This babysitter's kids are too busy to sit

By JEANNE WHITTAKER
Anyone who has ever parented
knows moments when it is easier to spell "superculifragilistics-juildocio us" than locate a dependable baby sitextra properties of the perfect sitter, she always seems to have too many clients, is retired, or is as mythical as Mary Poppins.

Jeanne Wassell, of Birraingham, is trying to do something about the problem. A single parent herself, she knows the problems that parents face when trying to juggle a personal life with children.

Mrs. Wassell (pronounced Waa-sell)

with children.
Mrs. Wassell (pronounced Waa-sell) doesn't compare herself to Mary Poppins, but her ideas on the care and feeding of her young charges sound like the Poppins ethic.
"It's very bad for a child to just sit in front of a television and even worse for him to see you plop down in front of the TV."
Instead, Wassell believes children enjoy walking, reading stories, sharing a bit of French poetry, and talking or acting out the ballet she loves so much.

ing a bit of rench poetry, and taiking or acting out the bailet she loves so much.
"Too often, the first thing a parent says to me is: Here's the TV and help yourself to anything you want from the ice box." I don't like to watch TV and I'm already too fat, so I don't need either of those things. I don't think that to the things. I don't think that telangers need another kind of person," she said.
"If ind that caring for smaller children: I think that teenagers need another kind of person," she said.
"If ind that caring for smaller children that the said of the she had been she had be

wife, Starr Danias, of the Joffrey Bal-let, appeared in "The Turning Point," she explains with pride. Unfortunately, she said, the young

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satisfied.
"I was very happy to be a mother," she said. "Now, when I hold a baby I remember how happy I was. It's a wonderful feeling. I have one baby girl who smiles the minute I walk into the house."

the house."

BABY SITTING is the latest of several professions Wassell has undertaken to ald her finances. In the past professions professions are severage, and the profession are professions are severage, and the profession are professions are severaged to the profession and a teacher's aid. She as worked in enough offices to know that clerical work isn't her cup of tea. "When I decided that I needed extra money." she said, "I went to the Community House to see what people were asking for. They had a lot of things going on; and baby sitting seemed like it would be interesting. I've discovered a lot of women who really help."

really help."

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, she said, taught her that a wife should be free to go with her husband.

"When Doug was little one of us had to stay home," she explained. She realizes now that this was a mistake, both for the child and her marriage.

"Now I tell my clients 'Go with him. Have some tun.' I'm delighted to be there so that they can go."

In the year since she began accepting clients—she believes that she is still the common the common that we had a single clients—she will be the common the common that the is so that the common that the she is the control of the common that the is looking for other mature women to fill requests she is unable to accept.

"I want to attract women who will make life pleasant for the mother and the child," she explained. "And I don't want anyone to think that we are trying to replace a domestic employee. I don't intend to do housework, al-

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"I figure that the family who hires me is paying me and often feeding me, so it's just a little gesture of appreciation if I put the dishes in the dish washer or tidy up a little." Wassell's standard fee is \$1 per to do extra chores—for one working mother she warms a pre-prepared dinner for the entire family—she charces \$4.

dinner for the entire family—she charges \$4. "Why not? A good cook or chauf-feur gets up to \$5 per hour and I am often asked to do the same things." Her job, said Wassell, is as much for self satisfaction as it is to help her budget. The women she is seeking to augment her service must feel the

augment her service must feel the same way.

"They're not going to make a lot of money. But, they are going to be doing something for themselves. In some cases I find that they are de-lighted to get out of the house and do something different. A couple of times, when I've asked friends to help out, they got such a kick out of it that they have asked me to call them again."

again."
Wassell has a set of goals, which

Wassell has a set of goals, which she believes are important to the success of her baby sitting venture.

"It ry to avoid the quarrelsome family; and I avoid the family that expects you to do a whole bunch of other things beside care for the children. I don't mind helping a little, but I can't clean a whole house."

Another time off: she said is a rule.

Another turn off, she said, is a rude child. "I can't stand kids that talk back to their parents."

Also inflexible is her determination to never accept an appointment before never.

I like to have my coffee, meditate a little, and do my writing in the morning. I'm actually th one of the best unpublished authors around

town."

Beside caring for the children,
Wassell also provides the parent with
a detailed summary at the end of an
afternoon or evening.
"I write the mother a list of what
went on while I was there. I learned
how to do that when I taught in nursery school. At the end of each week
we wrote little progress reports to
send home with the children so their
parents could see what had happened
to their children during school."
She also insists that the children
address her by her proper name.

address her by her proper name. "I'm not their playmate and I don't want to be. I've got a great deal of responsibility and I want the children to know it," she said firmly.

Wassell still finds time however, to shower her charges with enough im-aginative activity to keep them busy, amused, and cooperative. Though they know her as Mrs. Wassell, the children also know her as the friend who will join them finger painting on the kitchen table.

"I particularly like the walks," she said. "One house I sat for had big stones in the yard; so, I told the little boy to climb the mountains. He loved it. We made up a story about his adventure. I think that imagination is a wonderful thing and you don't develop that sitting in front of the television set."

ANOTHER pet peeve is the child with too many toys. There are chil-dren, she said, who have so many toys that they couldn't possibly play with them all.

"I frequently suggest to a parent that she put away all but a few then exchange them later once the child has had an opportunity to enjoy the ones he has."

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"I wish other women would follow my lead," she said. "There are so

many mothers out there was need our help."

For further information about Jeanne Wassell's project, call 649-6713. The Birmingham Community House also has information regarding baby sitting and other services.





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