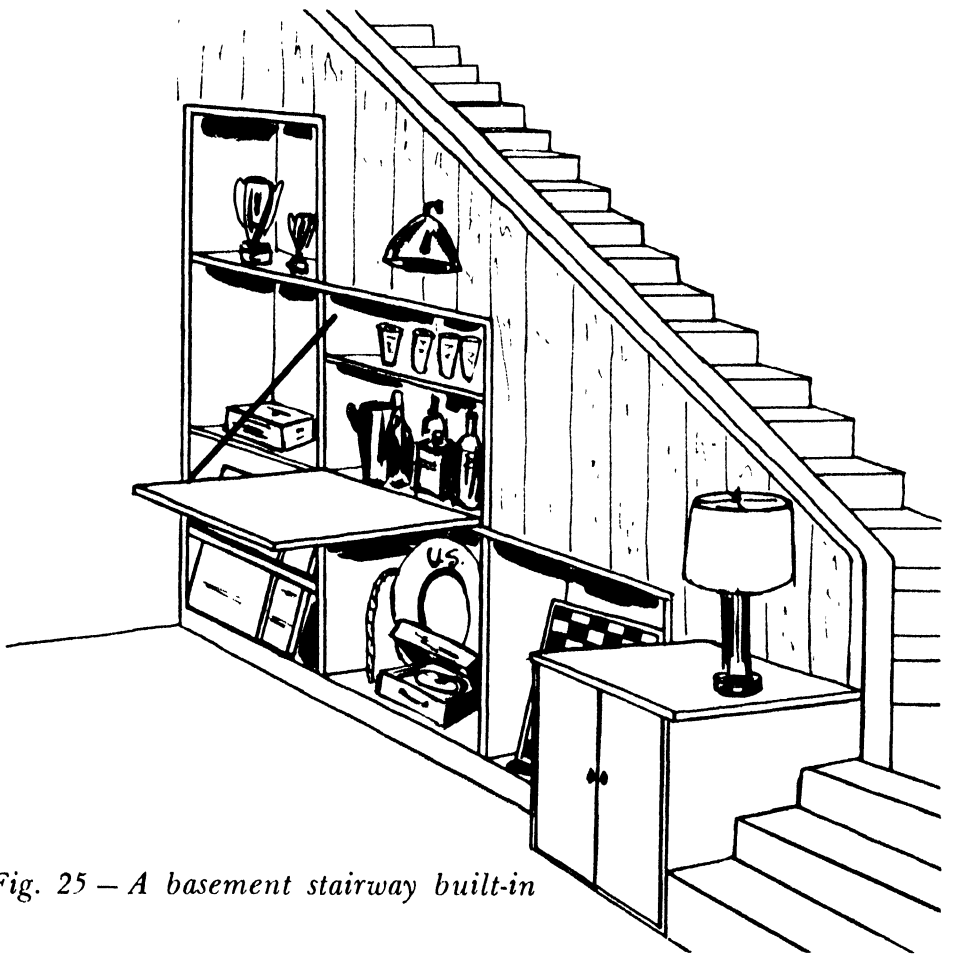


Fig. 25 — A basement stairway built-in

can be used in combinations, as our couple did. You can always cover the wall directly too with any of the easy applying paints on the market today, which is the cheapest method of all. Some interesting plaster wall or natural finishes can be obtained. Remember, however, that if there is calcimine on the walls you'll have to wash it off thoroughly before applying paint.

THE CEILING

Our couple knew that they would be using the basement a lot for music and that children would be playing there boisterously later on. Accordingly, they chose acoustical panels which were nailed on furring strips. These were also the tongue and groove type and cost about 11¢ a square foot. They reduce noise, reflect light well, and insulate. There are other ceiling materials also available.

THE FLOOR

Since their floor would get hard juvenile wear, they decided on asphalt tile. They would like to have had a section of highly polished hardwood flooring for dancing. But they felt it wouldn't work out too well with toddlers using the place. Many people use asphalt tile because it is supposed to withstand the moisture of cellar floors, resisting the alkali brought out of the concrete by dampness.

They used little decorative tiled insets with a musical motif. You can choose other patterns reflecting your favorite sports or pastime themes—hunting, fishing, sailing, cards. Colors may be chosen to blend harmoniously with your furnishings. Rubber or plastic tiles cost more, but also make attractive floor coverings.

You might use linoleum, linoleum tile, cork tile, or a recent development known as terra-tile, a vinyl plastic. These rate upward in expense in about the order listed. The last named is touted to be the easiest tile for the householder to install himself because it requires no adhesive.

And then again you can always paint the bare floor without using any other floor covering.

WIRING AND LIGHTING

This was something our man happened to know a thing or two about. And so he was able to save quite a bit of money by handling a good part of the wiring and installation of ceiling and wall fixtures himself. As a matter of fact, he even put in a speaker wired to the twins' bedroom to detect when and if they cried.

You'll likely need the help and advice of an experienced hand. One thing you should remember is that a dull, poorly-lighted playroom loses a lot. It is possible to arrange groupings of inexpensive wall pin-up lamps, so that they shed enough light. Floor lamps that throw light upwards against a highly reflective ceiling can furnish plenty of illumination too. Ceiling spotlights can create some dramatic lighting effects. You might use one to illuminate a games playing area, or point up a picture.

Install plenty of outlets. There are never enough in the average basement.

DAYLIGHT AND COLOR

Most basement playrooms lack sufficient window area. It's something to bear in mind when you build your own home and plan to fix up the basement for play purposes. It's good to let in as much sunlight as possible, particularly if children are going to play there.

Our couple's house had the usual small and high windows in the basement. One possible method for them to get more window space—an example of which they had seen in a magazine—consisted of opening a side or back wall and putting in 3-foot high casement windows overlooking the backyard. This would involve excavating, bracing weak points caused by cutting into foundations and establishing some system of drainage. They couldn't afford it.

Instead they achieved a more "daylighty," bright effect by tricking the eye with decoration and color. They hung photo blowups of natural outdoor scenes on one wall. The scenes for these photo-murals were selected from shots taken on a cross-country trip and showed lakes, snow-capped peaks, and wooded areas in national parks. The effect was a sense of spaciousness and outdoor relaxation.

A similar idea is to create a dummy window showing a pictured outdoor vista. With curtains to carry out the illusion, this can actu-

ally give the feeling of looking through a window at such a scene. Ceiling to floor draperies around small basement windows also add length to their appearance. And notice the decorative planting touch used in the small window in the picture below.

A word about the use of color in the playroom: You can achieve an effective coziness by adding spots of warm color here and there in the furnishings and decorations. Color, more than anything else, gives any room character, or makes it uninteresting. Further, it can affect mood and disposition. It can help induce a feeling of relaxation and comfort, or inhibit it. It can give you a lift, or drag you down. It actually influences your nervous system in ways of which you may not be consciously aware. Vigorous, gay colors—even exciting ones—are logical in a recreation room, if employed with discretion. If the playroom is to be used mainly for quiet, reflective pursuits, then provide calmer colors.

Fig. 26 – A cozy basement family room

One color consultant has devised a questionnaire which purports to determine your color personality and establish the color which best reflects your mental attitude and way of life. Whatever your dominant color—red, yellow, blue or green—it should form the basis for the color recipe used in your living quarters. If one hue shows up most often in a color personality test of the family, then it should be dominant in the decorations.

Pretty ingenious! But perhaps the best and most practical advice on the subject of color is that given by architect Paul Revere Williams. His tip: rely on mother nature as your color consultant. We never seem to tire of her color schemes. This is particularly applicable to a basement room where a reminder of nature is always refreshing.

FURNISHINGS AND DECORATIONS

Our couple looked about for second hand furniture that could be refinished and adapted for playroom use. It's a good idea but needs to be carried out cautiously. A room for relaxation and entertainment should not be a snug harbor for ancient furniture. Saggy springs and broken legs look no less disreputable down below than up above. Refurbish beat-up pieces that are to be brought down to the basement. An old side table, for instance, can be topped with Formica or heavy duty linoleum to form a work surface for hobbies.

Since they were fond of music, this pair turned one wall into a melody corner. Its outstanding feature was a refinished old pianola, alongside of which was a built-in wall cupboard filled with music rolls—great for accompaniment to song fests they held occasionally. Built into the wall on the other side of the pianola was the record player which also contained compartments for records. Here one could park in a chair and listen to a concert on long-playing records stacked on the phonograph.

They also built a wall bench padded with foam rubber for seating, and storage needs were provided for in the space beneath. What they had in mind, among other things, was to use this space for toys and make it easy for the twins to clear the floor when they were through with their play. There were sliding door compartments which would be easy for little fingers to work.

They filled out their furniture requirements in the basement by bringing down portable lounging and seating things from the backyard when the outdoor season was over.

Now our couple used music as the main theme of their playroom. It's a good idea, generally, to pitch your decorating to a central theme. It gives a playroom character and distinction. If you love sailing or water sports, for instance, your theme might be the verandah of a yacht club with a sea mural on the wall, and nautical touches such as storm lanterns and life preservers further to carry out the impression. A shuffleboard game or deck tennis layout would fit in here naturally. Or, your theme might be a South Seas one, Mexican, frontier, nightclub, circus, barn, artist's studio, or whatever suits the family fancy.

One home owner can recapture some refreshing vacation spirit anytime he needs it by going into his basement playroom. It has been converted into a representation of a tavern in a New England fishing town where he spends part of his summer. Old demijohns and grog bottles are lined up behind the refreshment bar, and the walls are festooned with fishing nets, anchors, and other reminders of happy and relaxing summer days.

A certain man and wife have such fond and warm memories of a holiday in Paris that they designed their recreation room to look like a bistro. Wall paper with a gay Moulin Rouge design suggests the merriness of Parisian night life. French doll miniatures, blow-ups of street scenes, prints by Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec hang on the walls. A visit to that room rarely fails to give your spirits a lift.

Still another couple—he an ardent amateur railroader—fixed up their basement to resemble the interior of an old-fashioned parlor car, using attractive and charming antiques. Simulated railroad windows on the walls framed travel scenes and the overall effect was escape from humdrum routine.

That's the beauty of fixing up a playroom. You can give your imagination free rein, express yourself, thumb your nose at arbitrary standards of "proper decorating." One woman had her husband put up narrow 6-inch shelves in their converted coal bin. These she lined with jars of home canned fruit and jelly, making

a pretty colored delight to the eye and stimulating the taste buds into pleasant anticipation. An attractive display scheme can be based on less transitory collections—pottery, chinaware, old guns, coins or what have you.

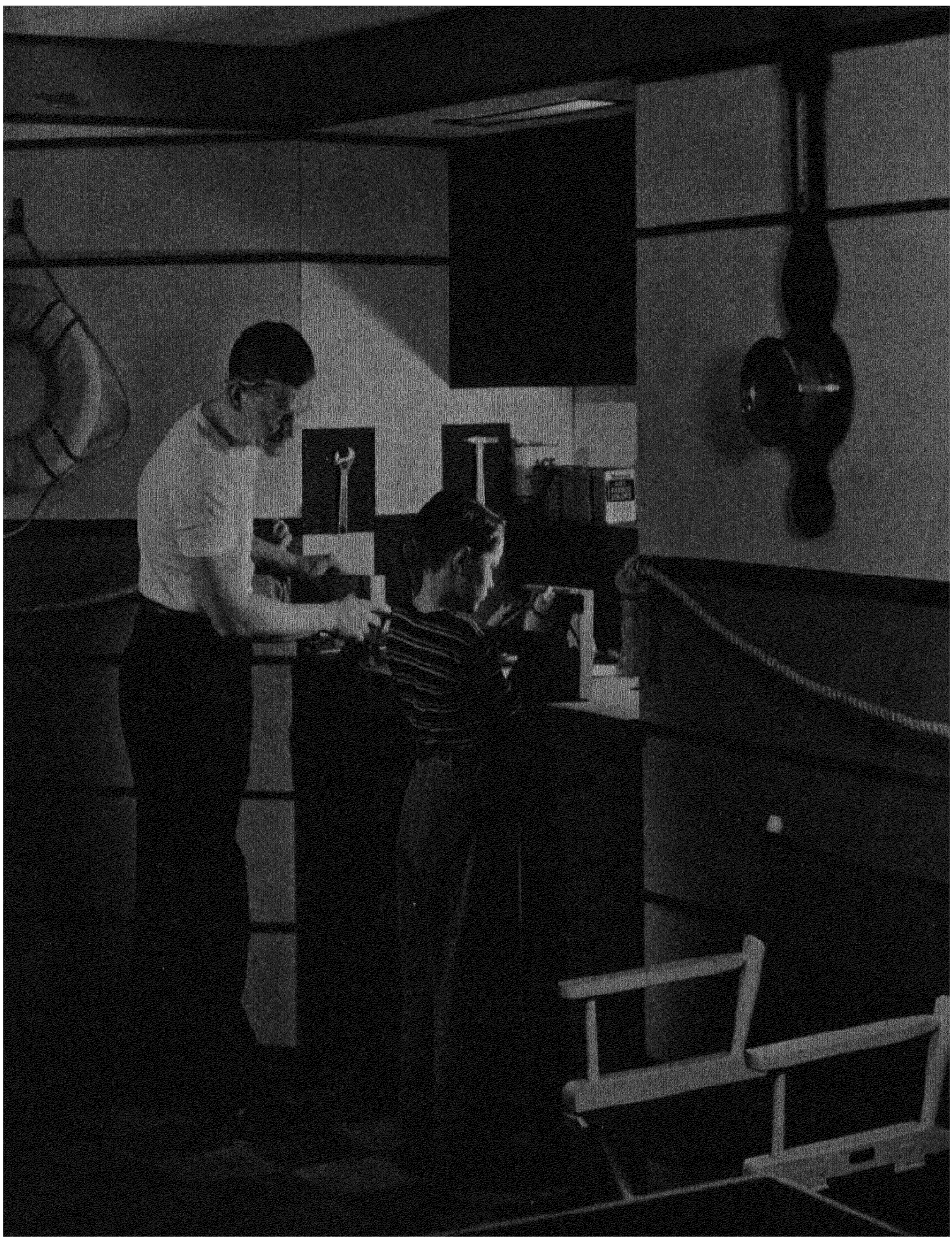


Fig. 27 – Basement workshop corner

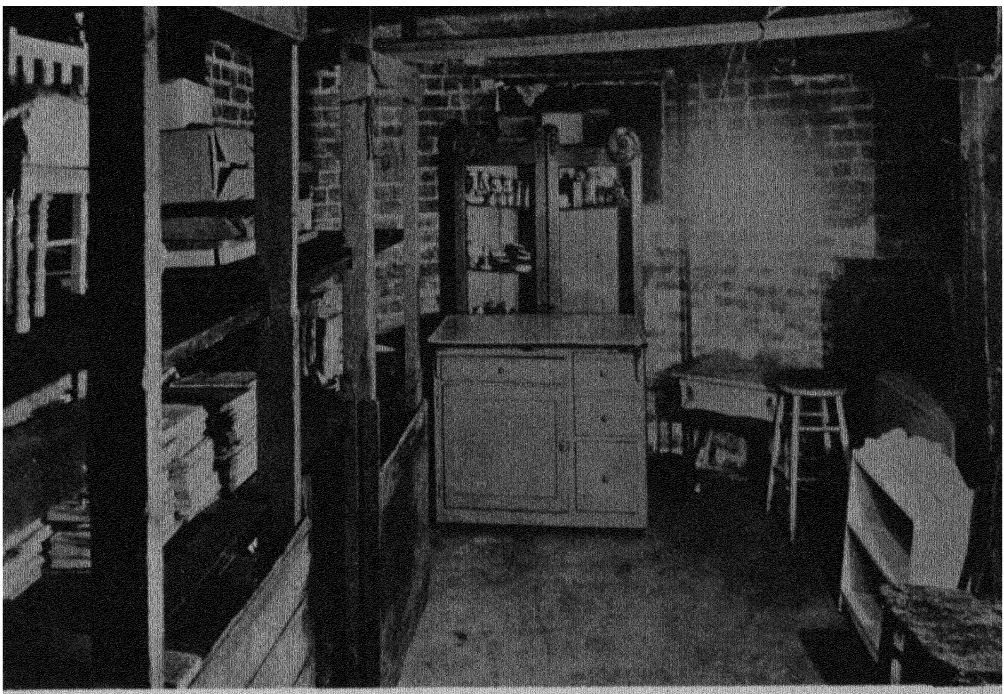


Fig. 28 – Before – a cluttered dingy basement

Fig. 29 – After – a room for family recreation

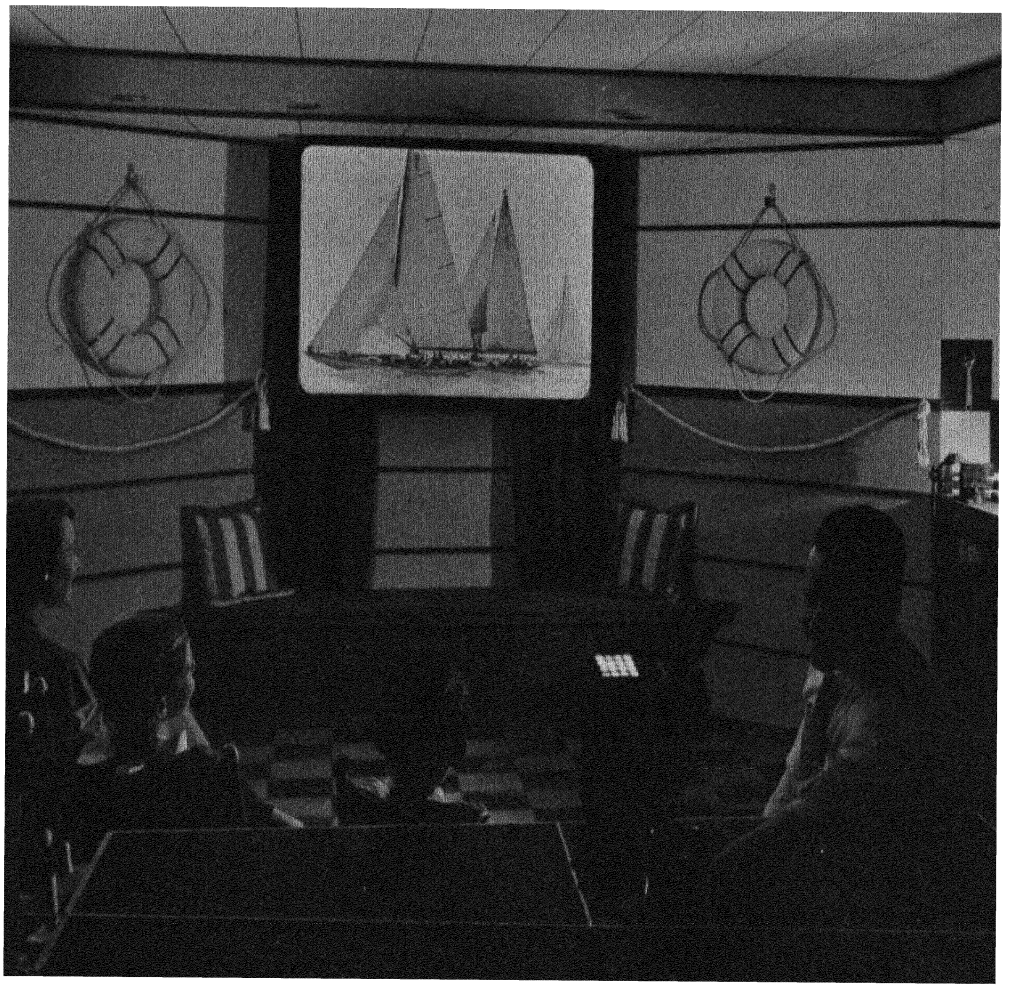


Fig. 30 – Home movies in the basement recreation room

PLAY AND HOBBY EQUIPMENT

What equipment and accessories for play will go into the basement will depend altogether on your family's interests, fun-making proclivities, and the extent to which you entertain. It's been said that no basement playroom is complete without a ping-pong table. Our couple subscribed to that, not only because they enjoyed the exercise and counted on the bending for balls to keep their waistlines in check, but because of the other uses the table surface could be put to.

They constructed a table of the kind shown on page 53 and painted the surface green. It is standard size–that is, 9 feet long, 5

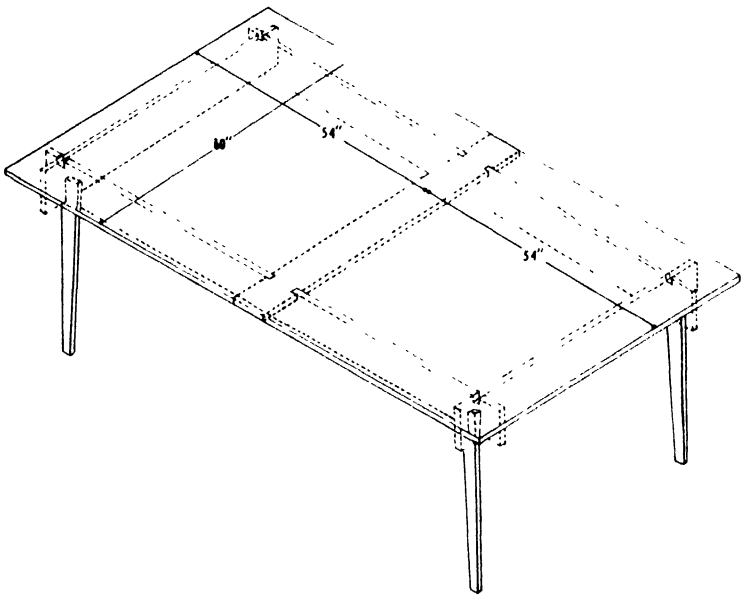


Fig. 31 — A collapsible ping-pong table

feet wide and the top is 30 inches from the floor. They used exterior plywood so that it could be utilized in the backyard if they wanted to. The two piece top and demountable stand and legs permit the table to be taken apart and easily transported or stored out of the way.

Some ping-pong tables are made so that they hinge in the middle and the legs can be collapsed. Or you can construct a serviceable one consisting of a two-piece top that rests on 3 sawhorses. A tip: There are ready made brackets in any size you want which simplify the construction of a sawhorse Available too are hardwood workhorses with tubular steel legs and rubber tips to prevent floor marring or scratching. And perhaps you'd be interested in a collapsible type. For ping-pong, remember, a sawhorse should be around 30 inches high.

Some kind of target game is always fun in the basement. Darts is a good standby, and archery is possible. The diagram on page 54 shows a dart or archery target which conceals a Murphy recess type bed, a fine idea for having a finished playroom double as a guest room.

For the shooting enthusiast there is the CO_2 pistol. This fires pellets, not bullets, into a hollow target, eliminating danger of

ricochet. Propulsive power is furnished by CO_2 gas, so there is no flash, or smoke, and comparatively little noise.

A form of badminton can be played by suspending a 22-inch circle of wire from the ceiling. The idea is for the players to bat the shuttlecock through this loop at each other.

If you can afford one and have the space for it, a small size pocket billiard table makes a good addition. It is a calming sport for young and old and retains its interest for years.

A bagatelle or family pinball game is also a good bet. Children enjoy it and so do grownups.

If yours is a family that likes to stretch its muscles in exercise, then why not put in some gym type equipment? Off behind a partition or removable screen, you might have a tumbling mat, bar bells, a punching bag, or paraphernalia for the kind of exercise you most enjoy indoors. It will help you keep in shape when bad or cold weather limits outside activities. It's swell for working off peeves, too.

A large, strong rope net hung on one wall with a mat underneath to protect against falls will provide hours of climbing fun.

Varied interests add richness to family living. Each individual may have some favorite indoor hobby—gardening, working in plastics or clay, photography, model-building, oil painting, woodworking, and so on. And there will be a number of pastimes that all will want to enjoy together—games, dancing, music making, card playing, dramatics. A well organized playroom will take care of every member of the family.

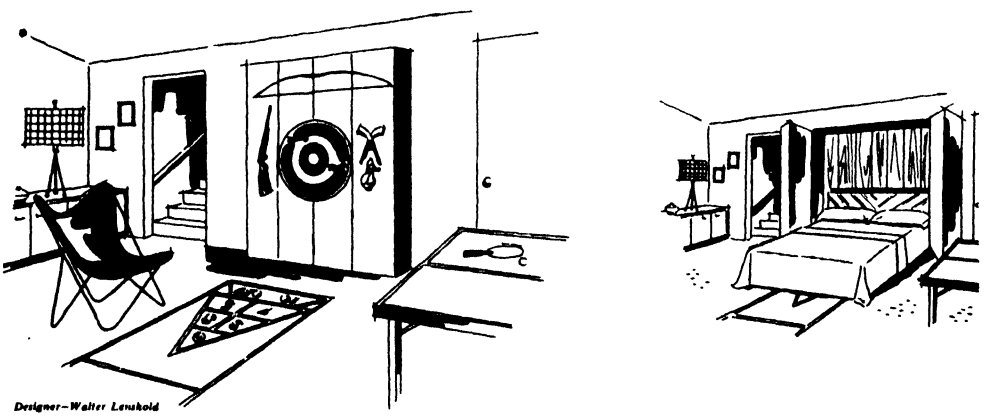


Fig. 32 — A target board conceals a Murphy bed

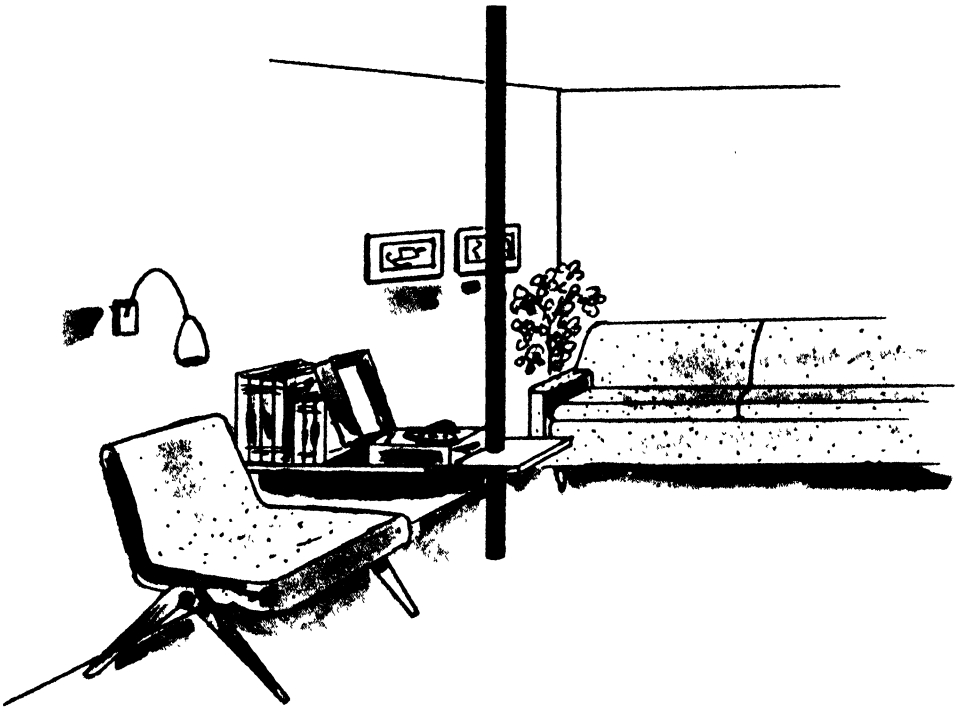


Fig. 33 — Making use of a basement post

ASSORTED TIPS AND TRICKS

Let's take those ugly steel basement posts as a starter. You can change them from eye sores to assets. Here's how. In a kiddie corner, paint the post to resemble a giant peppermint stick or circus pole.

Box it with 2 x 3's or 2 x 4's. Hang magazine racks on it or bookshelves or dartboards, or hooks for sports equipment. Build a refreshment shelf around it.

Pad it with leather. Put little brass nailheads into the padding. Build a circular table around it.

Just paint it an attractive color that fits in with your decorations. Build a plant box around the base. Or, wind artificial ivy leaves from floor to ceiling. (An idea too for camouflaging unsightly ceiling pipes.) (See Fig. 35).

Build tiered circular tables around it. (See illustration, page 56). You can put plants on the tables, store toys or games, use for refreshments, or utilize as work surfaces.

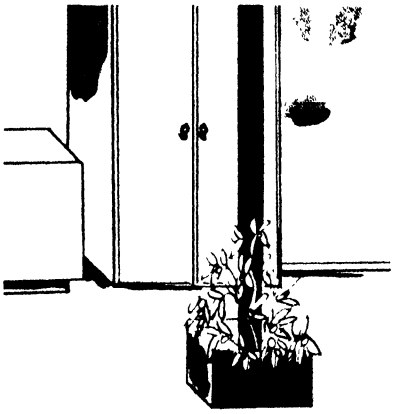


Fig. 34

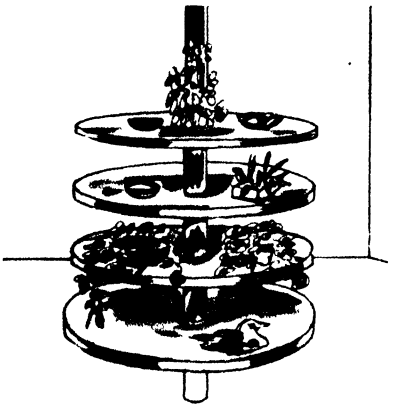


Fig. 35

Utilizing basement posts.

For a work or play surface, hinge two legs to a wood or plywood board, and hinge the board to the wall. When not in use it can be lifted out of the way and fastened to the wall.

Need floor space for social functions, dancing, shuffleboard, and so on? Install hooks on walls, Shaker style. Hang furniture on them to get it out of the way.

Perforated hardboard is a boon in hobby corners and workshop areas. Tools and all but the bulkiest equipment can be placed in holders, clamps or hooks. The illustration on page 60 shows Peg-Board with carpentry tools.

Can you use a compact entertainment closet? The one shown below, Fig. 36, can be built of plywood. It contains storage for a card table, drawers for games equipment, space for a movie projector, holds hobby supplies, and has a drop-leaf surface. Closed, it can be used as a counter as shown in the photograph on page 57. Put it on casters and it may be rolled here and there as needed.

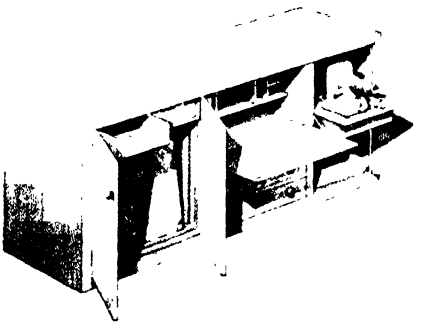


Fig. 36 — Entertainment closet

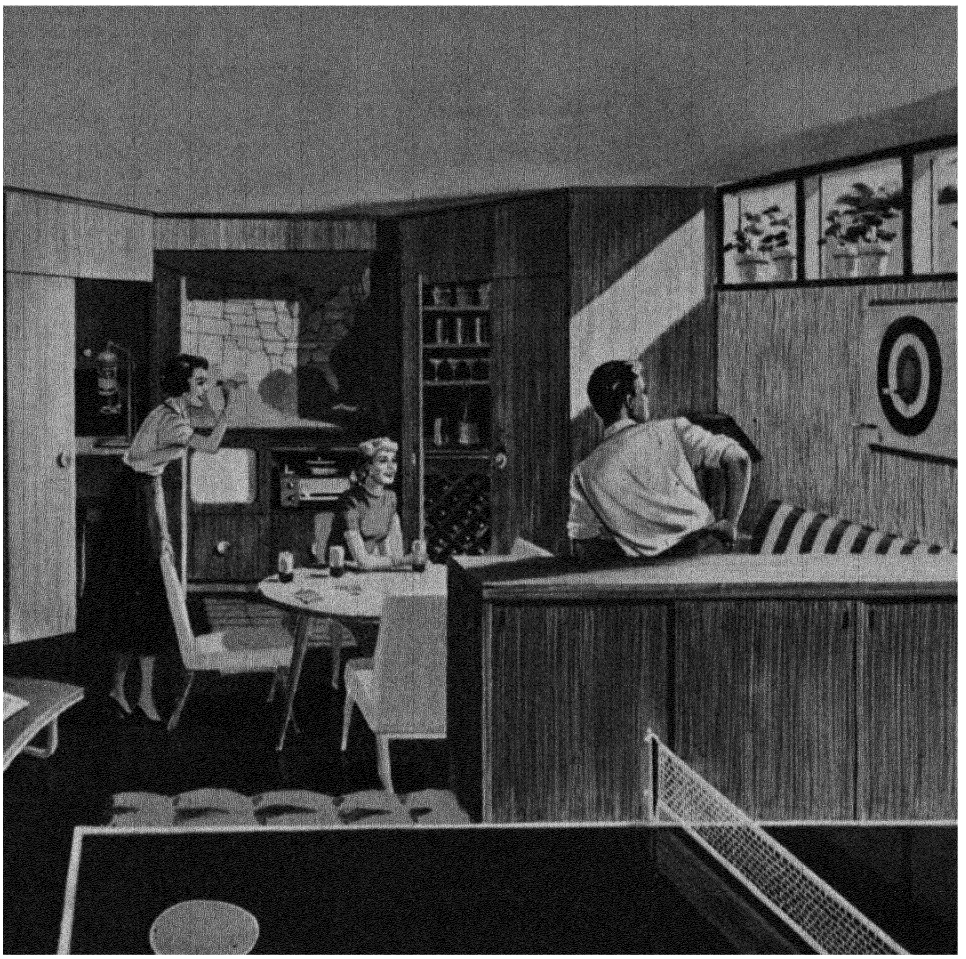


Fig. 37 — A basement playroom with mobile entertainment closet

Hollow hassocks do double duty as seats and as storage for toys, games, or hobbies.

Want to combine several play features? An excellent example is shown in the photo Fig. 38, on page 58. Here the TV bay recessed over a storage bench makes a good stage for a puppet show or home movie.

A reminder: Many a householder with a beautifully finished basement has lived to regret splurging on eye-catching externals without making adequate provision for concealed storage. Planning should be done before the walls are paneled. The diagram Fig. 39 on page 58 shows one example of a well-planned built-in. There's space in it for everything but the ping-pong table.

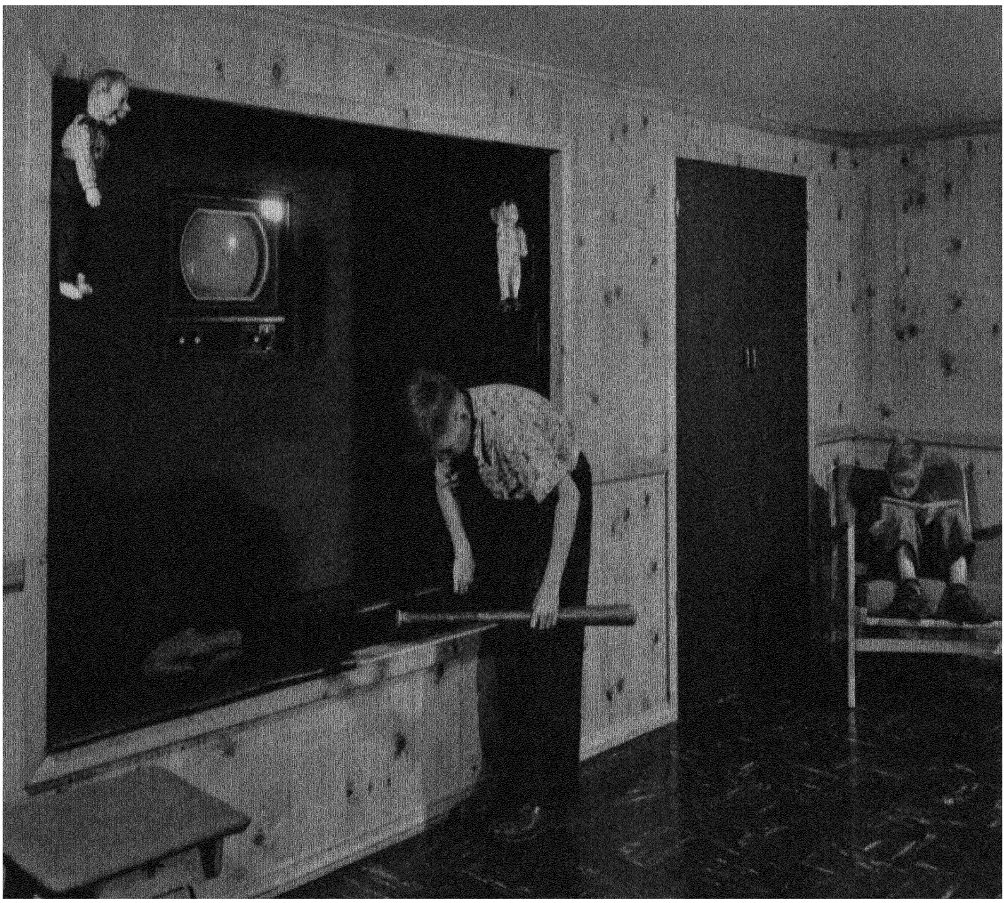


Fig. 38 – Combination TV bay, storage bench, stage

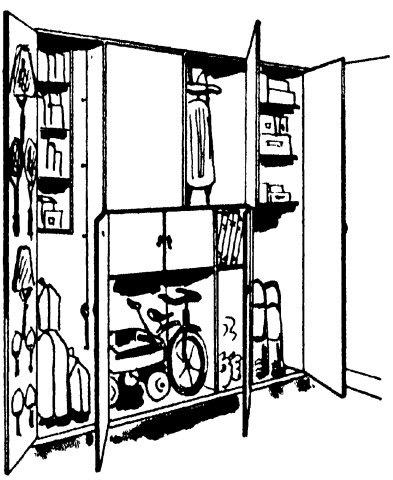


Fig. 39 – General closet for play equipment

A DESIGN FOR YOUR BASEMENT

The designs, illustrations and suggestions in this chapter are intended to stimulate your thinking rather than to give you exact patterns to copy. The way *your* basement is organized for recreation and relaxation should express *your* family's way of play life, not your neighbors', or the "smart" family in the magazine layouts.

Why, for example, waste valuable space and money on a big, fancy bar just for display? A roll-out cart, the top of a built-in cabinet, a counter made of inexpensive, tempered hardboard may suit your social needs well enough. Put the same dollars and labor into a fireplace or grill and you've increased your home's fun potential not just for an occasional weekend but for all the evenings of the week.

Or, make your investment in equipment or decorations that are really important to your idea of relaxed living, into things that best serve your requirements. Plenty of benches for indoor planting—if that hobby refreshes you. A ceramics workshop complete with potter's wheel and kiln. A built-in music center. Tanks of tropical fish. A comfortable set-up for games or sociable duplicate bridge.

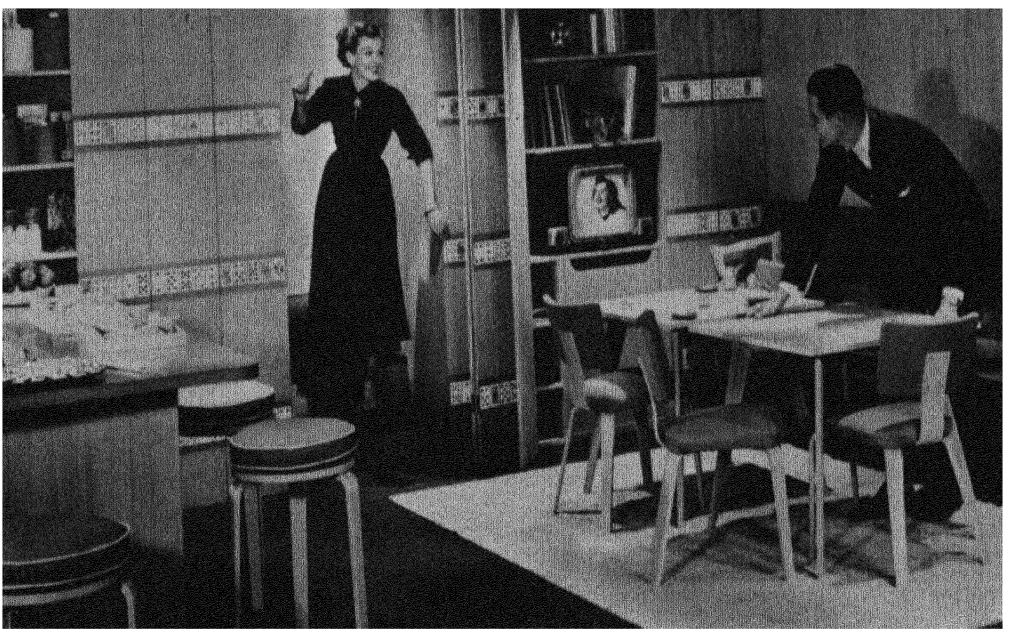


Fig. 40 — A basement playroom with a card motif

Remember the family that transformed its basement into a hanger for model planes? That makes all the sense in the world—to them. In another home, trackage for electric trains gets the lions share of basement space. In still another house a goodly section of the basement has been tastefully designed as a setting for a family band. And there is a basement which is set up as a nature museum. A masonry fireplace with a slat picnic table and rustic chairs completes the picture.

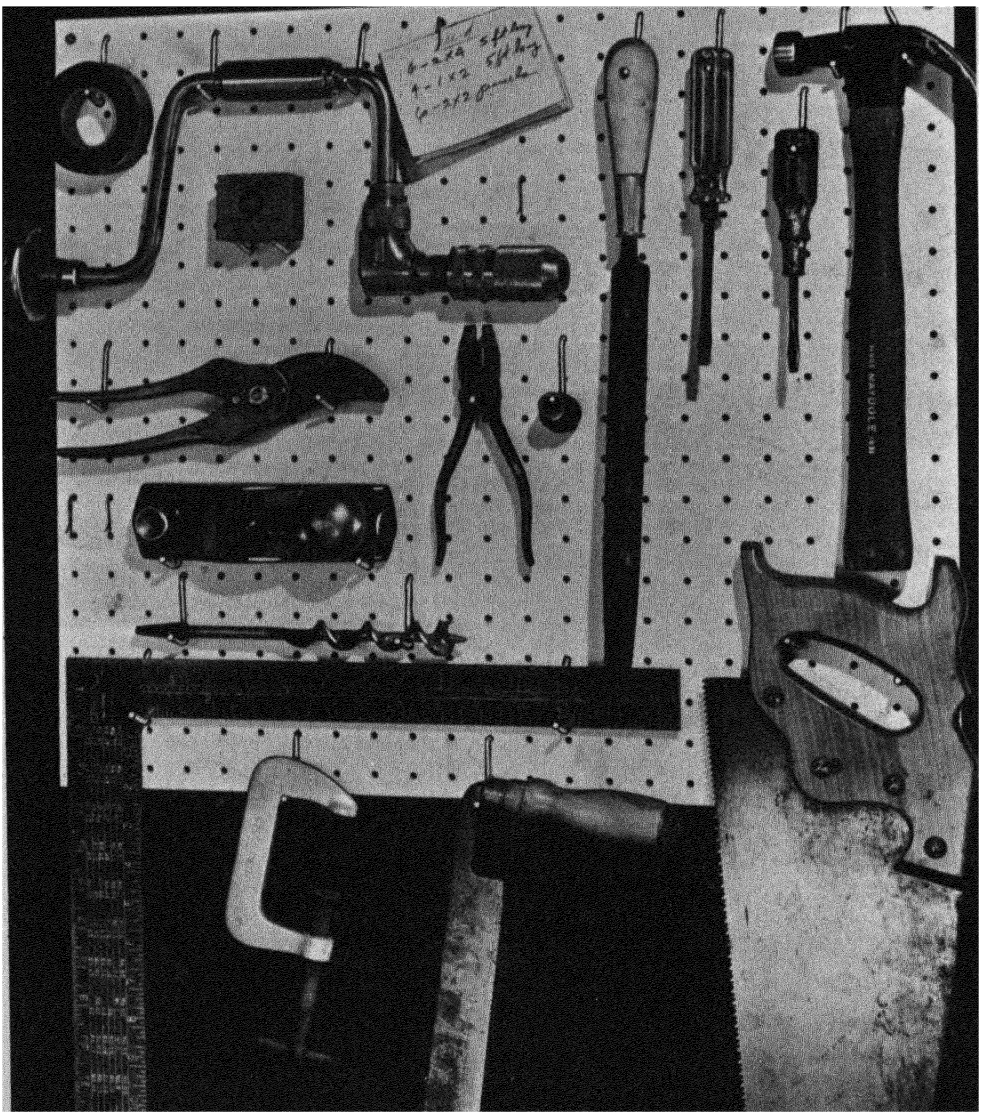


Fig. 41 — Perforated hardboard tool-holder

MAKE IT YOURSELF?

A lot of householders, male and female, have surprised themselves in recent years by building furniture and equipment that actually stand up, give service and look good. Not a few find fun and creative satisfaction in it, a prop to the ego.

Even those who labor reluctantly while the bright sun outside beckons them to crisp green fairways or a purling trout brook can find solace in this thought. Suppose he is working on a project that would cost $200 if done by hired help. If he were in the $6000 bracket, for instance, it would mean he'd actually have to earn about $320 to pay for the job. By doing it himself, he can put that money towards a bigger and better vacation.

Of course, there is another side to this. It may turn out to be a saving to buy a complicated piece instead of building it yourself. Raw material plus special tools needed for a specific job may total to more than what the finished product can be bought for. Then, too, there may be certain jobs you simply lack the skills to do the way they need to be done. Undertaking them could result in spoilage and a foul-up that would have to be straightened out by an experienced hand and so cost you much more in the end.

All of this should be thought out carefully beforehand. It may be a wise plan to decide what parts of a project you're willing and able to build yourself and what parts should be constructed by a skilled outsider.

Working in your favor are these factors: manufacturers of tools and supplies have developed some pretty wonderful gadgets in recent years for the do-it-yourself amateur. There are edge-grooved laminated panels, for instance, which eliminate nailing and can be attached with concealed metal clips. There are wood coverings which can be stapled, clipped or glued on. Paints can now be applied easily by roller. Paints come ready mixed in all shades and lose their smell quickly after application. There is a wall paper which is coated on the back with a non-staining adhesive for convenient decorating. A multitude of other such aids are available.

Most lumber needed for construction can be milled to your specifications at the lumber yard for a slight extra cost. Very often all that is left for you to do is to nail it into place or put in the

necessary hardware. Find out whether your community has a rent-a-tool shop where special or costly tools can be rented at a modest fee.

There are stacks of books, magazines, government booklets and bulletins put out by manufacturers which are loaded with tips on what to make and how to make it.

All in all, it's a good idea to do it yourself—in order to save money or out of enjoyment and a sense of pride. It's not a good idea, however, if it puts you under too much pressure, physically or mentally.

BASEMENTS IN APARTMENT HOUSES

Commenting on elaborate lounges, promenades and similar areas, Joseph H. Abel and Fred N. Severud in their book, *Apartment Houses,* speak of them as "a waste of space and money." They are entirely unnecessary and unused. Providing game rooms where tenants could play ping-pong, billiards and the like would be a better utilization of area, these housing experts feel. Another good idea would be to plan apartment buildings so that basement space is made available for hobby, workshop or play use.

In some apartment houses it is possible to get the management to turn over basement space for leisure time pursuits. It's something to think about if you're an apartment dweller and feel the lack of play and hobby space.

It may mean getting a few interested people together, securing the management's permission, buying the necessary material yourself and installing the work benches, and so on. Carpentry corners might be built, photographic darkrooms, a rainy day play area. You must be sure that there is adequate lighting and ventilation. Closets and cupboards will need to be built where supplies or equipment can be kept under lock and key.

It's a feasible idea that has been carried out before—in co-operatives for example.

SOURCES

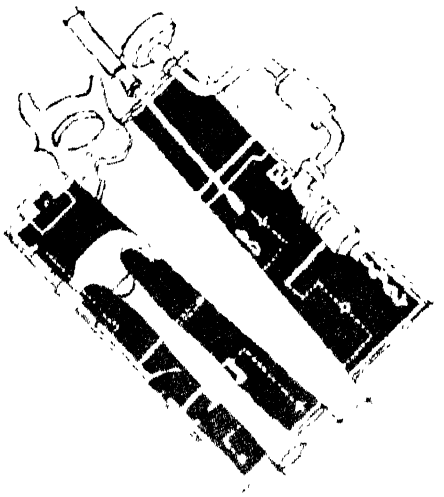
For the plans for building the ping-pong table and entertainment closet mentioned on pages 53 and 56, send 10c to M & M

Wood Working Company, 2301 North Columbia Blvd., Portland 17, Oregon. This booklet also contains plans for other useful items.

Plans for an all-purpose utility table with simple demountable legs cut from fir plywood together with one big panel may be obtained from Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma, Washington, for 10c. Such a table can be used indoors or outdoors for table tennis, dining, railroad models, etc.

Plans for basement shown in Figs. 29 and 30 may be obtained from Wood Conversion Co., St. Paul, Minnesota.

Room for Play and Relaxation



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"YOUR PERSONALITY AND YOUR FAMily's personality," says decorator Anne Mason, "will determine how you live, how you work, play, relax and entertain."

But is your house or apartment really a background for all your interests and activities? Does it provide for your entertaining, for your family entertaining, and yet offer every member a play spot of his own?

How do all your family activities fit into the living areas of your home? Maybe some changes are needed—perhaps the big bedroom should be turned into a studio-bedroom-study so that Sister can entertain there when Junior's friends are in the game room and Mother and Dad want the living room.

Do you find yourselves eating on the terrace or at the fireplace more often than at the dining table? Then why devote valuable space to a dining room which is used only occasionally. Do your friends naturally gravitate to the kitchen? Then why not think of planning a living-kitchen area?

These are some of the things to consider when thinking of ways to organize or reorganize the indoor living areas of your home for fun and relaxation.

GENERAL PLANNING

Draw up individual activity charts for each member of the family. These would include regular or occasional activities carried

on in the home, hobbies requiring physical props and space, listening, viewing or reading habits, social life.

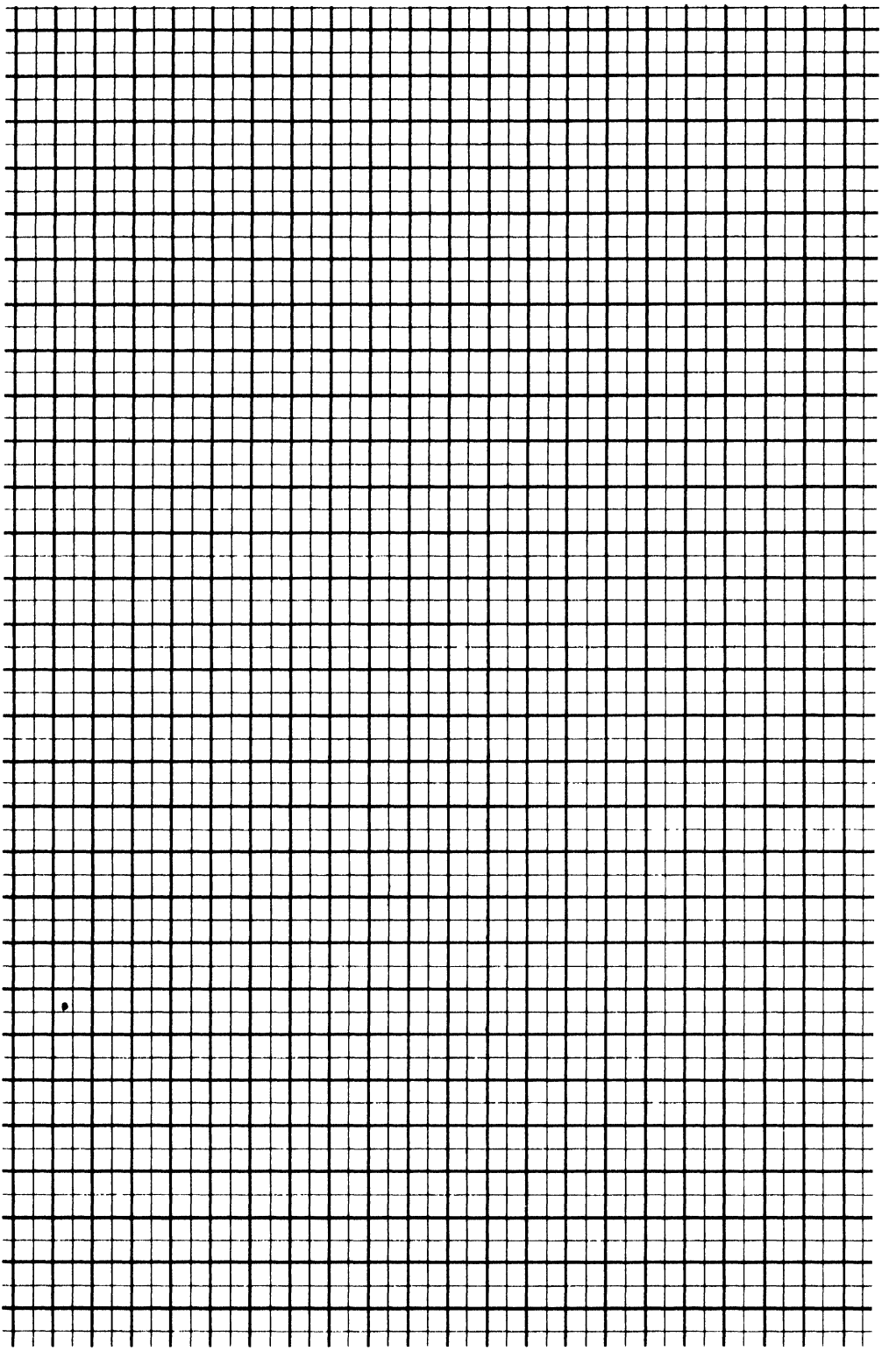
Next, prepare a "use" chart for each room. These would list the ways in which members of the family use or need to use each of the rooms. Also the hours and days of the week certain rooms are customarily in use.

Now compare the activity and use charts. Figure out how to arrange things so that every member of the family will get a fair share of play space, rooms will be used to best advantage, and conflicts reduced to a minimum. How many activities can be provided for in the living room? How many in other areas—bedrooms, children's sleeping quarters, den, kitchen, foyer, basement and/or attic (if these are available)? Following this procedure, which is based on suggestions by Anne Mason, you should make a good start towards effective planning.

A good part of the secret of making a room playworthy is in the arrangement of furniture. You can save wear and tear on your muscles and nerves, floor, carpet and walls, by doing your experimental moving on paper. Use the grid on page 66, or draw up a larger one to represent the area of your room. First sketch the position of all doors, archways and fixtures, electrical outlets and anything else that will not or cannot be changed or remodeled. Next make cardboard cut-outs of furniture, equipment and contemplated built-ins to the same scale as the grid. Move these around until you've worked out a plan that uses the space in the most-efficient and attractive way.

Do all this in the room itself so that you can check physical features with your eye as you go along. You'll find, by the way, that there will be more space in the room than appears to be on the grid. Color, decor and the overall finished effect may be hard to visualize, but such pre-planning will save you a lot of trouble.

Keep the activity and use charts handy as you move the cutouts around on the grid. Try to divide the room into different corners or sections suitable for the various activities that will be carried on there. Room dividers are helpful for this purpose. (See photograph, Fig. 42, page 67). These are a sort of combination storage wall and free-standing furniture. Some come with drop-leaf ledges



Grid (see page 67)

that can be used for a work surface. Their outstanding advantage is that you can use them from both sides.

A low bookcase might indicate the dividing line between areas or a table, a storage unit, and so on. Be sure you leave enough space in each section and plenty of leg room in the front of the seats. If you can allow for passageways which make it unnecessary to cross one section in order to reach another, all the better. It will mean less cleaning.

Try to plan so that areas for quiet pursuits are removed from those where there is more activity or sound. In a small room it helps if a few rules are observed. Speaker volume should be turned down, for instance, if someone else needs to use the room for something that requires concentration.

Fig. 42 — A room divider

LIGHTING

We know that good lighting is important in a room, but few of us appreciate that it depends as much on decorations, paint, upholstery, draperies and furniture as on the kind of lamps and fixtures used.

For close visual work, stamp collecting, reading and games, a permanently located lamp in the area of your work is usually the best idea. The bulb should be no smaller than 150 watts. Illuminating engineers recommend a lamp which lets much of its light come down through a glass bowl, is densely shaded from the side view and is open at the top to allow the light to hit the ceiling. One or two lamps should be turned on elsewhere in the room. This helps to light up the background and so reduces sharp contrasts which tend to strain the eyes. For the same reason doctors recommend that TV not be viewed in the dark.

Light walls, light decorations and light furniture also reduce contrasts. A lighting expert, R. H. Biesele, has described his ideal room—from an illumination standpoint—as having bleached wood furniture, light cheery upholstery, natural finished hardwood floors, a beige carpet, soft light gray green walls, and light woodwork.

For dining, conversation, listening to music and such, lower lighting levels are better. Some people have installed rheostat-controlled lighting, an idea borrowed from the theatre, which can be dimmed or brought up as needed.

A tip: It may be temping to rely on fluorescents for all of your lighting, particularly because they use less electricity. But lighting experts advise that some incandescent lights be mixed in with them. It helps the quality of illumination.

If very young children are going to roam the room, be careful about the placement of floor and table lamps and exposed wiring and outlets. There are safety outlets available which protect against dangerous poking and exploring.

A FAMILY LIVING-PLAYROOM

If there is space enough in your home to set one room aside as a formal "Sunday best" parlor where the family can show off its treasured possessions, fine. But in many homes, in apartments particu-

larly, reserving a living room for display is an impossible luxury. The main room is called on to be the setting for a variety of family activities. It may have to provide for lounging, reading, video, music-listening, music-making, hobbies, games, entertaining, homework, sewing, and countless other things. It is simply a matter of sound, practical intelligence to set up your room best to serve your family life—to create the kind of place you want to escape to, not from, when seeking fun and relaxation.

A decorator was once asked what his idea of a really liveable main room was. "I could use words like beautifully utilitarian," he said, "but I'm not sure that would convey my thoughts. I could say that except for bathrooms and closets, I'd like to see one big space with partitions of sound-deadening material rolled down from the ceiling as and when necessary to divide this large area into sleeping quarters and separate rooms. There would be a minimum of furniture and every stick of it logical, graceful and hostile to dust. But the great majority of us are at least a generation away from such a concept of easy and spacious living, so I'll just call it an ideal.

"I could tell you what an unsuccessful apartment is, however. A small family that lives above me has one. I know that even though I've never been in it. Any evening they have people over for some fun—and that's pretty often—there is the sound of scraping and creaking and heavy furniture being moved about. Later on I hear that furniture laboriously being moved back into place again. It seems to me there's something wrong with furnishings that are so out-of-joint with a family's way of living."

How should a main room that needs to serve play and other purposes be furnished?

If it is to be a center of family relaxation, then every foot needs to be used to best advantage. Now that doesn't necessarily mean clutter. Charm and beauty do not have to be sacrificed to utility and a "live as we please" philosophy. An attractive built-in music wall, a games cabinet topped by bookshelves, and other such multipurpose furnishings that double or triple in brass can be quite decorative of their own accord. They can replace several other pieces of furniture that have limited use.

SPACE SAVERS AND BUILT-INS

Think of your room in 3-D when you plan it—length, width and height. The dimension that is most often neglected is the area that runs from floor to ceiling. Built-ins, wall storage units and shelves can go there. These can be bought, built to your specifications by a carpenter, or worked up as a home project. Making them yourself can bring costs down often as much as two thirds. They are easier to construct than furniture pieces since they generally require no intricate joints or dowels. They can be built so that you can take them along when moving.

The photograph below shows one wall combination an amateur builder might put together. These are individual units which when placed together form a bookcase, desk, and shelves for play and refreshment articles. Notice the radio and TV set-up. Using a few basic hand tools and plywood, you can construct one unit at a time, adding sections as desired.

Doesn't this make more sense in a living playroom than a lot of separate pieces of furniture which just stand around and look beautiful?

Fig. 43 – A wall built-in

Adjustable shelf units offer another way of putting wall space to work for your benefit. Take the "shelf maker," for instance. You buy wrought iron frames with drilled screw holes. You make your own shelvings out of wood and fasten them into the frames. You can form a wall storage unit for toys, curios, magazines, a radio and books. (See below.)

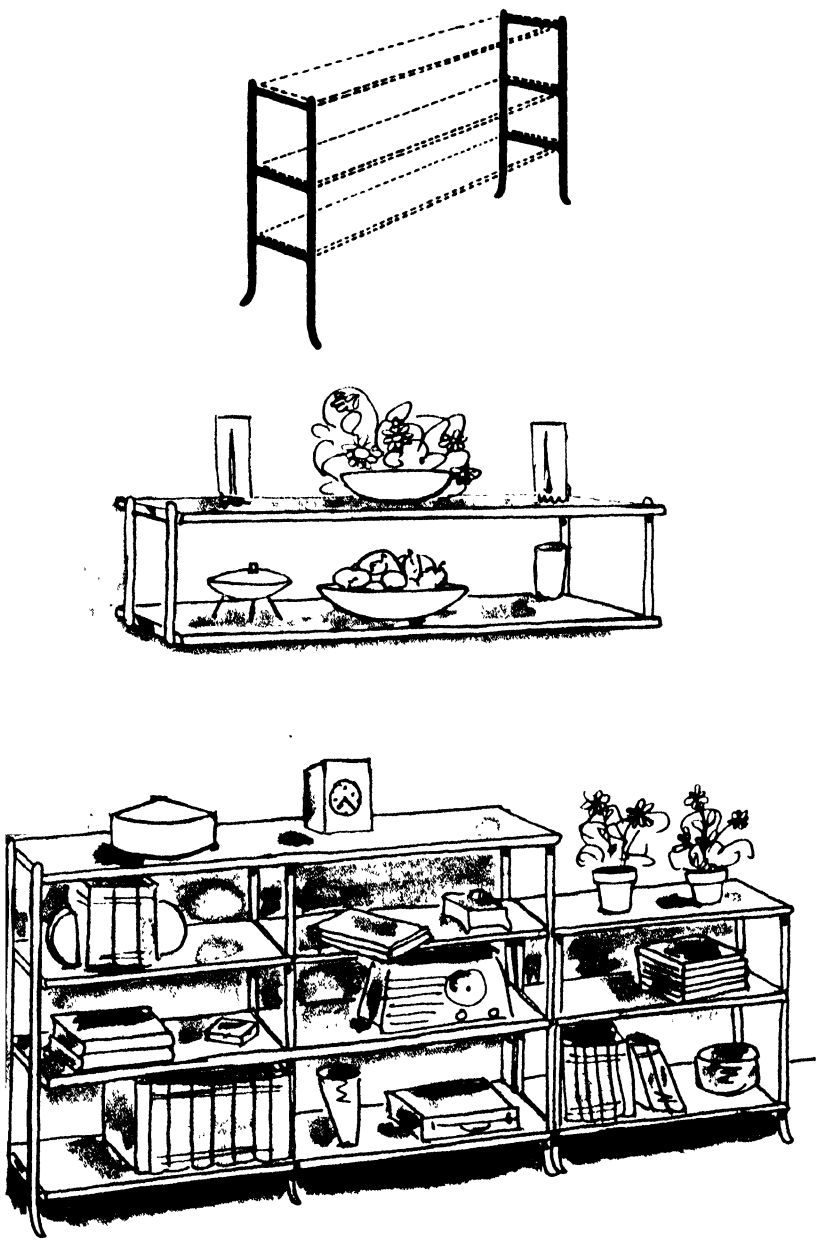


Fig. 44 — Adjustable shelves

There is even an arrangement where you snap poles with springs into place between floor and ceiling and add shelves as high as you wish. Another shelf idea involves laying board planks across columns of glass bricks or cinder blocks, row by row. A shade or draw screen conceals it if you wish.

Wall units have other advantages. Your carpeting need only extend up to the unit. It means that much less moving of furniture when cleaning.

Speaking of rugs, the kind and sizes you put down depend upon the use your room gets. If there's dancing at your parties, you'll want something that can be rolled up out of the way easily. With young children or pets you'd be wise to have a durable, hard-to-soil, but not hard-to-clean covering so that they can romp, and play on it without risking your displeasure. That goes for slip-covers or upholstery material as well.

Select your furniture with an eye towards using it in more than one way. You can have a table which sits in one corner as a decorative piece when not in use. Need it for a game or refreshments? Pull it away from the wall, drop a raised leaf, and draw up chairs. For a group game, add another leaf or two. Make it a surface for hobby work by placing a protective pad on it.

If you have the space for it, you can set up a "friendly rivalry" corner featuring a permanently set-up games table like the one shown in the diagram, see Fig. 45. It comes with a slide-away checkerboard, and a drawer for cards, score pads and pencils, checkers and chess men. Flanking chairs offer a permanent invitation for play.

A coffee table may be just a coffee table and a source of unhappiness if young children clamber all over it or mar the surface with wheeled toys. Or, it can be a durable, double-duty piece containing, for instance, a radio, record-player, and records. A lock makes the innards proof against tampering by small fry. The top will resist cigarette burns, spilled drinks and rough child's play if it is made of a substance such as Formica, which, incidentally, can be installed with only simple tools and no more pressure than a rolling pin. This is a good thing to remember when you need a rugged surface.

Pressed for space to pursue his photography hobby one man built a unit that looks like an attractive piece of wall furniture when not

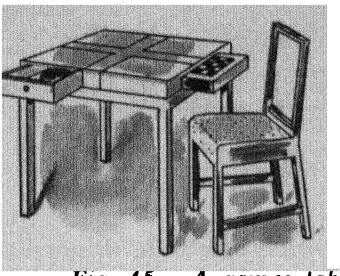


Fig. 45 – A games table

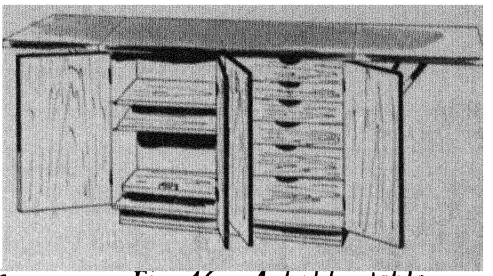


Fig. 46 – A hobby table

in use. Opened it becomes a work table, hinged drop-leaf sides being raised to extend the surface. It houses screens for drying enlargements, a print press, trimming board, drawers for chemicals, and more. The whole thing is mounted on casters for mobility. It's an idea that can be adapted to other play uses. (See Fig. 46).

Does TV watching sometimes necessitate shifting of furniture in your living room? You can eliminate that nuisance (and physical strain as well) by mounting the set on a castered stand so that it can be turned in any direction. A swivel-table allows you to do the same thing. Swivel mechanisms can be bought separately enabling you to make your own stand. The picture below shows a stock TV set that pivots on window rollers.

Fig. 47 – A music wall and swivel TV

COLOR

Color won't make a living room more playable, but since—as has been pointed out in an earlier chapter—it does have a psychological effect, it's worthy of mention.

A related color scheme where hues blend gently into one another is a relaxing influence. Contrasts, on the other hand, are exciting. Greens and yellow greens relax most people more than other colors. Shades of red and orange have a stimulating effect. These are simplifications, but they point up the importance of learning how to employ color effectively.

Too, color can be a means of giving your living playroom a sense of pleasing unity—other means being style of wood, motif, design or period. And with the wide variety of paints and wallpapers on the market today you can have your room just about the way you want it in color—and design. You can have outdoor scenes, Victorian patterns or comic figures. You can have designs that simulate pine paneling, bamboo, or bricks.

If very young children will be romping about your living playroom and you're worried about what grimy little fingers will do to your cheerful walls, have the paint or wallpaper of the washable sort. It's possible to coat ordinary wallpaper with a transparent liquid plastice to give it years-long protection. You can easily do that yourself.

COMBINING HOBBIES WITH DECORATIONS AND ACCESSORIES

Well chosen decorations and accessories can add charm, beauty and individuality to a living playroom. The best are those which reflect the family's tastes and interests.

A living room and foyer of a certain big city apartment are alive with decorative touches produced by the family that resides there. Dad is an insurance adjustor who finds emotional outlets in taking "junk" and making ornamental useful items out of it. Mother and two teen-age daughters join him in projects from time to time. The results are something to see.

Tin pie plates, for instance, have been attractively painted and grouped in a tasteful arrangement of wall plaques. A pair of old-fashioned flatirons were transformed into eye-catching bookends.

Bottles and empty frozen orange juice cans were turned into objects of beauty and utility. The transformation was accomplished with oil paints and raffia—resulting in such items as a pencil container, vase, decorative lamp.

The work on these things is done in the living room. But you'd never suspect it unless the workings of two pieces of furniture are explained to you. The first is a built-in wall unit that runs under two windows on one side of the room—a space that is generally wasted. Between the windows the unit extends upward part way to the ceiling. This section contains two compartments with doors which open downward and lock into a horizontal position, like a secretary-type desk. A board placed across the two doors forms a good-sized working surface. Paints and other supplies are stored within the compartments. The rest of the unit houses games, books, and even a fold-away bridge table.

The second piece of furniture is a bench with foam rubber padding covered in denim. The front side consists of hinged woven-strap doors concealing storage space. Inside the bench deep trays rest on racks. They have finger grips so that they can be easily slid out. Work is done right on these trays and unfinished projects can be put away just as they are. The woven strap doors provide ventilation permitting painted objects to dry faster.

Hobby interests may be tied in with living playroom decorating in other ways. Collecting, for instance, is made to order for it. Seashells can be mounted attractively in shadow boxes on the wall. In one family room, groupings of butterflies, fixed on a background of white velvet and framed behind glass, form a striking center of attraction. In another home colorfully wrapped hotel soap bars—souvenirs of Father's traveling salesman tours—have been mounted and framed like so many trophies. They add a surprisingly decorative touch and what a conversation piece they make.

Anne Mason has pointed out that extensive collections can be shown to best advantage by being displayed on shelves of setting-off hues. Barn red for ironstone or milk glass, pine for the earthy tones of early American slipware, velvety black for silver, geranium red for pewter. A row of old glass candy-store jars on the mantle or trivets over the fireplace would form interesting arrangements.

Well chosen pictures and decorative touches can add so much to the relaxing quality of a room that your selections should be made with as much thought as you would give to a collection hobby. Remember that you and your family will have to live with these things day in and day out. Friends and visitors don't.

Learn how to frame and group pictures attractively. For instance small pictures gain emphasis by being mounted on a mat. The materials and style of the frames should harmonize with the color scheme and style of the room. Pictures should be arranged in a way that conforms in size to the wall area and furniture. They needn't hang in pairs or match in shape, size or theme. As long as you group them so that they form a fairly regular square or rectangular arrangement.

Eye level is the most comfortable height but much depends on the proportions of the room and furniture in it. Pictures hung at an angle to each other (except on a stairway) create a feeling of unrest.

There is a picture frame, by the way, which doubles as a home movie screen. Zip down a screen over the picture like a window shade, and presto there is a blank white surface for showing color slides of that trip through the Rockies, or movies of Junior's first steps.

NATURE IN THE LIVING PLAYROOM

Greenery and plants bring a freshening touch of nature to a room, and tending and growing them can be a vitalizing hobby. But plants need care; the more of them you have, the more of your time will be taken up. Sickly or untended plants give a room a frowzy look. The diagram on page 77 (Fig. 48) shows a window treatment which gives you space for planting, conceals a radiator, and provides shelves for books and other items.

If you'd like to keep plants, but can't find space for them inside, boxes and pots may be placed on ledges fastened to the house wall right outside your window. Some people even grow plants in hanging wicker baskets there. (Out-of-the-window planting is not a recommended activity for very young children, of course.)

Chemical no-soil planting is one of the ways in which you can garden indoors. A simple juvenile variation is growing bird seed in

egg shells or other containers filled with sawdust. A sweet potato sprout is another good plant for youngsters. Giving a child a plant of his own to grow adds to his sense of responsibility and helps him to appreciate the miracle of growth.

And if he enjoys surprises—or you for that matter—get some woodland soil, put it into a large glass jar with a cover. It needs no tending. The fun is to see what will grow from the wild seeds hidden in the soil.

Fig. 48 — A combination window built-in

Dogs and cats are, of course, the most favored pets for grownups and kids alike—because of the companionship they provide and psychological and emotional needs they fill. But housebreaking and caring for a dog or cat can present problems in a small apartment.

It's worth while having a pet—particularly if there are children in the family. If it can't be a dog or a cat, consider a fish or a bird, which are easier to keep in a living playroom. A parakeet, for instance, (if you're lucky enough to get hold of a bright one) will provide you and the family with much amusement, in and out of the cage. With patience and application, you may even teach him a bird-sized vocabulary. A bird cage doesn't take up much space.

Nor does the average tank for tropical fish. Watching these colorful creatures glide about in the green tinged water has a strangely calming effect. Aquariums can be decorative. One type, for instance, can be built into a coffee table. Another hangs on a wall like a picture in a frame.

A FIREPLACE FOR RELAXATION

Poet William Cowper spoke of "fireside enjoyments and home-born happiness."

In building a home try to have the plans include an indoor fireplace as well as an outdoor one. If you already have one in your living room, put it to use when the weather is cool and don't mind the bother. It's worth it, not so much for its warmth—modern heating is much more efficient—as for the cheer and relaxation a crackling open fire induces. Marshmallow toasting, wiener or chestnut roasting, corn popping, story-telling, singing—these are fireside activities that have few equals as family cement. Or, you can just sit and gaze into a fire and dream.

A fireplace that draws well, doesn't smoke, and is constructed to make cleaning easy should cause you little trouble. If you have no fireplace, and can't stand the cost of installing a brick or masonry one, consider prefabs. These cost from $100 to $300. They connect to flue openings with stovepipes. You can see such a fireplace in the left side of the photograph showing the music-wall and swivel TV. (See Fig. 47 on page 73.)

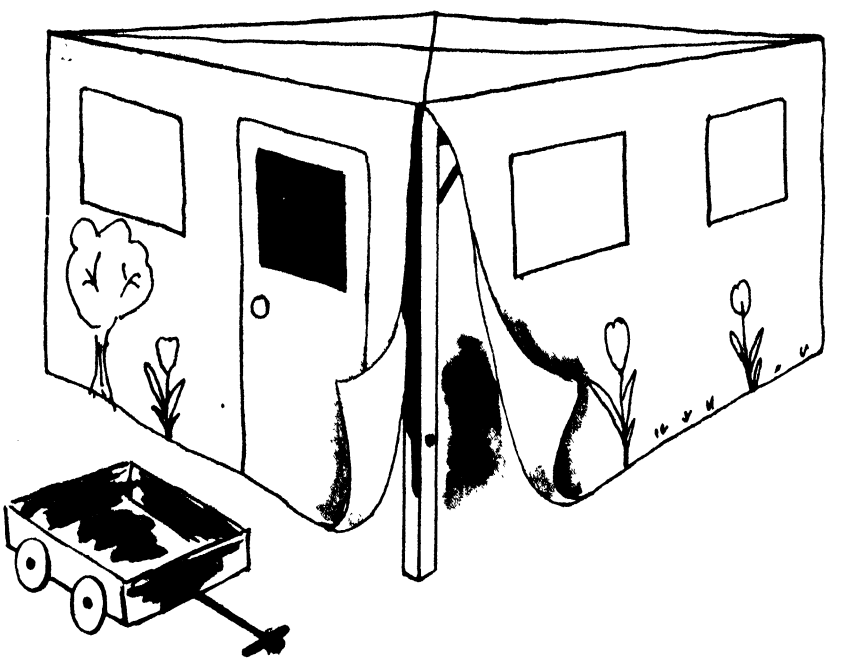


Fig. 49 — Card table playhouse

JUNIOR PLAY SPOTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

The modern apartment has been described by Mrs. Adele S. Mossler, director of New York's Play Schools Association, as a "kind of miniature living from which the child, once old enough, must be pushed out if he wants to have fun, make noise, play with friends. Television and radio, which requires no space, are the common recreational denominator."

That is too often true. Yet even if a home isn't big enough for a child to make noise and play with his friends there are at least a few feet of space that can be made available for fun on his own. For instance, a card table can be set up in the living room with an old bed sheet draped over it to make a playhouse. A door flap can be cut out in the sheet and suitable designs stitched or pasted on. (See Fig. 49.)

Not only card tables but fold-away furniture generally are a boon to parents hungry for play space for their young ones. In one family a couple of old camp stools were refinished. Dad made two trays to fit their top out of tempered hardboard. When the kids want a surface for play or art work the stools are set up and the trays put on them. Later the stools are folded up and put away with the trays in a space behind a book case. Sometimes a stool and tray are also used to hold a games board or Mother's sewing basket.

Regular fold-away tables with scratch and dirt resisting surfaces have varied uses. A single one may be used for, let's say, clay modeling, finger-painting, craftwork or a game. Put two of them together and they form a base for toy train trackage. Tilt an open table on a side and it makes the stage for a puppet show. The puppeteers work behind the table top and between the open legs. They hold the puppets up over the edge of the table. We've already seen how a card table can be made to serve as a playhouse or hide-away.

Most parents don't relish the idea of a young child rampaging all over the living room in play. And it's hard to blame them. But it's usually possible to set aside a spot in the living room he can regard as his private domain, even if temporarily. This should be done even if there is play space for him in his bedroom. Shutting a child off from use of the living room at all times creates tensions and doesn't contribute to his feeling of belonging.

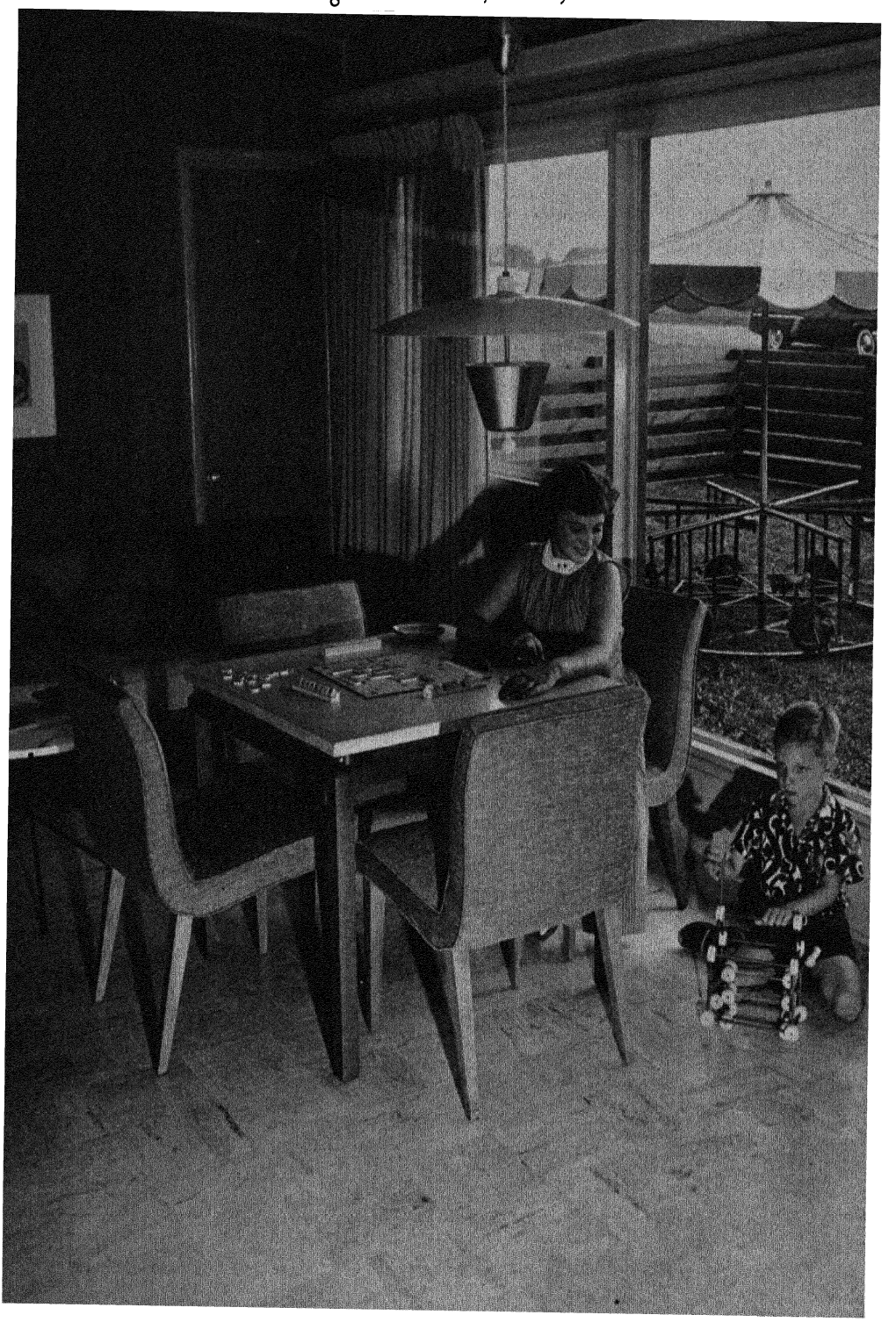


***Fig. 50 – Fun** corner in living room looking out on play yard*

His fun area might be a sunny corner near a window and behind a large piece of furniture. Here you might lay down a rubber mat, a piece of rugged carpeting, denim, linoleum or some other material to establish his province—and protect the floor. The walls in this area can be safeguarded with strips of butcher paper, washable wallpaper or the like. If he's at the scrawl and scribble stage, he can mark up these surfaces to his heart's content.

A soft board material known as Homasote can be affixed to the wall for picture pinning. An orderly array of large envelopes and a couple of shoe boxes may also be fastened to it. There, toys, art materials, blunt cutout scissors and so on can be kept.

In one home, part of a window seat that extends along most of the wall is reserved as a little girl's play surface in the living room. There is storage space underneath for a few playthings.

In another home, a little fellow has the use of the multipurpose affair shown in the diagram below. (Fig. 51.) The toy chest has two compartments, each with its own well-hinged lid. A board is attached to the wall over the toy chest. On its underside (the side showing when in the up position), half of the board has a square of cork for picture pin-ups. The other half has been treated with blackboard paint so that it may be chalked on. Let the board down

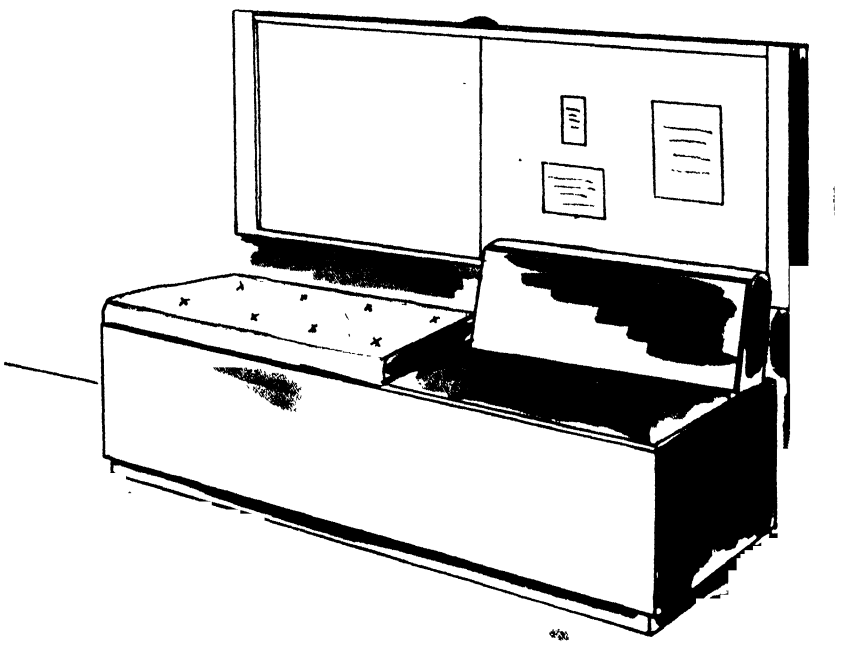


Fig. 51 — Multipurpose seat, toy chest, and play unit for child

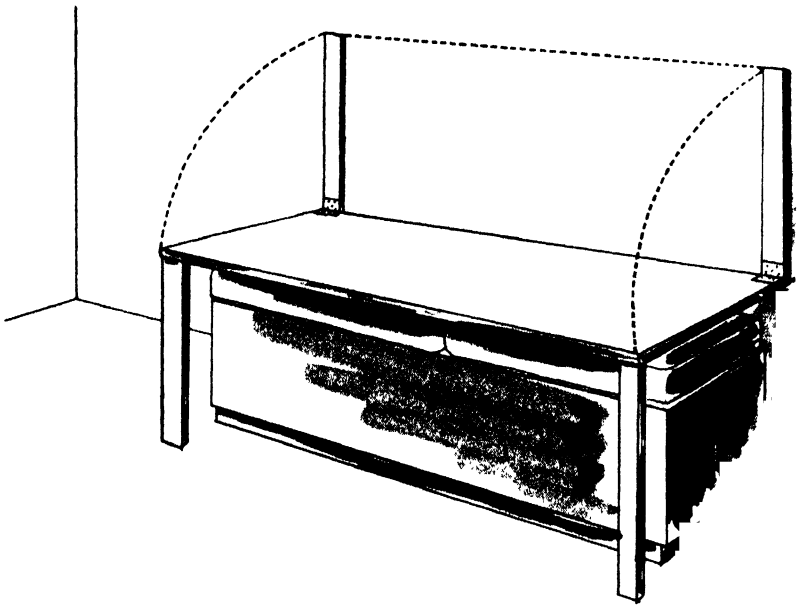


Fig. 51a — Multipurpose unit with legs down forms play table

on its folding legs and it becomes a play surface. The toy chest can be used as a seat.

When Junior isn't using this play corner, it's shut off with an attractive screen that blends in with the decor of the room. You might wish to utilize such a chest as extra seating. In that case upholster the lids and set the box on casters.

A National Recreation Association bulletin describes a "Peter Pan" playhouse for a small city apartment. It consists of a five-foot high screen with three broad wings, not too heavy to be carried about but still strong and firm. A door is cut in the middle panel that has good hinges and a real lock and key. The side wings have window openings with paste-ups of rose vines and flower boxes, or the decorations might suggest a garage, boat, space-ship or whatever. This screen, which can be home-built, may easily be set up in the living room and just as easily put away. And what a fun-setting it provides for a youngster's imagination.

If at all possible, provide some storage place in the living room where the small one can park a few toys. Allot him a little space in places where grownups keep their articles of play and relaxation. Make room for a few of his records in the family record cabinet, for

two or three of his books in the family book case. Anything that bolsters his feeling of family identification and helps him develop a sense of orderliness is all to the good.

One more thing. If you have a toddler who is at the explore and pull-down stage, put valuables or breakables out of his reach until he is older. It'll be much easier on your nerves than shrieking "don't" at him constantly or worrying about what damage he will do next.

JUNIOR'S OWN PLAY ROOM

A "room of my own" is a prized possession for a youngster. And if it is more than just a room to sleep in, if it is also a place where he can spread himself in fun and joyful activity, then it is a treasure indeed. The ideal playroom would be solely devoted to that purpose. It would be a place where a sprout could take his friends and play out of the way of household traffic. But since that isn't always possible, let's see what can be done to give a child's sleeping quarters more playability.

DESIGNING THE ROOM

Junior rooms have three types of inhabitants: the child up to school age, the school-goer and budding teenager, and the adolescent and young man or miss. Sometimes the room is shared by two members of the younger set. Sometimes there is a corner set off as a den for Dad or a sewing spot for Mother.

But no matter what variations are introduced, we must never lose sight of the main point, and that is that the four walls of a child's room enclose his private world. It should be designed to suit *his* needs and activities and not according to Aunt Matilda's idea of what is cute—or yours.

Joseph Aronson, distinguished architect and designer, has named these common deficiencies in the child's room:

1) Drab wall colors. 2) Dangerously sharp corners. 3) Inadequate storage. 4) Not enough room for vigorous physical play. 5) Improper wall coverings and use of wall surface.

To these might be added improper flooring. The wrong kind of accessories in the decorations. The wrong kind of furniture. Bad

lighting. The wrong kind of play equipment. Insufficient safeguards. And last, but by no means least, insufficient planning for the child's growth and changes of interest.

COLOR

If a room is not as sunny as it might be, light colors should be used on the walls. White is not desirable because it reflects too much light. But light greys, ivory and semi-gloss eggshell are good. They form a neutral background for bright colors in accessories and furniture.

Some decorators would eschew too vivid color schemes since they feel that some children have an unconscious dislike for certain colors. But most believe in lively hues and feel they fit in better with a child's play life. Aronson has used yellow, turquoise, deep marine blue, rich blue greens for the rooms of small fry. Other designers have employed fruit and vegetable hues such as tangerine, lemon, avocado, plum, nut brown. Subtler colors and pastels, in the opinion of such decorators, belong to teen years.

LIGHTING

Proper and adequate lighting is of vital importance to young eyes. Areas where quiet play is carried on—coloring, cutouts, modeling and so on—should receive plenty of illumination.

Lamps that can easily be knocked over or reached represent a danger to the young bouncer and scurrier. For him wall or ceiling fixtures or pin-up lamps with bright bulbs and non-glare shades are safer. And be sure that electrical wall outlets are of the safety kind.

FLOOR

Safety and durability are the governing factors here. A smooth-boarded floor needs little more than a coating of tough but non-slip varnish (no glossy waxing, please). A sturdy plain linoleum covering is good because it permits the chalking of play diagrams which can be wiped off easily. Inlaid linoleum comes with game insets. Plastic tile is a practical covering; it resists marking up and cleans easily. There are lovely tiles on the market which you can install yourself. When one section wears out it can be replaced without tearing up the whole covering.

Rugs bring a touch of coziness to a child's room and provide a comfortable place for crawling or physical activity. They help deaden sound, too — no minor consideration if there is an apartment or living room below. There are colorful rag rugs and ones made of cork, fiber and rubber. You can get a composition material rug which is virtually child-proof. Bear in mind that patterned rugs conceal spots better than plain ones. For the younger child leave plenty of bare floor area for construction play and wheeled toys. And if you use scatter rugs on a smooth floor treat the undersides against skidding.

WALLS

As has been noted elsewhere there are washable roll-on paints available and wall paper that can take a beating. All or part of the walls might be covered with wood paneling, rumpus-room style. You can cover the lower parts of the walls with Marlite, an inexpensive simulated tile which make an inviting doodling surface for crayons but cleans easily.

Grass cloth or Homasote can be attached to one wall for pinning up cutouts and pictures. A square of Armorboard or tempered hardboard treated with chalk-board paint will take all the artistic efforts a youngster can apply to it with very little sign of wear. Cheaper than a regular blackboard, too.

However you cover the walls it's easy to dress them up with cutouts or decaled strips of paper. These can be changed at will without much trouble.

FURNITURE

It hardly pays to invest in costly and eye-catching furniture whose chief recommendation is novelty or cuteness. Nor is it wise to bring in worn-out adult stuff that is completely out of scale to a youngster's size. Furniture for a child's room should be bought or constructed with the future in mind. It's sensible and economical, for instance, to have furniture with legs that can be lengthened to keep pace with a child's growth.

Begin with a few basic pieces, a bed and storage space for toys and clothes. Add a bench later, a work table and other things as

needed. Leave ample floor space, away from the traffic lane, where the room's denizen can romp or leave toy lineups, unfinished construction or other projects.

You can exploit space in a small room to the fullest by using only things that have more than one purpose. For example: A bunk bed which sits on the floor and has two large roll-out drawers for storage of large toys.

A stool and work table made as a single unit. The stool swings out from underneath the table and the child sits astride it.

A storage cupboard with a drop-leaf panel that affords a surface for arts or crafts work.

A blackboard which flips off the wall to form a table top. (See the suggestion on pages 81 and 82, Figs. 51 and 51a.)

A large hollow box mounted on casters which can be used as a wagon. Upside down it is a climbing aid, or can be padded as a seat, or have a checker board diagram.

A miniature stairway with space for open toy storage. (See diagram below.)

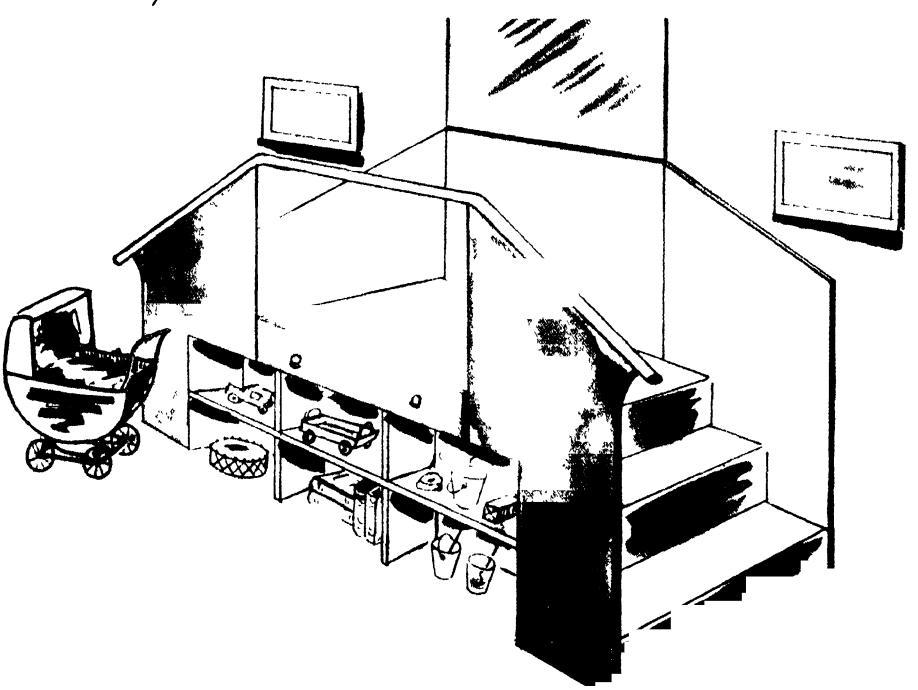


Fig. 52 – Miniature stairway with toy storage

A built-in which has a work surface, shelves for books and toys, a place for a record player, and end compartment for a fish tank.

A work table which consists of a large square board atop a box-like base which has a door. The base is hollow and can be a "cave" (it has a window in one side for ventilation), or a garage for a velocipede or wheeled toys.

A fold-away model railroad which swings down from the wall for use. When not in use, train sets and accessories are stored on shelves. (See diagram below, Fig. 53). The back of the base can serve as a bulletin board in the closed position.

Most such things can be built in a home workshop out of stock lumber, plywood and hardboard or even fruit and soap boxes. (Some sources for ideas are at end of chapter).

These are the points to bear in mind about the furniture that goes into a child's room: It should be as functional as possible. . . . It should work for the child's comfort and pleasure. . . . Chairs should be low enough so that the youngster's legs reach the floor. Chair backs should provide firm support and not press on his spine. . . . Tables and work surfaces should be of a height that doesn't require too much stooping or stretching. They should be topped with a hard wearing material such as heavy-duty linoleum or Formica.

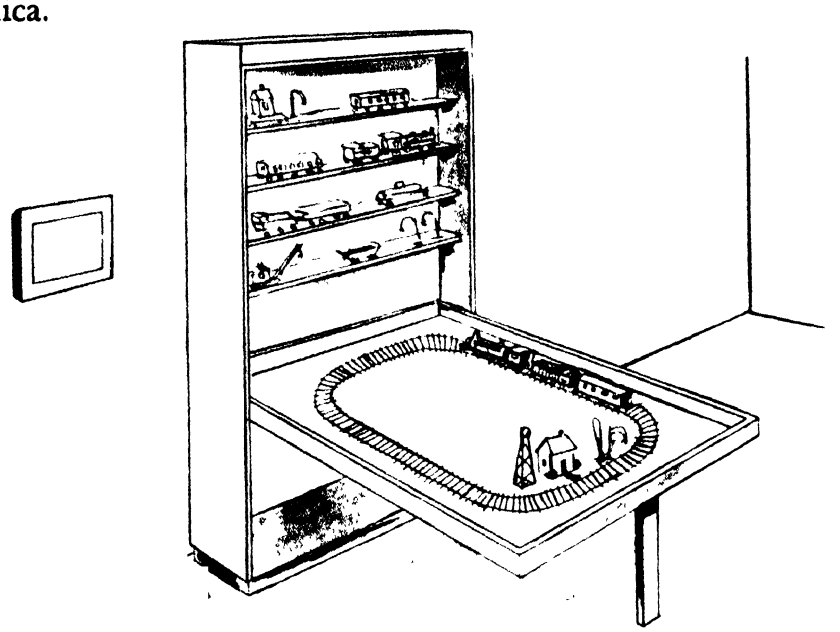


Fig. 53 — Fold-away train unit

For safety all juvenile furniture should have rounded corners or edges. . . . For conservation (of pieces and housekeeper's nerves) everything—tables, chairs, closets, shelves—should have several coats of plastic paint or lacquer. This will give them protection against grimy fingers and banging around.

STORAGE

Lots of put-away space is much more conducive to orderliness in a juvenile room than any amount of threats or bribes.

Some decorators lean heavily on the use of drawers, closed bins and the like for housing toys and childish treasures. These do make the room look neater but there are disadvantages. Drawers tend to stick or may be hard for a child to pull out—unless they are made friction-free or are mounted on rollers. Thus he may not bother to put his things away in them at all. Even if he uses drawers he tends to throw his belongings into them any old way and then complains when he can't find a particular toy next time. The same holds true of bins and other receptacles.

Open-shelf storage is more practical and better suited to a child's play habits. He likes to have a view of his possessions so that he can make selections easily. Besides, shelves are easier to clean and straighten up. And toys displayed on open shelves can be quite decorative of themselves. Very young sprouts can be coaxed to orderliness by painting shelves in different colors—blue for cars, yellow for dolls, green for blocks and construction things and so on. Or the shelves may be identified with decals or pictures.

In setting up shelving be sure that some of it is deep enough to hold larger playthings, paint sets and games. Shelves may be hung on the wall. They may be a part of a radiator-masking window unit. This might include a wide top surface on which the young one can sit, keep plants, line up stuffed animals or dolls, push toy cars. Be sure, though, that the window is safeguarded.

For the older child you might install built-ins, the upper shelves of which may be reached by means of a sturdy stepladder or other safe climbing aid. One idea is to affix a large perforated hardboard to the wall containing hooks or clamps to hold playthings. (See Fig.

54.) Cupboards for teenagers might have louvered doors which are closed when the storage space is not in use.

Shelves or no, there is likely to be a certain amount of dumping in a room for small fry. Have a container handy for that—a toy chest, carton, large knitted bag hanging from a door, or the like. Every once in a while you might check the contents of a catch-all when the sprout is elsewhere. A kind of sediment of broken, outgrown or discarded playthings will probably have settled to the bottom.

Store these away, to be brought out when you have to entertain young visitors who come with their parents. Or give them to the local firehouse to be refurbished for needy youngsters. Or perhaps you can find some use for them around the house. A toy broom, for instance, goes handily with a dust-pan.

But resist the urge to come into your youngster's room two or three times a day "to straighten things up." Unless you're trying to find a way to go crazy. Let the easel and its unfinished art-work stand where it was left. Don't disturb the miniature city of blocks and cars. Leave his favorite toys at the forepart of the shelf even though they're not as beautiful to *you* as the ones in the back.

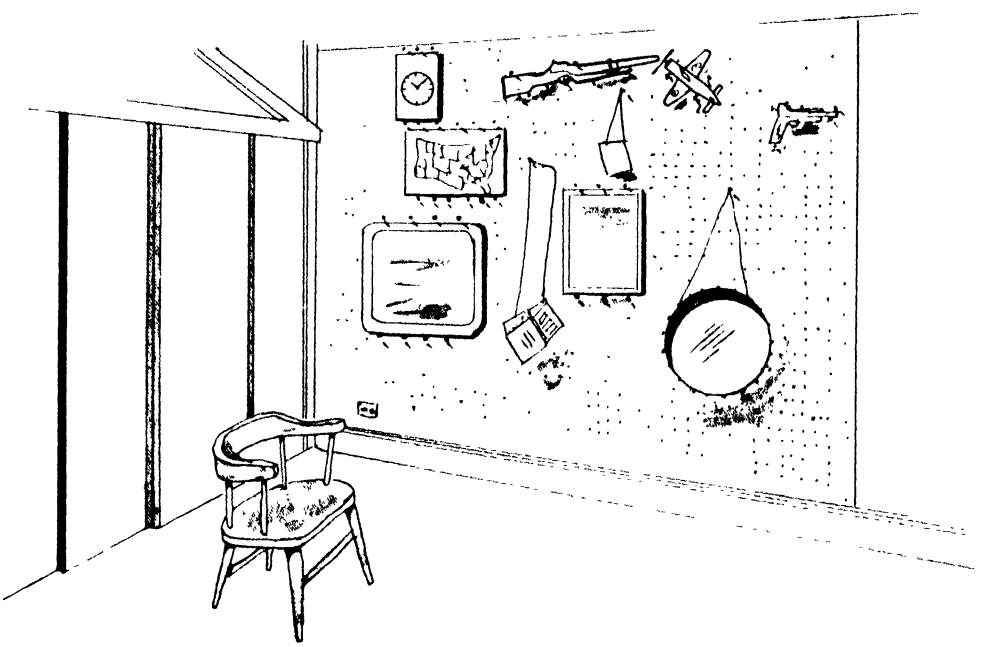


Fig. 54 — Perforated hardboard for toy storage on wall

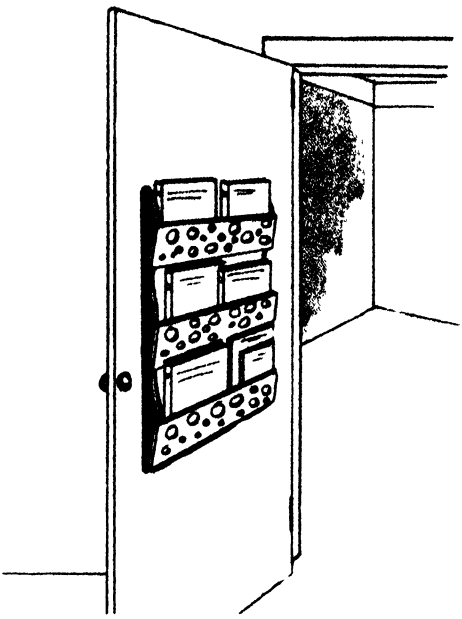


Fig. 55 — Book rack on door

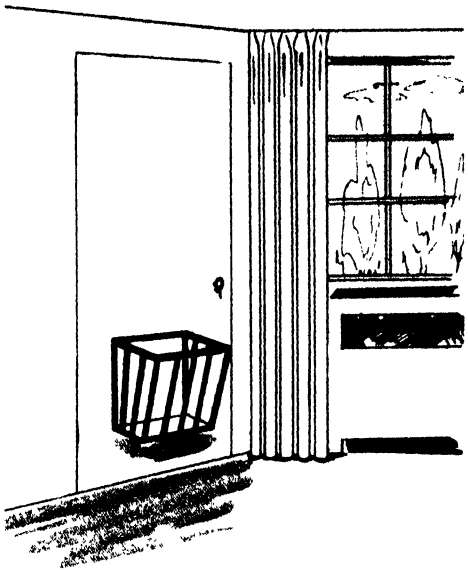


Fig. 56 — Toy container on door

If the sight of a boy's prized collection of "junk" spoils the view for you, do what one mother did. She reached an understanding with her youngster that dead snails, bottle caps and like items would be kept in a special hideaway shelf concealed by draw curtains.

DECORATIONS AND PICTURES

It's a good idea to let an older child have some say about the kind of decorations he'd like to have in his room. If Billy yearns for the atmosphere of a ranch-house or pirate den or Geraldine has her heart set on a Fairy Queen's castle why not play along? You'd be surprised how a few inexpensive decals, cutouts and other simple decorations can help achieve the desired effect. They can always be changed without too much trouble, too.

If there is building to be done let a boy drive a nail, sand an edge, apply paint. Let a girl help select the drapes for her room, sew some stitches, do a little hammering and painting. A child who has actually had a part in fixing up his room is bound to take greater pride in the way it looks and feel a greater incentive to take care of it. Besides, such early experiences in decorating are valuable training for the future.

Get a few good colorful action prints that delight his senses but are not overstimulating. Get some, too, that reflect his current interests, illustrate a favorite story, deal with experiences he's familiar with or arouse his curiosity about other people and other lands. These might come out of magazines, travel folders, or catalogs. By all means display some of his own art efforts —crayons, water colors, finger paints—even though they look like nothing recognizable to you. They have a special meaning for him.

You needn't frame pictures expensively. Mount them on heavy construction paper, tack them on a bulletin board or string them on a colorful ribbon. But have most of them at eye level where he can study them. From time to time they can be changed to provide variety. Clay products or other craft things made by the child can be attractively displayed in shadow-boxes.

PLAYTHINGS

Toys are more than mere articles of amusement to a child. They are also tools of learning and aids to growth.

But before you fill your child's shelves full of playthings you would do well to ask yourself these questions: Am I buying it for him or for myself? . . . Will he really use it? . . . Does it encourage him to play or does it do the playing for him? . . . Does it meet some basic play need—building, creating, making believe, muscle-development? . . . Will it help him develop a valuable skill or satisfy curiosity? . . . Is it within his ability to handle and manipulate, yet not so easy that it will quickly bore him? . . . Am I getting it because I think it will push his learning pace? (No toy can teach a child something he is not ready for) . . . Is there something simpler and not so expensive? . . . Am I overloading him with playthings to salve my conscience or make up for a weak "buddy" relationship?

Certainly a youngster should have a gift of a toy from time to time. And occasionally a novelty gimmick, if it isn't too costly. But more important to him are the meat and potatoes of childhood play —blocks (square, interlocking and unit-building), art materials, dolls and housekeeping stuff, basic wheel toys, equipment for scientific experiments, books, music-makers, exercisers.

Buy only according to his needs. He should own things he can play with alone in his room and some that require play with others and social cooperation. Try to arrange for him to have some apparatus in his room that permits muscle play or release of physical energy. Wide cleats strongly fastened to the side of built-in shelves, for example, will provide a means of safe climbing. One of those knock-around inflated dummies, made of vinyl plastic, will draw off a lot of steam from a restless youngster.

Make a number of playthings for your child yourself—with his help, if possible. Spool toys, sock dolls and other playthings made out of scrap odds and ends have plenty of amusement value. The diagram shows a doll house that gladdened the heart of one little girl in a certain home. It was made out of two orange crates backed by inexpensive beaver-board. The wood was carefully sanded and painted in bright colors. May be adapted for boy's use, too. (See also leads on things to make at end of chapter.)

JUNIOR ROOMS IN TRANSITION

If you plan your youngster's room wisely it will grow with him and put a minimum strain on your pocketbook.

Wall storage units will need little changing. You might want to adjust a shelf here and there or enlarge a cupboard to provide more space for athletic equipment, books or records. (Putting in adjustable shelves originally will even make this part easier.) Legs will be lengthened on work benches and tables and their surfaces perhaps replaced or refinished. Scuff and stain resistant work or play surfaces will be even more important in the middle-child years with their scientific experiments, spilled ink or paint, model building and other busy work.

The diagram, Fig. 57, shows a built-in unit that grows up with the child. The bulletin board will be replaced by a panel that holds tools for a boy teenager's workshop hobby. For a girl it will be replaced with a mirror. The sliding door compartments under the work surface will be taken out to leave space for a vanity stool.

Perhaps you'll bring in an easy chair. Decorations will change to keep pace with changing interests. Junior's room takes on an increasingly masculine look. Daughter's is beginning to show frills

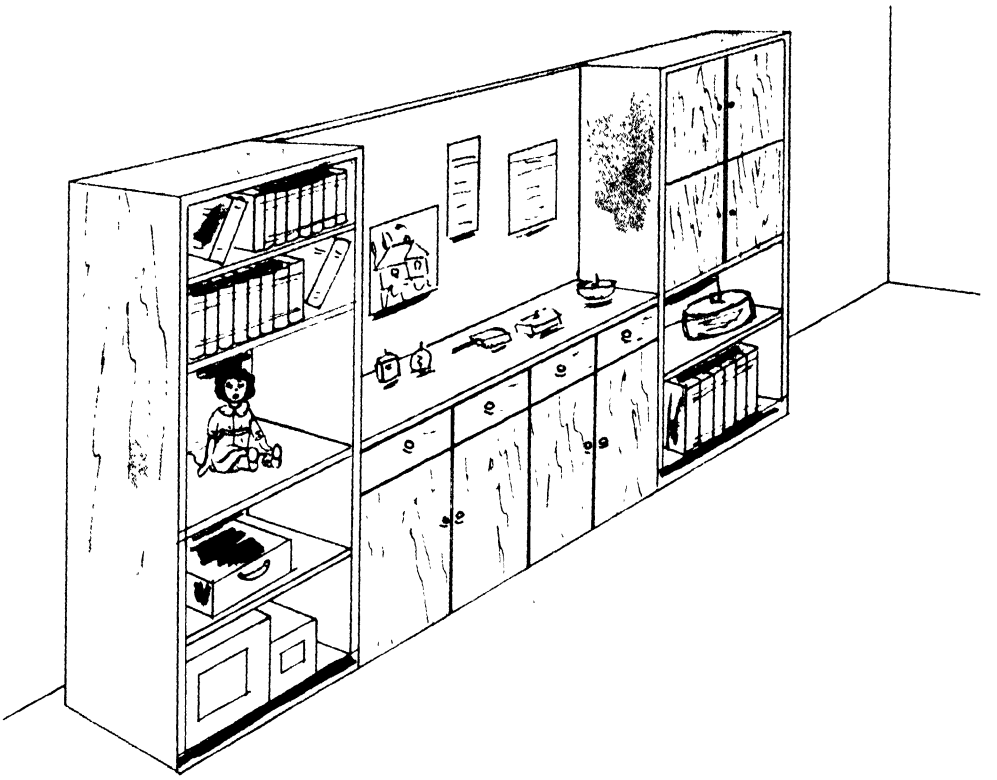


Fig. 57 — Storage unit that grows with child

and ruffles. Boy or girl, the room provides for favorite hobbies, music, lounging or reading, entertaining friends. It will reflect the personality of its inhabitant.

ONE ROOM FOR TWO

When two youngsters have to share a room, it can make for fun or friction depending on how you arrange things. Each should be given his own storage space for playthings. Each has his own worktable, chair, blackboard, and bulletin board (remember these can be made inexpensively). Each should have a few pictures of his own preference in his own corner.

Some clever space-saving sleep set-ups are possible. Double tiered bunks, in which the lower one slides out on rollers for night use, and back again in the morning. Lower and upper train-style bunks, the latter reached by ladder. Beds set side by side in fenced off enclosures. Each bed is reached by its own entrance.

If space permits, beds on opposite sides of the room are perhaps

the best arrangement. If needed—as when one child is ill—the room can be divided by shades or screens or by rolling or sliding panels into place, or by unfolding an accordion type partition. Thus, you create in effect two separate rooms. During the day the center area is kept open to make that floor space available for play. (See photograph below).

With two children of disparate ages or of different sexes a movable partition is an excellent idea from the start. In younger years they can romp and play all over the room when the partition is open. As they grow older, the partition can be permanently closed and each half of the room decorated and furnished according to its owner's needs and preferences.

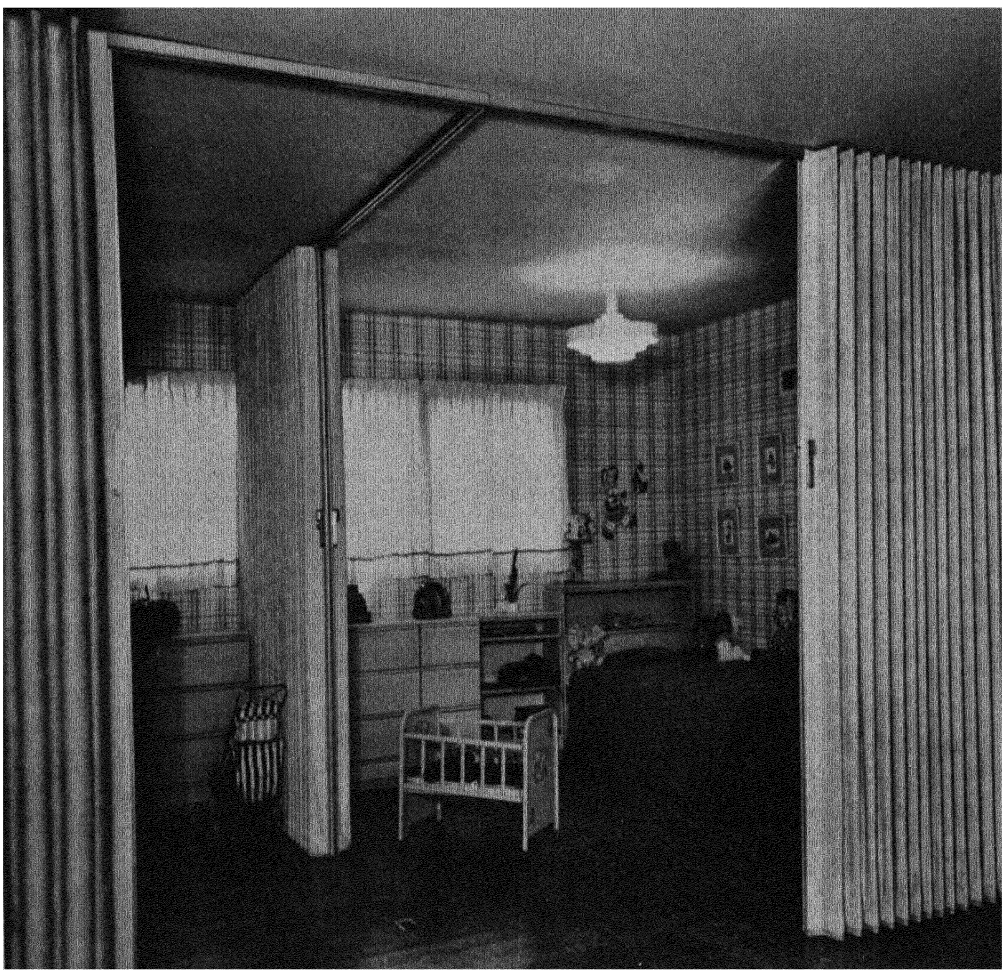


Fig. 58 – Modernfold doors partition room for two children

Fig. 59 – A room set-up for crib-age and older child

SOURCES FOR PLANS

Popular Science Magazine, New York.

Popular Mechanics Magazine, New York.

Make It For Children—50c—Association for Childhood Education, Washington, D.C.—includes plans for furniture, apparatus and toys—work benches, toy boxes, chart racks, play and doll furniture, climbing horse, and so on.

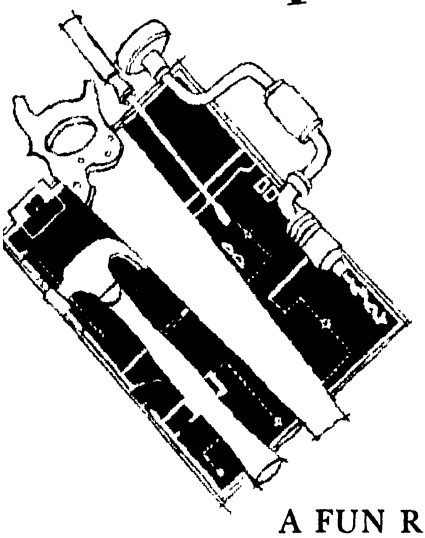
American Toy Institute, New York, 200 Fifth Avenue.

Card-Table Playhouse for Children—Dept. W, Cannon Homemaking Institute, 70 Worth Street, New York City.

Plans for wall combinations, Fig. 43 and Fig. 47, may be obtained from Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma 2, Washington—10c each.

How to Build Children's Toys and Furniture by Norman Cherner, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Space Many People Waste



5

ARE YOU PRESSED FOR PLAY SPACE? LET'S see where you may have overlooked something. Let's go over the rooms and areas that are commonly undeveloped resources for family happiness.

A FUN ROOM IN THE ATTIC

Time was when a house wasn't a house without an attic. With the swing back towards the larger family, the attic is making a comeback, too. If not always as an actual attic, then at least in the form of a room that can be materialized when you want it—the so-called expansion attic.

Suppose we begin with an attic-in-being. You use it at present to store old trunks and things you can't make up your mind to get rid of. It can be turned into a fun area at moderate cost, assuming that it is possible to heat, light and ventilate it properly. It can be finished with knotty pine, insulated wall planking, gypsum wallboard, plywood—in fact with almost any of the materials mentioned on page 44 in our discussion of the basement. Proper insulation will help keep it warm in winter, cool in summer. You can install built-ins and form alcoves for good looks and better utilization of space. Look over the ideas in Chapter 3. A number of these can be adapted for the attic.

Look at the "before" and "after" pictures on page 97. The "after" photo shows what might be a teen-age or adult fun room. The closet wall at right contains a shelf for records and books, also

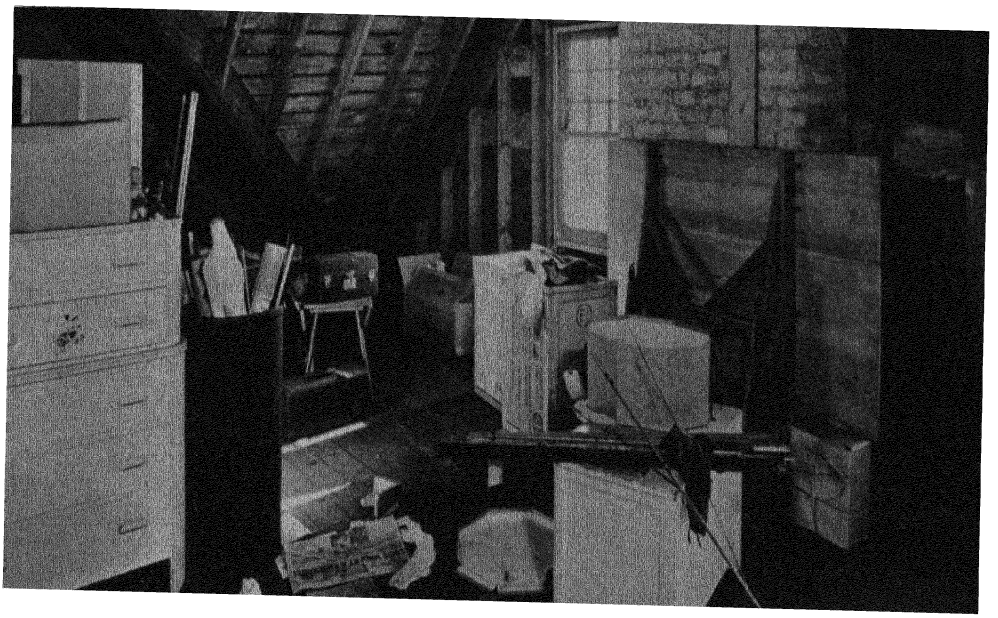


Fig. 60 — Before — An ordinary attic

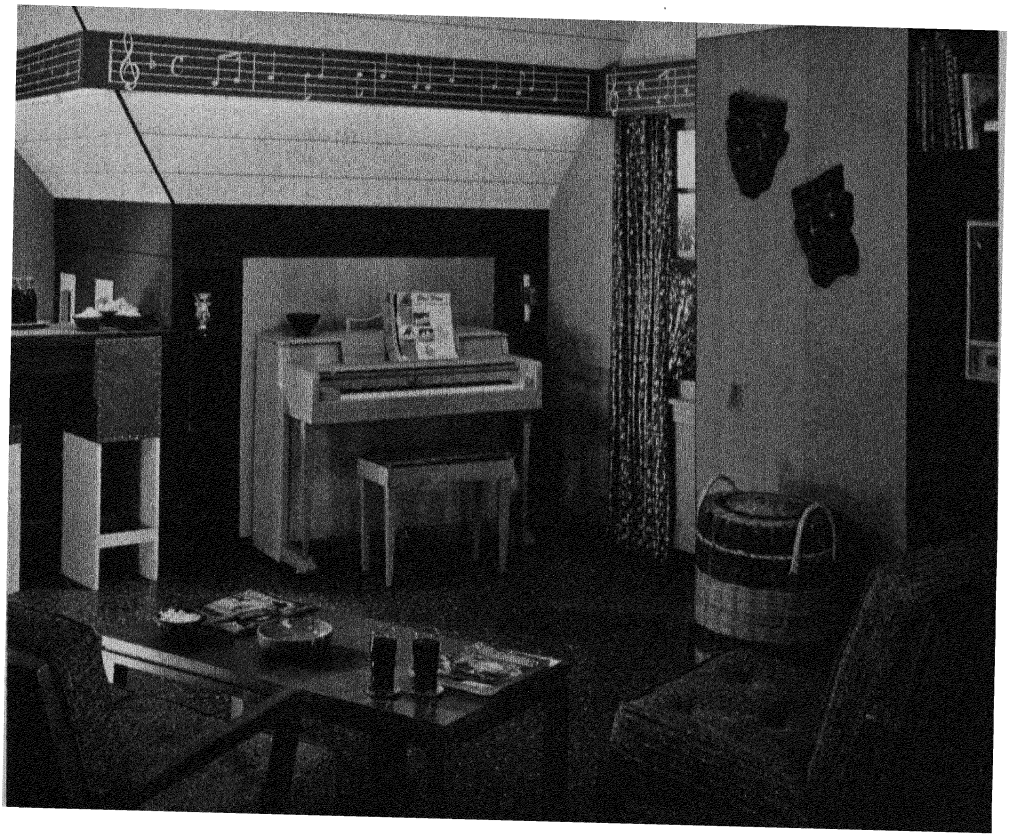


Fig. 61 — After — A teen-age or adult fun room

a shelf on which the TV rests. Below are doors concealing a built-in radio and record player.

The snack bar can be made of plywood with pine edging. The stools are also of plywood with hardboard panels for the backs and pine crosspieces for strengtheners.

Note the record and storage shelves on either side of the piano. In this room, too—but not showing—are a place to store luggage (behind the walls), a dark room, a fold-away bed for a sleep-over guest and a recessed movie screen in a light valence.

The next picture, Fig. 62, shows what could be a youngster's play and bedroom, a games room, den or grownup retreat. The recessed space at fore left could be used as a desk or workshop corner. Back left is a music section. Observe the storage possibilities under the window, in the bookcase at right and under the studio couch. The space is utilized to the fullest. And look how cleverly sloped ceilings are concealed by the use of attractive alcoves.

Of course, you don't have to convert all of the attic to play purposes. Perhaps you'd like to leave part of it as a storage place for

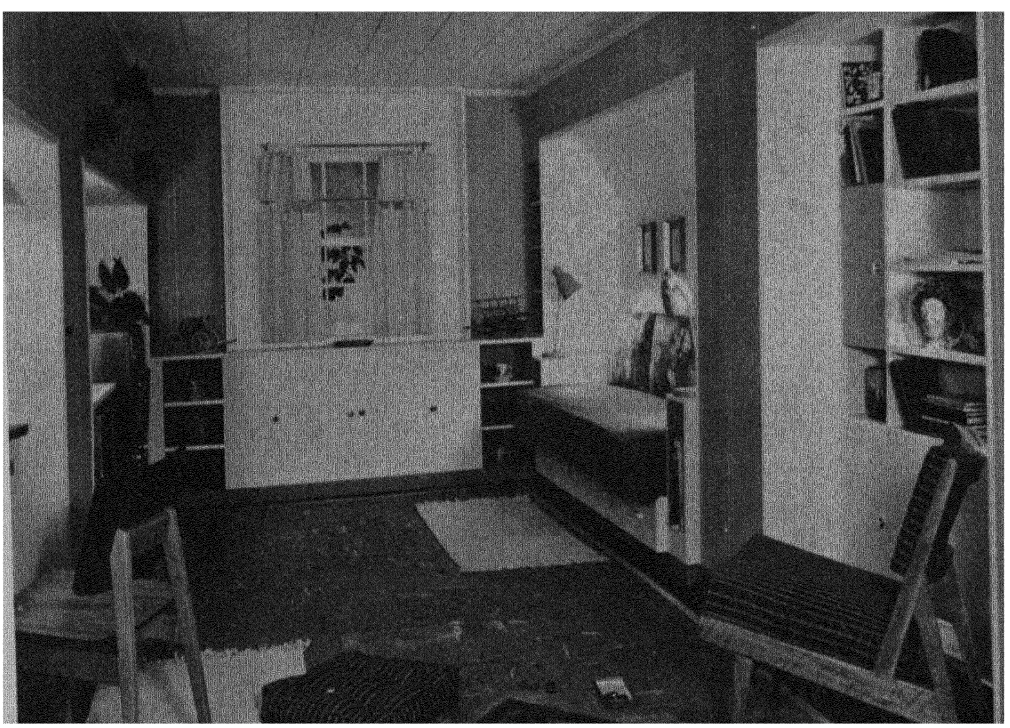


Fig. 62 – A playroom, den, or grownup retreat

the old family trunks and boxes containing the relics, mementoes and clothing of earlier days and generations. It will be the place where the kids—or you—can rummage for forgotten treasure or find costumes for masquerade fun. It can be separated from the activity area with curtains, bamboo or woven wood screens or some other partition.

Building an attic room from scratch is a rather more difficult matter than finishing and fixing up a room that already exists. It costs much more and involves more time and energy. But many families have managed to do it with little or no outside help.

Before you make a move, check whether the floor of the attic and the ceiling below it are strong enough. Check on heating, ventilation, lighting, insulation. Next get estimates of costs and look at some pictures of finished rooms. Then if you decide to go ahead, do some planning with paper and pencil so that you know what you're to have in it and just where things will go.

A PORCH FOR RELAXATION

A porch room can be one of the most valuable areas in the house. Screen it in the summer for coolness and protection against insects. Fit it with big glass windows in the winter to coax in sun and shut out cold. Equip it with versatile furniture, storage units and good lighting, and you have the makings of a room of many uses.

It can play the role of den, guest room, TV room, rainy-day fun area, train room, rumpus room or card room as needed. If the porch is squarish in shape it permits the grouping of furniture to form a conversation corner, a music corner, or a nook conducive to sewing or reading. An all-year round porch provides opportunities for indoor gardening.

Some of the ideas from other play areas around the house may be adapted for use here. For instance, the window treatment on page 77 (Fig. 48) for indoor gardening. Or, if the floor is even, you might paint some diagrams for shuffleboard (diagram on page 111), or lay down linoleum or tile with game insets. Dartboards might be hung on one wall and the suction type of dart used for safety.

The photographs on page 100 show two of the various ways in which a porch can be treated.

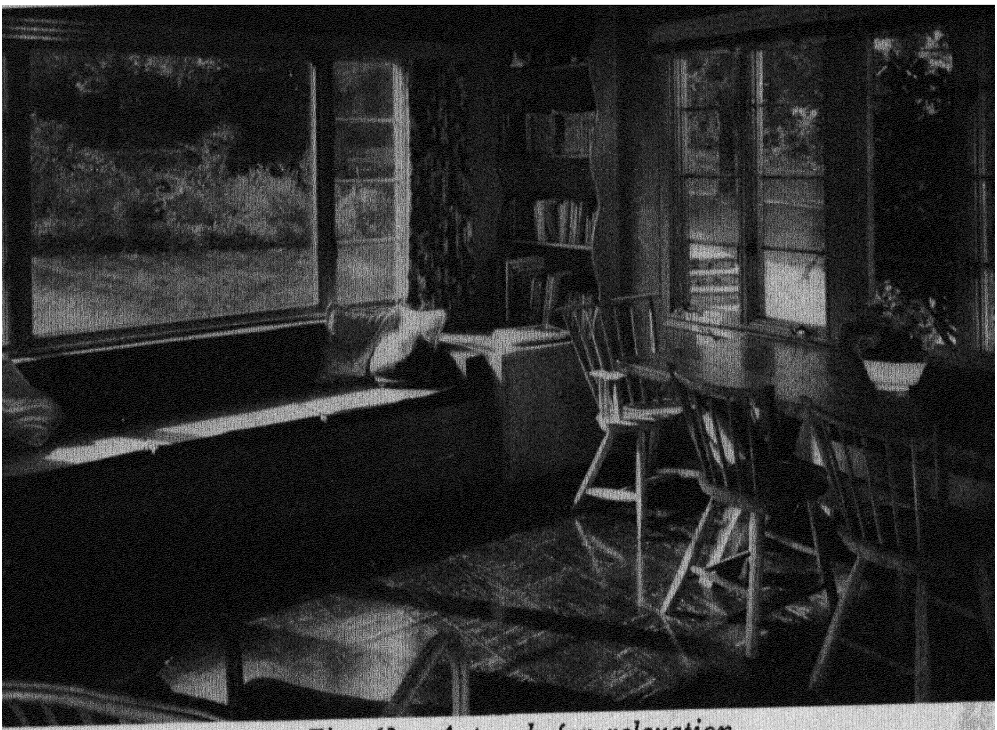


Fig. 63 — A porch for relaxation

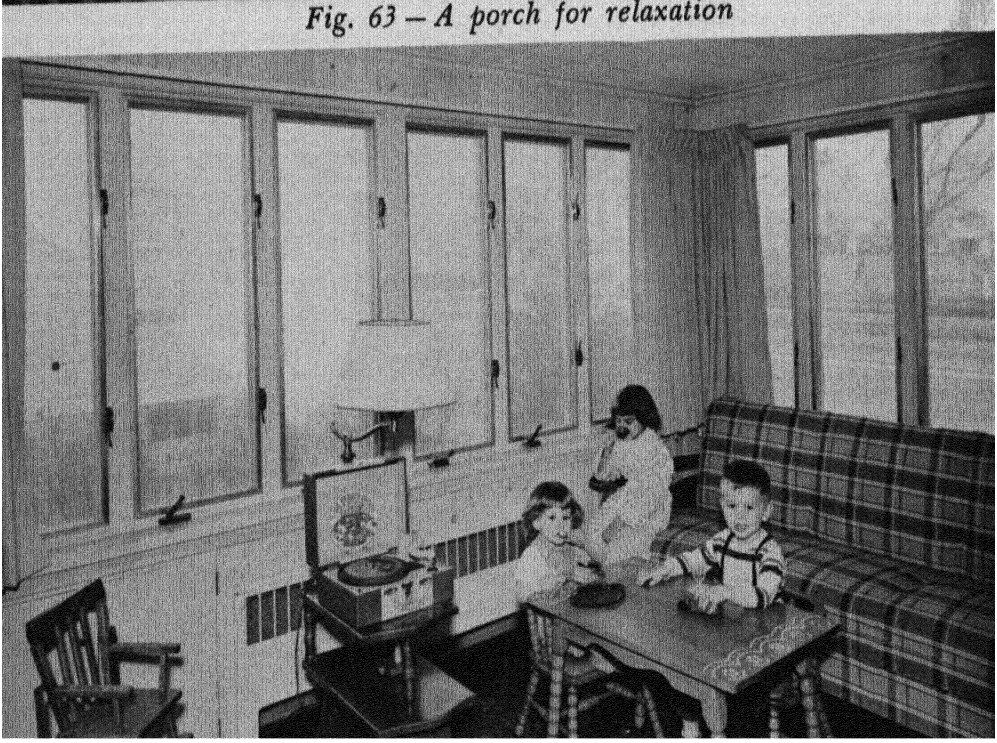


Fig. 64 — A porch for children's enjoyment

A DOUBLE-DUTY MASTER BEDROOM

Is your bedroom only a part-time room? It needn't be. If you plan it thoughtfully, it can be a haven for solitude, lazying, reading, listening to music, or working on hobbies—anytime at all. In a home with active, tireless small fry it may well be your only sanctuary when you need a breather. If there are teenagers who need to use the living room on certain evenings, it can be a nerve-sparing retreat.

Even in a small chamber you can save at least one comfortable corner for leisure with efficient organization of space and the use of furniture scaled to the size of the room. Again, built-ins and clever utilization of wall space will do the trick. Make a reading corner. Put the area around and under the windows to use by building shelves for books, or collections. A tastefully displayed collection in a bedroom, by the way, adds a great deal of charm and individuality.

You might have a hobby corner, or a setup for sewing. Perforated hardboard could be affixed to the wall to hold supplies, tools or sewing paraphernalia. When not in use, the corner could be masked with a decorative screen that harmonizes with the rest of the room.

One home craftsman built a table with two hinged leaves. He covered it with heavy-duty linoleum, and drew a checkerboard design on the center surface. He and his wife might play a game of chess, there, or Scrabble, or, a two-handed card game—away from the juvenile hub-bub in the living room. On certain evenings, the side leaves are raised and he takes out his stamp collection. Light comes from a pinhole spot above.

Beds can be had with headboards that contain built-in shelves and swing-out lights which illuminate just the area the reader needs. Books and newspapers can be kept there. If you like to unwind with a program of good music before going to sleep there's even space for a radio. It might have an automatic shut-off and a plug-in for earphones so that you can listen without disturbing others.

In one apartment home the parents of teenagers got a box-type bed that had a roll-out compartment in the frame. The mother, a

pastime artist, stores her pastels and canvases there and can bring them out to work on when the living room and kitchen are taken up with juvenile entertaining. And in another home a devotee of exercise installed a punching bag on the inside of his closet door. A workout on it in the morning before breakfast sets him up for a day at his desk job.

FUN IN THE KITCHEN

There is an old rhyme which goes like this:

While Mother worked in the kitchen,
Such lessons and such fun,
We'd learn our sums with nuts and plums,
Then eat them, one by one.

What a picture of cozy family happiness that conjures up. Given something larger than an "efficiency kitchen" it's still possible to invoke some of that wonderfully warm atmosphere.

The key piece of furniture would be, of course, a good, big table. The kind that was once described as "a solid dining table big enough to seat two generations at Thanksgiving . . . and with enough elbow room for friends and neighbors to sit around and talk, play games or eat." Such a table is practically a family activity center in itself.

It would sit right smack in the middle of the floor. And it would be accompanied by good-looking but comfortable chairs that can take and not show hard use.

The top of the table would be durable and stainproof so that kids wouldn't have to be shooed away if they wanted to use it for play. They could do papier-mache work on it. finger-paint or run toys over it. And cleaning it up afterwards would be no bother at all. The family artist or craftsman could work on it evenings or weekends. After all, Grandma Moses did some of her best work on the kitchen table of her farm.

A kitchen can also use a bookshelf, a magazine rack (these can be hung on a wall) and a piece or two of relaxing furniture. A rocker would be just dandy, or a lounging chair or a cushioned wear-resistant wall bench for reclining or for kids to romp on.

With very young children it's important to set off a corner as a

play area so they can be kept under supervision when Mother is busy in the kitchen. The floor and walls in this spot would be protected with paper or linoleum. Though this precaution isn't necessary with today's kiddie-proof wall and floor coverings.

In some homes a children's play area is planned adjacent to the kitchen. Folding doors separate them. During the day the doors are kept open and Mother is able to keep an eye on her pet at play. When the doors are closed the play area becomes a sleeping room for the child. The room can be further divided for two children. (See photographs below, also page 94).

Some of the storage and space-saving devices suggested for living-room play corners can be adapted for use in the kitchen. A special cupboard or seat-chest for playthings will lessen clutter considerably.

And don't forget that eye-pleasing decor, plants and pictures help to promote an atmosphere of relaxation. (See the end of the chapter for a lead on a decorating booklet.) Robert S. Hillyer, poet, novelist and professor, even has a pump organ and piano in the medium-size kitchen of his home and a couple of oil portraits on the wall. He enjoys playing a bit of music in the morning while his eggs are boiling and the coffee perking.

Fig. 65 – Folding doors separate children's play area from kitchen

THE BATHROOM

Doctors will tell you that a nice, tub-soaking in warm water is one of the finest possible relaxers—an excellent therapy for tight nerves. It has been found, too, that gentle rhythmic exercising in a brimming tub firms muscles and conserves energy.

If you're one who likes to catch up on his reading while luxuriating in a bath you can make things easy for yourself with a handy bookshelf within reach and plastic or oil-cloth covers for books. One designer built himself a "tub-reader's" gadget. It consists of a crossboard which lets down from the wall to rest on the tub. There is a support for the book with clamps to hold down the pages. Attached to it is a piece of dry terry cloth with which the reader can dry his fingers before turning a page. A further improvement obviously would be an automatic page-turner.

Children, we know, love to amuse themselves with water toys while taking a bath. But they enjoy water play at other times, too, and psychologists know that there is much satisfying and healthy fun in it for them. Furthermore, water play at home helps build confidence for swimming.

If you have a young child, why not set up a shelf in the bathroom where he can keep toy boats, his rubber duck and other water playthings? He can play there when restless at other than bath time. Run some water for him in the washbowl or into a large basin which can be set into the tub. He'll splash in it happily for long periods. Protect his clothes with a plastic bib and apron and the floor with a rubber mat. Remember, though, that very young children can't be let out of sight when at water play.

The bathroom is a good place, too, for a youngster to blow bubbles with pipe and a mixture of water, soap and glycerine (a clay pipe, please, not Daddy's.) And if part of the wall is covered with Marlite tile he can let out his artistic strivings there. A few whisks of a damp cloth will set things right later.

CAN YOU AFFORD A LAZY AREA?

If you're pressed for play space you ought to think of how to get more service out of lazy or part-time areas.

Take the spare room, for instance. By moving storage space to the walls you can get use out of it as a playroom for the kids. Build cupboards, shelves and furniture that suit their play requirements. Let them know they can go there when they need elbow room for activities or a place to romp. It will reduce wear and tear on other areas of the house.

Perhaps you will want to fix up a spare room as a reserve fun space. Its floors will be bare so that it can be used by teen-agers to entertain their friends and dance. It will be available to the grownups on other evenings as a card room, den or hobby area. It might serve as a library or a TV room where kids can watch their programs without disturbing the rest of the household. It could be a cozy gathering place for all the family after dinner, a sort of upstairs rumpus room.

Another idea is to make it a convertible, all-purpose area. It is then available for entertaining, or as a den, study or TV room, and can also serve as a guest room. One plan includes light but sturdy furniture that can be moved to other rooms when needed or when the necessity for the room becomes less. There are two or three versatile pieces of furniture. For instance, cocktail table sections which serve three ways as single seats, single tables or together as a surface for refreshments. A sofa or love seat becomes a bed with the removal of back cushions.

Fold-away or roll-away beds are useful in this kind of setup, too. One plan has a bed which disappears into a cabinet atop of which are rows of bookshelves.

THE DINING ROOM

Few people think of a dining room as a lazy area, but in many homes it is that in effect. It is used but not really utilized. Unfortunately, this is often true in homes where the family hasn't nearly as much play space as it needs.

In one apartment with an under-sized kitchen the man of the house put together a wall bench on a side of the room away from

the traffic lane. The top of the bench was surfaced with a composition material and foam-rubber bolsters were made up as backs for seating. The space below was partitioned into shelves and compartments. These were concealed by drop doors made of tempered hardboard and the inside surfaces of two of these were coated with blackboard paint. The outsides were painted to match the color scheme of the room.

When it was finished Dad turned the unit over to the kids as a place to keep fun-things when they played near Mother while she was busy in the kitchen. As an after-thought, and just in time, a wide strip of fiber carpeting was put down to protect the floor next

Fig. 66 — Separating work and play areas

to the unit. The kids could run wheeled toys there or use the top of the bench for their activities. But if there was need for more play surface a special padded, protective cover could be taken out of a compartment and slipped over the dining room table.

Another way of putting the dining room to use is suggested by the picture on page 106. In this scene a Modernfold door is used as a room divider to shut the dining area off from the living room. The man of the house is using the dining room table as a desk. And the children are playing in the living room. Surface the dining room table appropriately, install some attractive wall cupboards to hold tools and supplies and you can see the possibilities of creating a room for hobby work.

GETTING PLAY USE OUT OF A FOYER

If you live in an apartment where space for recreational activity is at a premium part of the answer to your problem may lie in your foyer. Is it possible, for example, to set up a child's playhouse there or a workshop corner?

In one family a woman had taken an adult education course in carving plastic blocks internally to make book ends and other use-

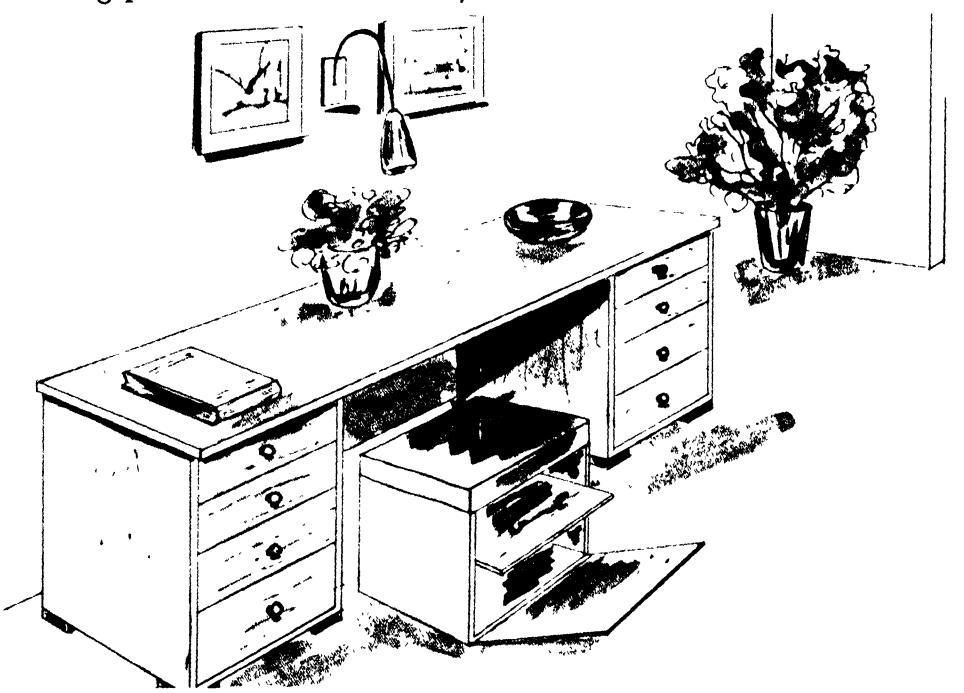


Fig. 67 — A decorative or hobby unit in the foyer, with storage bench

ful and decorative pieces. With three children and only four rooms, finding space to work at her hobby wasn't easy.

But friend husband came up with a workable solution. He got two unpainted, low, four-drawer chests. These were set along one wall of the foyer away from the traffic lane and about 6 feet apart. Across them went a wide ¾ inch board, surfaced with heavy-duty linoleum. The unit was finished to match with the wallpaper in the foyer. A shaded lamp was hung on the wall to illuminate the working surface. And when this work table (see diagram, Fig. 67) is not in use it doubles as a foyer sideboard for a bowl and vase.

The foyer is a good place, too, for a storage cupboard or wall of perforated hardboard. Kids can take their play equipment on the fly as they go outdoors and replace it when they come back. Or the family's sports paraphernalia might go there.

A DOUBLE-DUTY GARAGE

Chances are that a survey would show the average one-car garage to be not only a stall for the old family bus but a disorganized storehouse. It's a place where Pop, Mom and the offspring dump gardening stuff, larger toys, sports equipment, beach chairs and anything else they are too lazy to lug elsewhere. It probably also has to serve as a tool house and supply depot.

You can let the garage retain its storage function efficiently by planning put-away space on the walls. Tools might be hung on a large perforated hardboard or the sports paraphernalia used for backyard play. Storage cabinets for the children's playthings can be built over the space where the hood of the car goes, or a ledge for trunks and boxes containing out-of-season stuff.

You can fashion some hobby workbenches that are let down from the wall when the car is out of the garage. A certain homeowner with teen-aged sons set up an indoor gym consisting of rings, exercise bars and so on. When the car is stabled, the equipment is filed up out of the way, backstage theater style. A mat is rolled open over the floor when the gym is to be used.

In another family a large tarpaulin containing game diagrams, and weighted at the corners, is unfurled on the floor to let out the energies of the small fry on inclement days. A sheet hung from a

hinged drop-ledge forms a playhouse. If the car happens to be around it receives temporary shelter under the roof of a carport built to the side of the garage. Work tools and other equipment that might be dangerous are locked away securely in storage cabinets.

POSSIBILITIES IN A TWO-CAR GARAGE

If yours is a one-car family with a two-car garage and you need more room for fun and relaxation consider converting half of it into a playroom. Its great advantage for children is that it can be entered directly from outdoors. The partitioned-off space might have a tile floor or some other covering that will stand up under the beat of busy little feet. For teen-agers a smooth floor is best since it allows for dancing. Walls could be treated as in a basement room with decorations being much of the same character.

In one successful conversion project the feature was a bookshelf and cabinet unit built against one of the half walls. An opening was left where a wheeled snack and refreshment cart could stand when not in use. The upper part of this opening had a roll-down screen for showing movies and slides. Equipment for this was stored in cabinets under the bookshelves where paraphernalia for quoits, shuffleboard, darts and other games was also kept. There was even put-away space for out-of-season clothing.

The garage wall which was left in its natural brick was painted sunlight yellow and decorated with planters and greenery. Along it stood a convertible sofa for an extra guest and towards one end was a conversational grouping of comfortable chairs. An electric heating unit provided warmth when and if needed.

You might transform unused garage space into a backyard summer pleasure headquarters by building a screened-in veranda around just that part of it on the outside. You can play bridge in the outside area on very warm evenings or have your meal there, protected from insects. On cool evenings you use the indoor space for ping-pong, listening to music or other recreation.

Build a strongly supported roof out from the garage to cover the veranda. Rail it in. Add a wide-treaded ladder or permanent stairway to give you access from the ground and you have a sun deck.

A DRIVEWAY FOR PLAY

Ever think of the fun potential in a driveway? Take a paved driveway, for instance. The kids can skate up and down its length, bicycle, skip rope or play hopscotch or "potsy." The family can play shuffleboard or hand tennis.

HOPSCOTCH

The diagram (Fig. 68) shows a court that can be drawn on a 5 by 15 area. Children know a lot of games that can be played on it with a small flattened square of tin or a similar object.

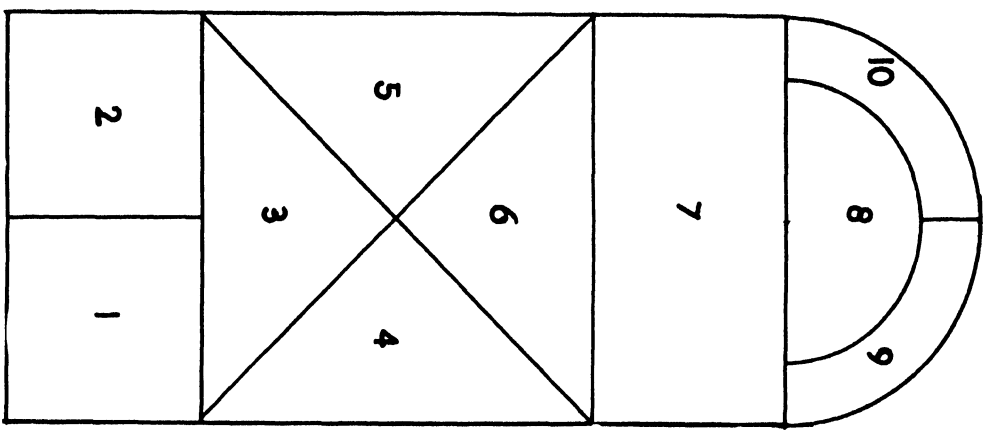


Fig. 68 — Hopscotch

SHUFFLEBOARD

The family can play this game with a purchased set or a home-made one. Pushers might be broomsticks with cross pieces nailed on. The discs can be squares of wood with rounded corners or coasters. The game may be played by two or four competing against each other as opposing pairs.

In singles both opponents play towards one scoring triangle and then back to the other, each sliding one disc in turn. In doubles two opposing players are placed at each end of the court. Discs are played from the back line of the 10-off space.

The object of the game is to land your disc into a scoring compartment so that no part of it rests on any line of that space, or to knock out opponent's scoring disc. Landing in 10-off reduces your score by that much. Game may be any arbitrary figure.

The regulation playing area is 52 by 6 but it can be reduced proportionately. The diagram (Fig. 69) shows the most popular layout.

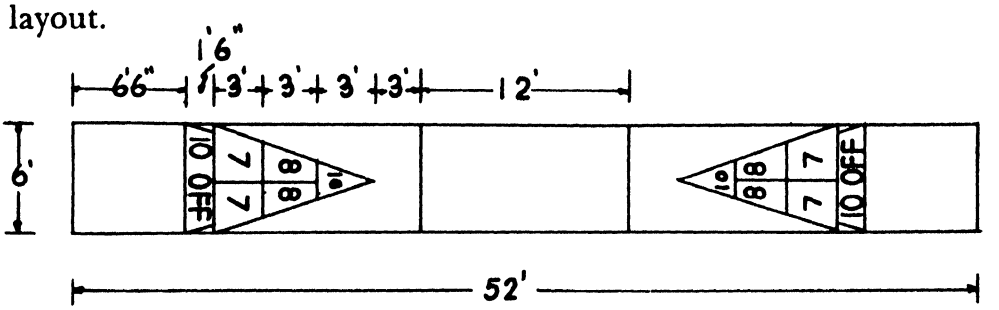


Fig. 69 — Shuffleboard

HAND OR SIDEWALK TENNIS

This simple game packs a lot of fun. The court covers an area about 18 to 20 feet by 6 but you can vary the dimensions. The important thing is to divide the court into 4 even sections by drawing two intersecting lines. The game may be played singles or doubles.

Sole equipment is an ordinary rubber ball which is struck with the palm of the hand. The center line is the "net." You serve by hitting the ball so that it bounces into opponent's court diagonally as in tennis. It is then hit back and forth across the "net," always on one bounce, until it goes out of the boundary lines or is missed. You are not allowed to put either foot inside of the court during the play.

Scoring is as in tennis or handball.

OTHER IDEAS

With a driveway that has dirt strips between concrete tracks it is possible to set up a horseshoe court. The stakes can be driven into the ground.

There are other ways in which a driveway, even a gravel or dirt one, may be used for small area sports. Some of those suggested in Chapter 2 might be adapted.

LESS LAWN—MORE FUN

Is your front yard an example of "conspicuous waste"? Is it taken up mostly with parasitic lawn when the need of your family is for more outdoor relaxing space?

If so, think over these possibilities. You can fence off a section of your front yard, as others have done, leaving an outside border for relieving hedges, grass or plant beds. The fence can be a decorative one of redwood, woven wood or wire screened with greenery. It will safeguard the kids when at play, afford privacy for outdoor lounging and actually can improve the appearance of your property.

The space thus saved from uselessness might be paved. Side strips can be given over to planting. One family swapped useless lawn for usable ground by dividing the front yard into a patio and gardening plots. The backyard was turned over outright to the three youngsters, with some space reserved for family sports.

Almost the best part of it all for Dad is thinking about all that lawn he no longer has to nurse.

HERE AND THERE AROUND THE HOUSE

Some additional, and brief, tips on how families have created play and relaxation-serving areas out of ordinarily wasted space:

Did you notice how the side of the basement stairway was treated on page 44? Variations of this idea can be worked out with the stairway on any landing . . . Or drawers or cupboards for sports and hobby equipment can be installed during building or remodeling.

An upstairs play area can be planned in the corner formed by stair railings. In one family a TV corner was set up there. The youngsters could watch programs without getting in the way of activities downstairs. The set was placed on a slat bench against the wall which also held books and magazines. Light, movable chairs and a small table were grouped at the railing opposite, out of the way of traffic.

A built-in with space for games, hobby equipment and books can be placed at the end wall of an upper hallway—around and under a window, perhaps.

A wall in an upper hallway or near the back entrance can be covered with perforated hardboard or other decorative and easily cleaned material. Hang tennis rackets, golf bags, baseball gloves, skates or other play stuff there conveniently at hand.

A similar arrangement as above can be set up in the foyer or

hallway of an apartment. If you wish, it can be concealed by drapes, pull curtains or a roller shade.

The inside of a closet door can be fixed up as a small workshop. There is a place to hang tools. A ledge is pulled down to form a work surface. A flexible lamp provides illumination.

A roofed shed built around the back entrance of the house is a fine place to: hang play or gardening equipment, keep wheeled toys or backyard playthings, have a shelf with a basin for cleaning up muddy small fry after a summer's day romp in the backyard, store barbecue equipment.

A MULTIPURPOSE FUN ROOM

Here's a room (Figs. 70, 71, 72), that really does an all-out job for play and relaxation. It could be an attic, basement, garage or extra room.

Note the uncarpeted tile floor rugged enough for kids' play, hobby shop use, dancing. The built-ins for storage of toys, tools, refreshment utensils. The plentiful counters for play, work, entertainment. The pull-out couch which could sleep an overnight visitor. The reversible table-halves (see how a half is stored in the shallow compartment at left.) The versatile sawhorses.

All in all a model of smart planning.

SOURCES FOR PLANS

For plans on attic conversion—Wood Conversion Co., St. Paul 2, Minnesota.

For plans on attic conversion—Johns-Manville Corporation, New York.

For decorating tips on kitchens—Youngstown Kitchens.

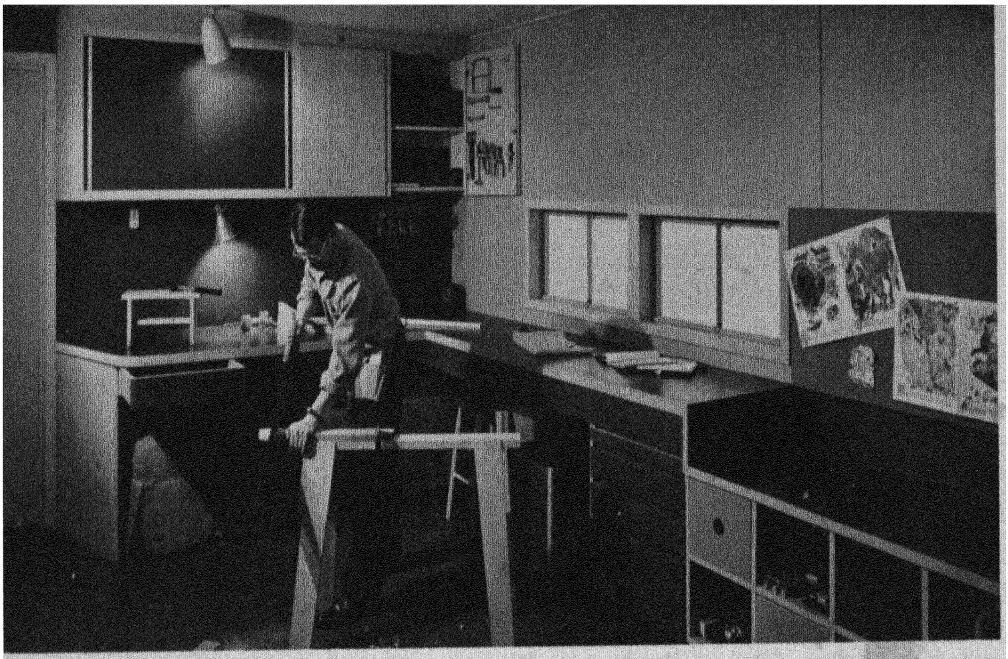


Fig. 70 – Workshop corner in multipurpose fun room

Fig. 71 – Entertainment set-up in same fun room

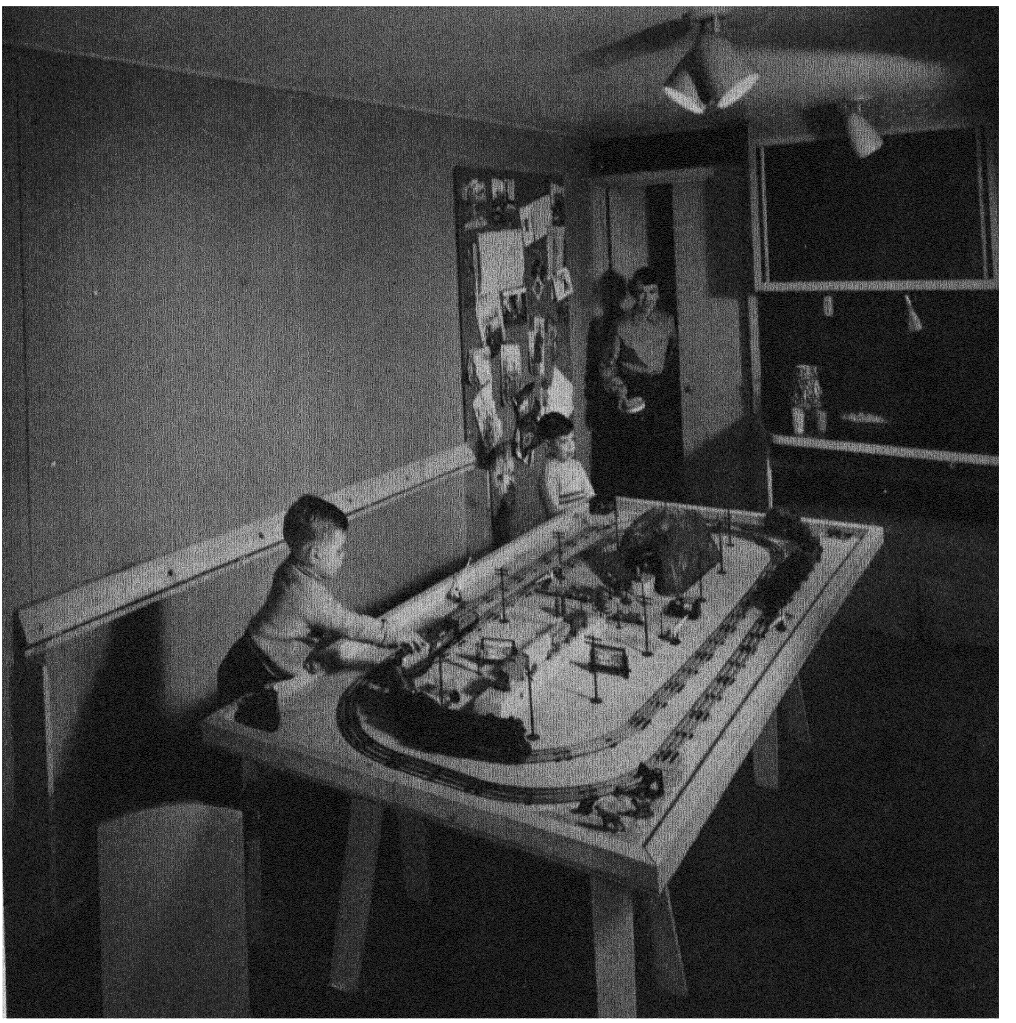


Fig. 72 – Children at play in fun room

What kind of tools should you get? Recommended are these basic ones to start with:

A claw hammer with a 13 oz. head and perhaps a smaller ball-peen one, useful for model and toy work. A nail set for finishing.

An 11-point saw which is fine enough to cut plywood. A coping saw for cutting curved and irregular shapes. It can be fitted with a blade that cuts metal. There is a small combination keyhole metal and compass saw to handle different jobs.

A jack plane for furniture and a block plane for small work.

A hand drill. A ratchet brace and bits.

Large and small screw drivers. Handfiles and rasp. Brad awl.

Ordinary and wire-cutting pliers.

Combination square. Tape measure and folding rule.

A good pocket knife.

A vise or C-clamp.

And, of course, sandpaper, nails, screws, bolts and other necessary hardware.

Power tools such as a magnetic jig-saw (safe for children), electric drills, a lathe and so on are very nice to own if you have the space and cash for them. But with wood pre-cut and prepared at the lumberyard, hand tools will see you through most projects.

Keep tools sharp and in good repair. Store them neatly and conveniently. They can be hung on perforated hardboard over your workbench or in some other easy to get at arrangement. For apartment dwellers there are tool-boxes which also serve as seats. There is a portable tool-kit which can be hung up on a wall and can be closed and taken elsewhere in a carrying case. Tool shapes are outlined on the backboard to show where they go.

PROJECTS FOR THE WORKSHOP

As has been noted, any of the projects mentioned in this book are feasible even for an amateur builder. Books and magazines suggest numerous other ideas slanted to the home craftsman. You have only to ask your librarian or to scout around in a bookshop or on a magazine stand to get all the information you need for making built-ins and storage units that ease the problem of play space.

There are many things that can be constructed to bring more

fun into the home. For the children—pull-along toys, push wagons, peg boards, boats, trains—to name just a few of the numerous possibilities. Look at the toy house in the diagram, Fig. 73. It was made of two orange crates (carefully sanded and brightly painted) and connected by a piece of beaver board.

A little girl uses it to house doll furnishings. A boy could keep trucks and trains there. Or it might be a store or a place for books. Pictures are pasted on the beaver board with scotch tape and can be changed at will. Something to delight any child's heart and costing little in time or money.

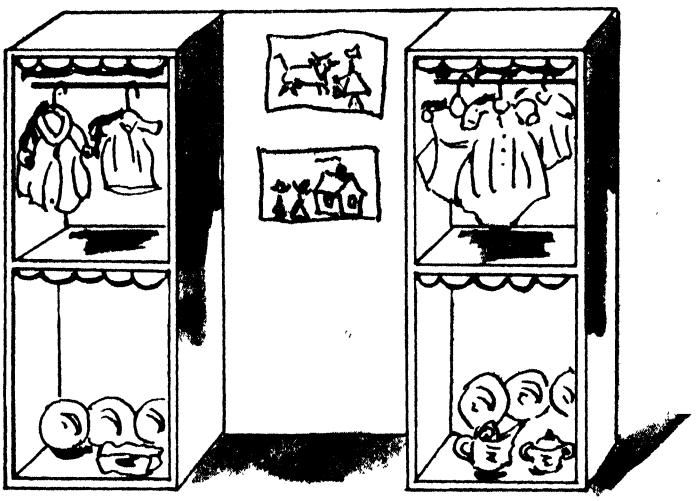


Fig. 73 — An orange-crate toyhouse

For all the family, a chess and checker board can be made, dart boards, jig-saw puzzles, picture frames, sports equipment for the backyard or basement and more, much more. (Leads on how-to-make-it instruction for games and toys are given at the end of the chapter.)

Now for a few general tips concerning workshop projects:

1. Have a definite idea of what you're going to do and where it will go before you tackle a project. Some people find it helpful to make little cardboard models of built-ins or furniture they are planning to construct.

2. If you're inexperienced, don't start too ambitiously. Get your schooling and confidence on simple projects and work up to bigger ones.

3. Learn how to give the products of your workshop a smooth, good-looking finish. You can get much helpful information from a paint dealer . . . Remember that playthings for very young children should have non-toxic paints in case they chew on them.

4. If your youngster is going to work with you, try to make it fun. Don't expect too much of him or that his interest and concentration will last as long as yours. Let him do as much of the job as he is capable of. Teach him to respect good craftsmanship by example.

THINGS FOR THE FAMILY TO DO

Just for the fun of it look over this list—by no means complete—of activities that will provide enjoyment for the family around the house:

ASTRONOMY

With an amateur's telescope . . . studying charts of the heavens . . . constructing a backyard observatory.

BACKYARD COOKING

Building the fireplace . . . Making a collection of recipes.

CANDY MAKING

All sorts of recipes to be collected here.

CAMPFIRES

In the backyard, with the stick-cooking, songs and story-telling that go with them.

CARPENTRY

No end of projects.

CERAMICS

With kiln or self-hardening clay.

CHARADES

COLLECTING

Stamps, coins, dolls, autographs, buttons, stones, match-folders, leaves and other things from nature. And much, much else.

CRAFTS

Leather-work, basketry, tin-can projects, plastics, jewelry-making, papier-mache and so on.

DANCING

DECORATIONS

For rooms, parties and holidays, special events.

DRAMATICS

A home show with just the family or the help of neighbors and friends . . . Improvisations.

DRAWING AND SKETCHING

With pencil, charcoal, pastels, crayons.

EXPERIMENTS

In chemistry, physics and other sciences.

GAMES

Board games, card games, parlor games, word games, proprietary games, musical games, challenges and competitive stunts, indoor sports, treasure or scavenger hunts.

GARDENING

Outdoors, rock, soil; indoors, soil, chemical. Greenhouse.

GIFT-MAKING

For friends, family, holidays.

MAGIC

Tricks and stunts.

MASK-MAKING

For masquerades, Halloween, parties, home dramatics.

MODELING AND SCULPTING

With clay, soap, plasticine, wire, sea-shells and so on.

MOVIES

Home-made action and comedy sequences . . . Rent instructive or entertaining reels.

MUSIC

Rhythm band with tambourines, wooden blocks, gourds and the like . . . Toy instrument band . . . Song fests . . . Record concert . . . Making simple musical instruments.

PAINTING

With oils, water colors, poster colors. Finger-painting, the artistic substitute for mud play or mess-making fun . . . Paint parties with everyone tackling the same subject . . . Decorating trays, bottles, furniture.

NATURE LORE

Organizing and maintaining a home museum.

PETS

Breeding and training.

PUPPETS

Make them. Write shows around them. Present these on table or piano-top theaters, in doorways over a stretched sheet, in theater made out of a hat box.

PUZZLES

Make them. Play with them . . . Manipulatives, brain-teasers, cross-words.

QUIZZES

Run your own quiz show with prizes.

READING

Aloud. Familiar, everyday things for very little children. Make-believe and personal identification stories for the pre-teenager. Well-plotted or romantic tales for young teenagers. The any-age

classics for all the family—New and Old Testaments, *Robinson Crusoe, The Arabian Nights' Entertainment, Baron Munchausen, Last of the Mohicans, Ivanhoe* . . . Poetry . . . Plays . . . Books on hobby and play ideas for the family, traveling, sports.

SCRAPBOOK

Put in anecdotes and pictures of family life with bright, descriptive captions.

STENCILING

Make own Christmas cards. Decorations for playroom.

TAPE-RECORDING

Pick up good musical programs off the radio . . . Do a home talent show.

WEAVING

WHITTLING AND WOOD-CARVING

Decorative figurines which can be varnished, water-colored or painted. Toys. Objects of utility for the kitchen.

A GAMES CLOSET FOR EVER-READY ENJOYMENT

Games are a common denominator of family fun. You can start them at a moment's notice. They help develop play skills that are useful for a lifetime. What's more, they offer a fine opportunity to teach some important life lessons in regard to cooperation, competition, sportsmanship and sociability, without strictures or preachment.

It's a good idea to have some shelves or a games closet or cupboard where paraphernalia can be conveniently stored. In one family a combination bookcase and games cabinet was built. The games storage part of it had several wide and deep shelves to hold playing boards and boxes of equipment. The back of this unit—a low-standing affair—was so constructed that you could slide a fold-away bridge table into it.

What would a games closet contain? Much would depend on the interests and ages of the members of the family. But here is a representative list of contents that should meet most requirements:

A CHECKERS AND CHESS SET

You can get some fairly inexpensive ones that give good service. The family might make up its own board out of plywood or hardboard. There are 64 squares, remember, alternating red and black. Checkers can be home-made, too, consisting of slices of an old broomstick—12 painted light, 12 dark. A small cigar box is the checkers container.

Checkers is a fine game for friendly parent and child rivalry and involves enough skill to make it continuously interesting. Besides the standard game there is an amusing version in which the idea is to try to lose men. There are also such intriguing variations as Fox and the Geese and Shifting Pyramids, mentioned in most books on games.

Chess, particularly the version where there is a time limit on moves, is interesting to older children. You might carve your own chess men out of wood or plastic, or out of soap and then coated with shellac.

CHINESE CHECKERS

More than two can play. You can make your own board.

PARCHEESI

A more chancey game than checkers and good for parent and child competition.

BACKGAMMON

Lots of fun for two. Diagram could be drawn on back of checkerboard.

TABLE COVER GAMES

Diagrams for checkers, backgammon and other games might be drawn on bridge table covers, using both sides of a reversible cover. Protect with plastic liquid.

PLAYING CARDS

Standard, Rook or Flinch. There are many interesting varieties of games for family play. Notably, ordinary rummy, canasta, hearts, concentration, I doubt it, fan tan, bridge (with older children).

LOTTO OR BINGO SET

Good low skill games in which the small fry can join.

DOMINOES

Fun at any age. Helps kids with numbers.

MONOPOLY

One of the very best of the proprietary games for family participation.

SCRABBLE

Helps stir up interest in word formation and spelling. Cheaper varieties of the game provide just as much fun.

ANAGRAMS

A simple and comparatively inexpensive game for word fun. You can make up your own set at home by printing letters on oak tag or tough cardboard. Let there be more vowels than other letters and plenty of the following consonants: d, h, n, l, r, s, t.

DARTBOARD SET

Preferably with safety rubber suction darts. Different boards can be made up at home.

JIGSAW PUZZLES

For quiet fun. Alone or with a not-too-intrusive kibitzer. You can make up your own by pasting a picture on plywood or thin hardboard and cutting with a coping or jig saw.

BOOKS

Containing ideas and directions for games.

Other items may be added to this collection, of course; such as, for example, a bagatelle or pin-ball game that can be played on a table top, or other playthings the family particularly enjoys. Go easy on fad items. With most of them, after the novelty wears off you're stuck with a piece of junk.

FOR THOSE "WHAT CAN I DO?" BLUES

It's raining and raining with no sign of a let-up. Or, Old Man Winter is acting a little meaner than usual. Or, there's no one for Junior or Mary to play with. Or, you have to sweat out a period of quarantine with your precious. Or, the bout of fever is over and your small one is getting restless and fretful while waiting for Nature to take its healing course.

These are times to try souls and bring tempers to the breaking point. They are hard enough on a home-confined grownup, particularly one without play resources to make him forget his worries. For the child and parent who must try to keep him happy they can be periods of maddening friction and frustration. Unless some way can be found to occupy young hands and minds pleasantly.

Watching TV works for a while only. Not all programs are interesting to children. Besides, a child's eyes may be strained by staring at a bright screen for any extended time and his muscles become twitchy with inactivity. What then? Suppose we consider first the case of a healthy child trapped indoors for one reason or another.

If you've got play space in a basement, porch, attic, garage or other place where your youngster can throw his weight around in physical activity, let him loose there and cut down on the "don'ts." Or enlarge his play corner in the living room or kitchen by moving furniture out of the way, and give him a little more freedom than he usually enjoys. Now is the time to set up the card table playhouse, for instance. (See page 78).

When he's had his fill of noisy and kinetic play you can bring out a surprise or emergency kit. This you have kept hidden away to be produced on just such occasions. It's a roomy affair with several compartments for different play materials. It might consist perhaps of several boxes, each with its own cargo of fun things. These should be novel or different enough from his everyday playthings so that his interest is intrigued. The surprise chest is the place, too, where surplus toy gifts from adoring relatives should be stored. They'll be more appreciated now.

Have items in the chest that he can play with alone but don't expect to have him off your hands entirely. Make the best of it. Remember that here is a chance to get to know your child better.

Take this opportunity to introduce him to a new play experience—candy-making, a game he doesn't know, building figures with pipe cleaners—or whatever.

These are some of the things you might stock in your surprise kit:

New coloring, activity, cutout, picture or story books.

Comedy or novelty things to promote, healthy relaxing laughter.

Model-making kits for boys.

Sewing, knitting or embroidery projects and materials for girls.

Games and puzzles.

Blunt scissors and plenty of paper to cut. Old magazines with bright pictures, seed catalogs and other such items that can be cut out and pasted up in a scrapbook or played with.

The makings for peanut, bead or cardboard puppets. Old gloves for hand puppets.

Corks, toothpicks, pipe-cleaners, clothespins, spools, paper bags, cereal boxes, drinking straws, tin foil, bits of cloth, construction paper, crepe paper, milk containers—and the like. With the aid of paste, glue, cellophane tape, household cement the earlier mentioned odds and ends can be transformed into dolls, toys, gifts and all manner of interesting playthings.

Musical toys.

Construction sets.

Things to play store with.

Boxes of all shapes and sizes.

The list might be extended almost indefinitely. Before you throw that piece of household junk away—think. Maybe it will come in handy some day in the surprise kit.

THE CONVALESCENT CHILD

The youngster who is up and about after an illness but still must stay in the house is apt to be champing at the bit. He needs distraction. Many of the activities suggested for the weather-bound child can be used with the ambulating convalescent, but since he is not well enough to resume normal play these things should be borne in mind:

He tires quickly; so keep physical play to a minimum . . . His attention span is not too great and he needs more variety . . . He

should not be overstimulated . . . He doesn't have the concentration or energy for new or difficult projects or games and certainly not for lessons . . . He's going to whine some no matter how much attention you give him.

WHEN HE IS ABED

The convalescent child abed can be a thoroughly cranky and unreasonable creature. And no wonder, since it goes against his nature to be physically inactive for such a long stretch. However, his misery—and yours—can be alleviated to some extent if you can find ways to keep his hands and mind, if not his body, occupied. It will also help keep him from getting spoiled.

If he's not well enough to sit up, his main distraction must come from watching and listening. These are the ways in which it is possible to divert him:

Tell stories and play favorite music . . . Let him watch the progress of quick-growing plants . . . Show movies from a home projector on the ceiling or wall screen . . . Let him look at pictures in a book or the family scrapbook, or color and story slides in a viewer . . . Place tropical fish or other aquarium pets where he can observe them or let him watch the antics of a bird . . . Tack pictures and bright illustrations on a bulletin board or folding screen in easy line of vision and change frequently.

Have somebody make shadow figures on a wall or screen with fingers and the aid of a bright light . . . Create novelties, paper or clothespin dolls or do some handkerchief stunts where he can watch you . . . Amuse him with jokes and easy riddles . . . Play finger games with him . . . Let him have simple contests with you on the blackboard—tic-tac-toe, hangman, forming boxes and so on—with you doing the marking as he calls out the moves.

When he sits up he is ready for more active pastimes. But first you must see to his comfort. A simple method of assuring that his back is well supported is to place a chair upside down on the springs and against the headboard. The back of the chair goes under the mattress and serves as a prop-up support at a comfortable angle. Another way is to backstop the pillow with a board, the ends of which are tied to the foot of the bed with lengths of rope. Be sure,

by the way, that when your convalescent needs artificial light there is plenty of it coming over his left shoulder.

A play and work surface for the bed can be created by placing a board (perhaps the leaf of the dining room table wrapped in protective paper or linoleum) across the bed so that each end rests on a chair top. Or you can cut curved sections away from two sides of a cardboard carton so that it will fit over the patient's legs. A third idea is to cut down the legs of an old card table. Fold two of the legs and rest the table top on the bed. A folding or play table set alongside of the bed will save you the bother of running in from time to time to pick up dropped playthings.

Here are some other tricks to make things easier for him and yourself:

Put a piece of plywood or beaver board on the bed play surface as a tray. It's a drawing board, too, since paper can be fastened to it with thumbtacks . . . A plastic cover protects bedclothes from stains . . . Paper or cotton bags pinned to the side of the mattress are handy for storing play materials and scraps . . . A picnic basket hung on the back of a nearby chair or placed on a table next to the bed is a receptacle for toys. So is a bicycle basket clamped to the side of the bed frame.

As for activities, consult the ideas mentioned earlier in connection with the rainy day surprise chest. (But don't forget the cau tions for convalescents.) He will enjoy, too, writing or dictating letters to friends and relatives. Looking through a magnifying glass at stamps, picture post cards and other small things is fun. And there is pleasure and satisfaction—and excellent therapy—in cord-knotting, weaving and spool-knitting.

THE CONVALESCENT GROWNUP

Not a few of the suggestions given for amusement of the sick or convalescent child work out pretty well for the adult. Crafts and art work, puzzles, quizzes, musical instruments, light reading, solitaires, letter-writing, games. These and other interesting distractions make the long hours pass pleasantly and speed recovery. They take up time that might otherwise be spent in fruitless fretting.

The underlying principle is the same as that in play generally.

Whatever helps to relieve the mind of burdensome worries and tedium is good medicine for the entire organism.

SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Let's Build, by Constance H. Crocker (Houghton-Mifflin).

Woodworking, by Roger Lewis (Knopf).

Homemade Toys, by Arthur Lawson (David McKay).

Adventures in Scrapcraft, Michael C. Dank (Greenberg).

Booklets on making toys, playthings, planning a home workshop put out by Delta Power Tool Division—Pitts. 8, Pa. (Also send for their catalog.)

The National Recreation Association, New York, prints bulletins on making puzzles and games and other play apparatus. Also, *The Right Toy for the Right Age.*

Diversion for the Sick (free)—John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co., Boston, Mass.

How To Help The Shut-in Child, Margery D. McMullin (E. P. Dutton).

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