

You often discuss cosmetics, exercises, etc. on the pages of your magazine. I am sure that very few women follow your advice systematically. Why? There's no time. I recently conducted an experiment. I asked several friends a series of questions. Three of them had two children. Two of them had three children, and two more had one child. And here are the results. Each one got up no later than six in the morning and went to bed after midnight. "Do women exercise and have a massage?" "No," they replied in chorus, except for one who said very rarely. "Do you go to the theater or to the movies?" "Only with the children, and not often," they answered unanimously. I asked them how much time they spend with their children — "15-20 minutes." Only one answered "I try for 30 minutes." Lastly, I wanted to know how my friends amused themselves. "I sew and knit a little," answered two. The others categorically said "I don't attempt anything other than the most important housework."

So, try to be charming, fascinating, bewitching, and mysterious!

The proposal to give women the opportunity to work flexible hours, with a shortened workday (for example, up to

six hours), is a good idea. There will be a loss in pay, but for women the two extra hours are more important. There would be time for the children, and for massages and exercise.

And it would also be good to organize more co-operatives like "Nanny" with hourly rates. Then it would be possible to go to the theater or a concert peacefully, knowing that the children are being looked after.

I have not talked about the role of husbands. In most of the families I have been talking about, the husbands are not bad helpers. But, after all, they are also busy 8-9 hours at work.

Elena Liubimova

Krest' ianka, June 1988.

"I have tried all channels, but with no luck," wrote N. Iu. Zakharova to the editors. "I work as the head of a kindergarten. Our kindergarten is affiliated with the local village council, on the same territory where the Voskhod collective farm is located. The farm is building a well-appointed house. There is enough room for everyone. But the collective farm does not want to give apartments to 'outsiders.' And the 'outsiders' are us, the workers at the kindergarten."

The editors approached the executive committee of the local soviet of people's deputies. The head of the executive committee announced that the collective farm management had decided to give Zakharova a two-room apartment in the new house.

"Dear Krest' ianka," wrote T.M. Bologova, a single mother from a state farm. "I worked as a store manager. Last year, when a conflict arose, I decided to change jobs, but I was not given my work book for several months. As a result, I could not get a job before going on maternity leave. [In order to receive the benefit, a woman needs at least one year's job seniority.] I recently had my second child. How can I support two children if they will not pay me any maternity benefits?"

As the secretary of the local trade union council explained to the editors, Bologova was reinstated in her former job with payment of wages for the time she was forced to take off. She went on maternity leave and received the benefit.

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anonymity

JOANNA KAFAROWSKI

I like striding along with my jeans that sag in the bum,
And my father's old sweater with the holes patched up
And not too well either because I can't sew.

But most of all, best of all, I like to move unencumbered,
My arms free to swing in time with whatever half-remembered,
Half-forgotten song I happen to be singing at the moment.

The simple fact is — I don't like purses or wallets
Or anything that hangs on the shoulder, tucks under the arm,
Fits neatly into the palm of the hand,
Contains money, credit cards, license, keys and of course,
An untidily organized Everywoman's Almanac.

My greatest fear in any dire public emergency
Is not whether I'm wearing the underwear I was given
At age 12 — with the pink elephants and broken elastic,
But that I'll be found lying unconscious in the street,
Aided by someone who searches my pockets for identification,
Trying to name me, trying to pin me down.

Canadian Returnee

LILIANE WELCH

Sunday curls noiseless over Luxembourg,
Sunday without work, fleeing into bells,
candles waning skyward. And I, Canadian
returnee, conquer engraved stone, until
the riven citadel spews fireballs again,
their comet-tails scanning the ramparts.
And touching broken frescoes, my hands
stumble no more blind through speechlessness,
I find words warm like a goose-down shirt,
a comfort seductive against the vetoes
from a past reborn slowly as foreign tongue.
My fingers walk willing through my childhood,
long Sunday afternoons infatuated
by an atlas with Indian campfires
and pencilled somewhere a way toward them.