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management in families / MANAGING
RESOURCES



Managing Resources

A birthday party for the children, a new sofa, Grandma's tea set, a family workroom, your health, a cherished memory, a dairy farm—individually these items do not seem to have much in common. But if each is related to the life of a family, they all take on a common identity: they are all examples of *resources*, or ways and means to be managed for the good of an entire family.

The list of family resources varies from family to family, and from generation to generation. In the "good old days" the average family had fewer material goods than today, and less money, tools, and education. So families, generally, were limited in their choices of what to use and what to do in managing their affairs. Today most families have a wide variety of resources available to them. They have more to pick from to help them fashion the kind of life they want.

Recognizing resources is partly a matter of viewpoint. Do you recognize all your resources when you see them? Are you ignoring some? Are you hoarding others for some unclearly defined future use? Are you spending some on needs which really don't exist any more?

Your answers to these questions will depend, first of all, on what is important to your family—your values—and your objectives or goals as a family. If you can define these values first, then it will be easier for you to recognize your resources and see how they can be related to your goals. You might even discover hidden resources or create new ones that will help you strengthen, or reach, your objectives.

You will read in the following story how four families managed some of their resources, sometimes happily, sometimes not so happily. This article is reprinted by special permission from *Farm Journal*, March 1964, copyright 1964 by Farm Journal, Inc. Although written for farm families, it shows a practical application of management philosophy for everyone.

WHY SAVE THE CREAM?

Too many people settle for a skim-milk kind of life, says California ranchwoman **ETHLYN GORSLINE**.

The boss just came in from egg gathering as I

was throwing an old spread over our new sofa. "What's that for?" asked the man in my life, and I told him: "I want to keep this sofa nice and clean."

The man looked skeptical. "I thought we bought the new sofa so we wouldn't have to cover up the old one." While I was trying for a comeback, he went on: "Reminds me of Link Dill's old car he traded in the other day. You know, when he took the seat covers off, the upholstery looked as bright as fresh paint. No profit to Link—he only got list price."

I can read the Boss's mind like a book. He's in favor of keeping equipment in top condition, from screwdrivers to chicken feeders. But he also thinks the good things of life should be enjoyed—now. In fact, I've heard him say that too many people live a skim-milk existence; they save the cream for "special," only to have it turn sour.

He's right too. I remember the bitter cold night we took Lucy and Joe Peters home with us after they'd been burned out. They hadn't rescued a thing. As we warmed ourselves with hot chocolate, Lucy said in a strained voice: "You know what I regret most? My Dresden tea set from Grandma."

The tea set had pink moss roses on it and you could see your fingers through the china. "I was so afraid something would happen to it, I kept it stored in tissue paper," Lucy told us. "I used to dream that some special occasion would come along and I'd use my nice china. Too late now—it's gone."

And I remember the auction that was held after our community's Aunt Becky died. Uncle Buford was



a new sofa . . .

going into a home for senior citizens, so all their belongings were up for sale. There wasn't much, but when one trunk was opened, a feminine chorus of ohs and ahs went up. The trunk was overflowing with Aunt Becky's handwork—crocheted and embroidered linens, lovely hooked rugs . . . I thought of the bare rooms she and Uncle Buford had lived in, and how much brightness her beautiful things would have added. But Aunt Becky kept them put away till we can get a better house." What a waste!

Then Fred and Ellen Baldwin, who have a dairy near us—they've worked hard all their lives and raised a family. Ellen has been arguing that they could take things easier. She told me, "We're going to Hawaii, as soon as I can convince Fred we can leave the place with the hired man."

But one morning recently she found Fred unconscious on the floor of the milk room. Heart attack, the doctor said—from overwork, probably. So Fred was in the hospital for three weeks while his wife traveled miles to and from. The ranch got along—perhaps not as well as if the master mind had been there, but it didn't go broke. Ellen laments: "If only we had taken our trip, at least we'd have had more memories to cherish."

Our family's cherished memories include the camping trips we used to take into the high Sierras. We couldn't really afford trips, and it wasn't easy for

Dad to be away from the poultry. So our excursions were inexpensive and of short duration. It came out how important they were, though—in a letter I've treasured since World War II, from our son Gary in New Guinea:

"As I sit here in this steaming, rotting jungle, things come to me out of the past. I can smell and feel the cold crisp air of a mountain morning. I smell the bacon Mom's cooking on that old rock stove. I can hear Dad's ax ringing on the pine log he's cutting for the fire, and Sis is rattling the tin plates on the camp table. For a little while the darkness and the death smell are gone, and I know why it is that I am out here fighting."

The Boss and I are glad we didn't put off those camping trips. We're glad we "used the cream" while we had it. And that decides me: I am putting away that old sofa-cover so we can enjoy our sofa. It will be new only once, and that once belongs to us.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Resources are tools, ways and means, assets or helps—that you have available to achieve what is important to you. Resources sometimes overlooked are the personal abilities, interests and skills of family members and other people.

1. In managing a home, which comes first: de-

Grandma's tea set . . .



oiding on what is important to do—or how to use resources? Why?

2. Fred Baldwin continued using his physical capacities mostly to keep the farm going when the need to slow down, delegate some work and change his living ways was becoming important. Can you think of other situations in which a family needs to re-think what is important at the time and then perhaps change the way they are using resources?

3. "Human Work Capacity" is a name used to describe a person's total physical, mental and personality resources. It is called the most important and necessary resource in home management. Can you see why?

4. How many different resources can you identify in this article? In your own life? Are there some that you never thought of as resources before? Are some hidden away like Aunt Becky's linens?

5. What is your own point of view on "saving" resources? Are there times in families when something or other is scarce and needs to be conserved? Do you think that you can ever *increase* a resource by using it?

6. There are many ways to create—not only save—resources! Have you ever actually created a new resource that you didn't have in the family before? For example, "create" a more pleasant home by putting out the beautiful things you already have; "create" or develop a love of animals in your children by taking the kids to the zoo; "create" or train someone to look after the children (or the farm, shop, etc.) so you could do something else.

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family workroom . . .

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