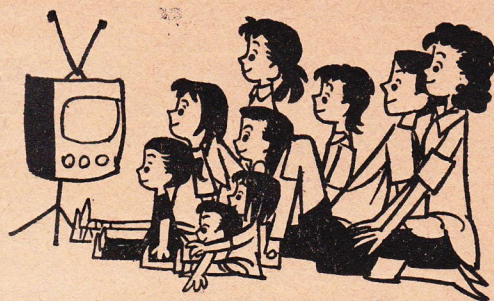




Mom + I  
wrote this  
together

## That Difference about a Large Family



## There's More of Everything!

BY JOHN DOWNES

WHILE driving home together recently, my wife Margaret and I listened to a radio discussion on The Family. It was interesting, but the spokesman for the Large Family was better qualified to discuss fishing. I say this with full realization that the poor man may have lived in a desert all his life.

Anyway, as a result of listening to the program and hearing varied misconceptions about big families, we decided to jot down a few thoughts of our own.

First off, I know that eight children (seven girls and finally a boy) is not the largest family extant. However, when compared with the national average, we feel we qualify.

Let me be slightly disagreeable and say that Margaret and I disagree with the Large Family pic-

ture so often painted by uninformed artists—the jolly mother who sits back to enjoy television and fudge while her efficient children perform the housework—the idea that family life is a constant comedy because of the constant round of hilarious things said and done—the belief that parental personalities, wants, ideals, and standards necessarily change with succeeding children.

Our own experience leads us to conclude that the difference with a large family is easily defined. It's simply this: there is just more of everything.

There is more work. When you clean or check finger- and toenails of eight children, the total comes to 160. In our family when you let down or take up hems, it adds up to seven fittings. When you complete a day of giving home-permanents, you feel like an ex-

ploited beauty shop apprentice. Dishes, laundry, cleaning, pressing and ironing are all multiplied. It is true that the older children do help, but they are limited by their mental and physical capacities.

But there is more pleasure too. The parent of a single child has less chance of hearing a funny or heartwarming incident that happened in the classroom or during the course of the day's play. Only in the past week we have heard:

- twelve year old Peggy lament because "the only thing maturing on me are my feet."
- ten year old Betsy, respectfully, tell sixteen year old Mary that "your eye makeup makes you look like a racoon."
- kindergarten Nancy express her devotion for a little boy whom she could truly love except that "he smells like apples."
- growing-up Joey recount a story wherein the heroine was given a chest of gold, with the hope—wistfully—that some day she'll have a chest of any color.

AGAIN, THERE'S MORE EXPENSE despite the hand-me-down process. When we stop for ice-cream cones, a dollar suffers irreparably. Shoes for the family represent a major cash outlay. It isn't so true now but not too many years ago we used to say that our family spilled more milk than many families drank.