

Mother Frets About Son Dad Has Hopeful Idea

Dear Mary Haworth: My problem centres on my 5-year-old son. He was born about the same time as four baby girls in our neighborhood. When Buddy was old enough to play, these girls were his only playmates and still are; except at now there are numerous boys around here, but only two near his age, and they are a couple of years older. Of course these boys have tried to play with him; but he doesn't really enjoy them and much prefers the girls. Occasionally I make him play with boys, telling him that he will like them after a while, as boys

are more fun; but he always goes back to the girls, playing dolls, etc. We have given him trucks, guns and such; and last week when I saw three boys in the next yard, I sent Buddy out with a couple of trucks. But soon he was crying because his trucks were dirty! I am very upset by all this; and not only about his outdoor play, but indoors too. For instance, he likes my shoes, hats, jewelry and make-up. And he always shows interest in what women guests are wearing. Last week in a store he noticed the salesgirl's mismatched earrings, and she said he was the only person who had noticed.

FATHER HOPEFUL
Indoors, at play, he puts a towel on his head, fastens the ends in back with a rubber band and pretends it is a pony tail. I could go on, but this will give you the general idea. I have talked to our doctor, who suggests YMCA or camp; but I find he is still too young for either. Next fall when he starts school he will be thrown with these girls again, unless we send him elsewhere to school I've even

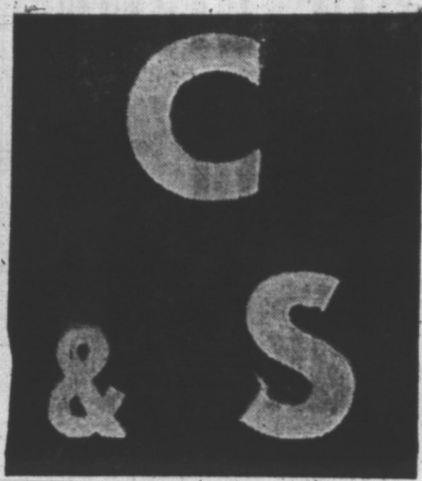
thought of moving, but that is not possible at present. I want him to be happy; and I want to do what is best. You may say that I have no problem, but I am a nervous wreck worrying over this. My husband insists that school will make a difference, but I can't agree, even though I hope he is right. I think any normal mother would understand my concern—wanting my son to be a real boy. Please advise us. E. D.

BENEFITTING NO HELP
Dear E. D.: As I get the picture, Buddy is a sorely hen-

packed child; and maybe this is a considerable part of his difficulty, on the score of becoming "real boy."
It seems that you are an overly anxious Mom, wanting your son to support your ego—wanting him to be "all boy," according to your very narrow concept of masculine merit. Even your husband is patiently on the defensive against your characteristic nagging—or "worry" as you call it—about the lad. He is trying to keep alight a spark of hope for the best, in the midst of your perpetual gloom about the youngsters' tendencies.

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Wed., July 15, 1956-7
Let's face it, your attitude is unsympathetic towards Buddy's interest in girl pastimes and feminine furbelows. Your upset, baffled and hedgesing concern along this line amounts to rejecting him "as is." He can't help but feel the dismaying impact of your disappointment and disapproval, even though he can't fathom your reasoning, nor relish—on order—the boy games you push him into.
It may be that this chilly aspect of the mother-child relationship vaguely puzzles and frightens him and thereby weakens him for hardy interchange with other boys, particularly those a bit older. Why? Well, because it isolates him from the primary source of the pre-school-age child's self-confidence in exploring new fields—namely, a sense of rating A-1 with a warm-hearted, happy mother, who is loyally sympathetic to his innermost quality even when she can't let him do as he pleases.
Also it's possible that he has an image of Mother, or Woman, as the big cheese in life. If you try to manage husband and son on a tight rein, calling the shots, having the last word (to the best of your ability) he may tend instinctively to model himself after the household despot in petticoats, feeling she is nature's king pin. So, study yourself, as a likely contributor to his special bias.
To some extent, Buddy is the person he was born. But the substance of his rearing will make the difference between plus or minus, in the character he forms.

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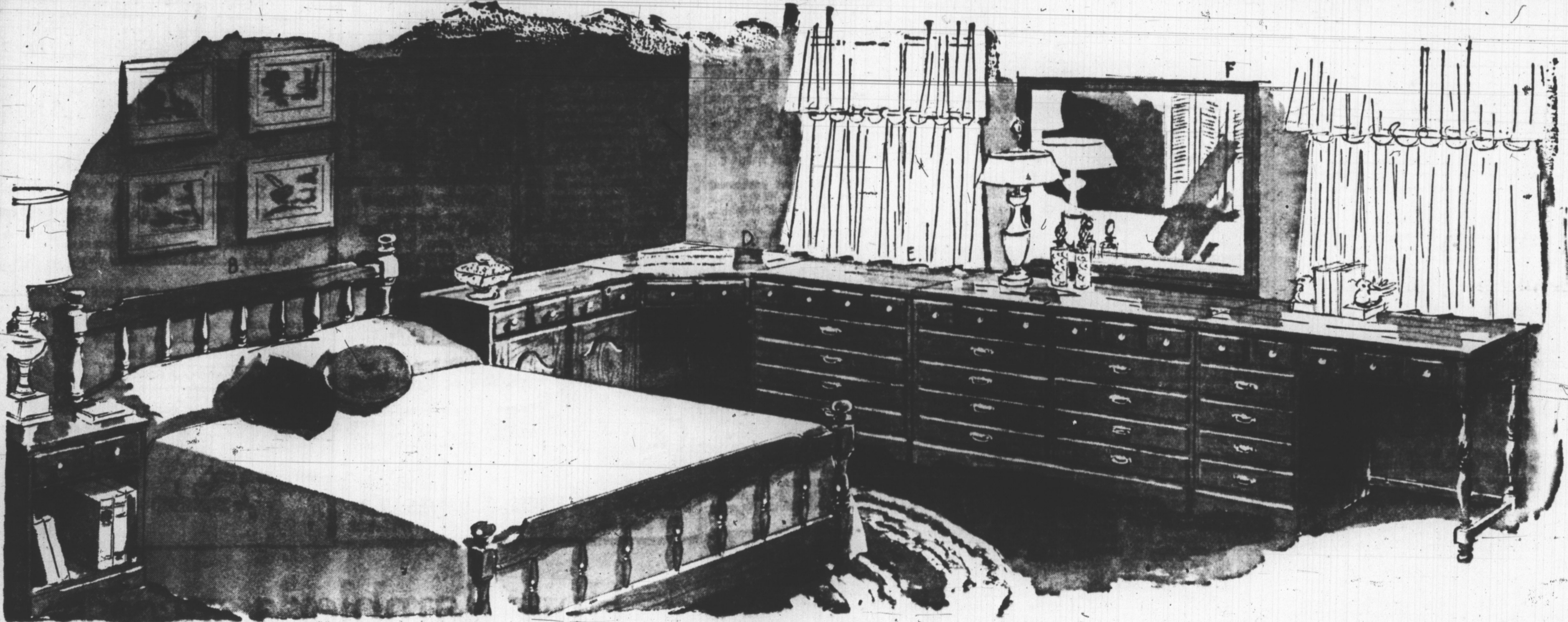


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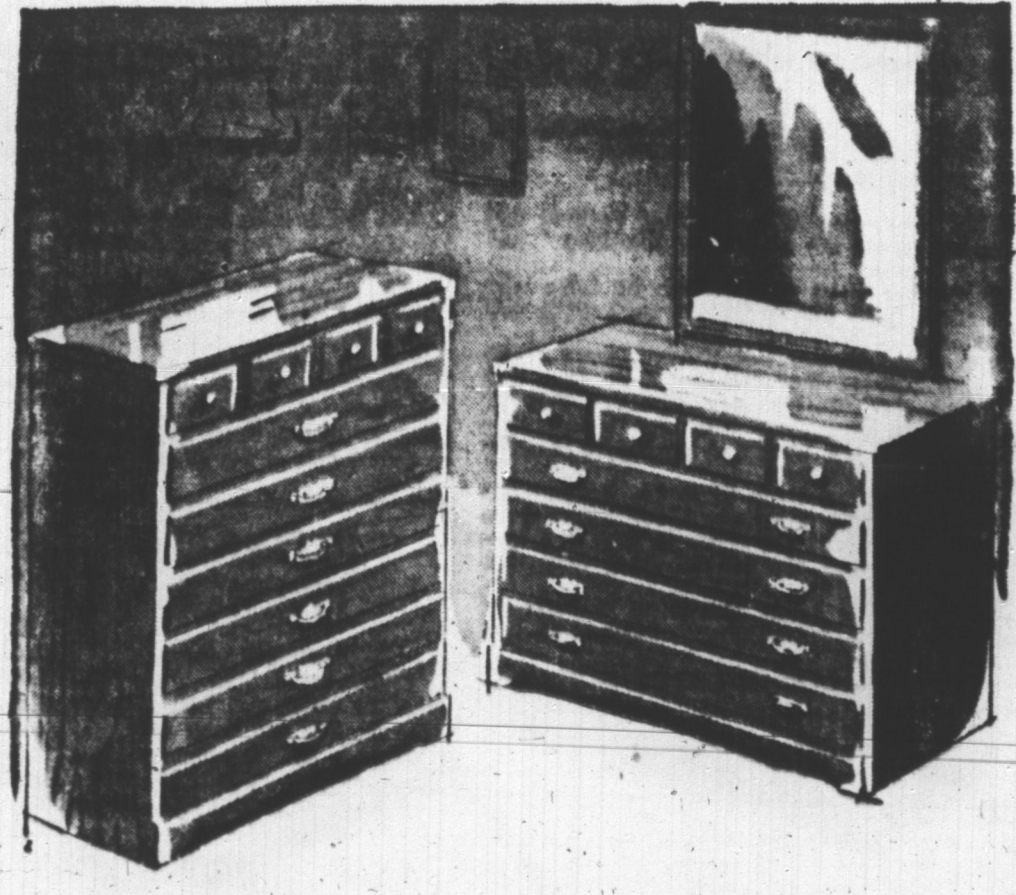
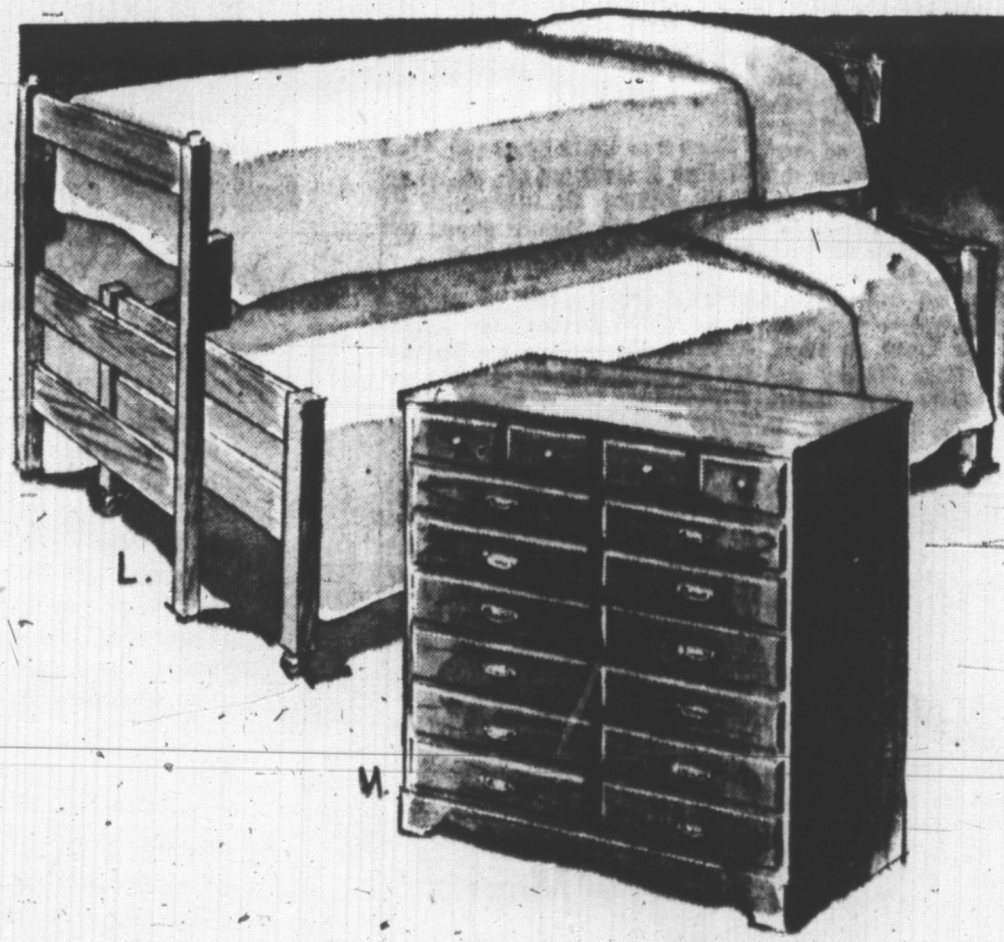
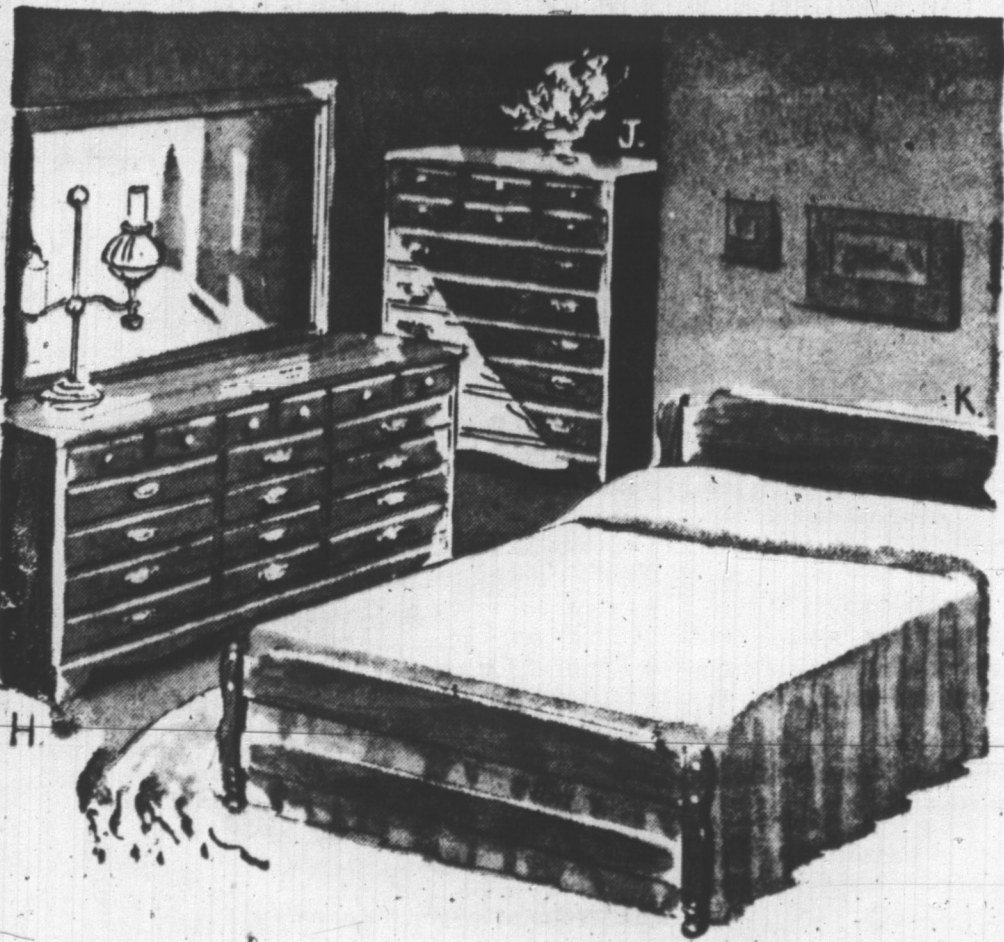
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