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Mattingly, Mary Erb, "Safety Begins At Home " (1957). *Historical Documents of the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service*. Paper 898.

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FS Script-4
April 30, 1957

SAFETY BEGINS AT HOME

(A Short Four-Act Safety Play)

FURDUE UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension Service
Lafayette, Indiana

SAFETY BEGINS AT HOME

By Mary Erb Mattingly
Elston Home Demonstration Club
Tippecanoe County

Settings Takes place in living room of a modern Indiana farmhouse.

Characters are

Bill Johnson, age 36, a modern farmer
Sarah Johnson, age 35, his wife
Their children: Dick-----14
Lois-----10
Janie----- 6
Timmy----- 4

Note: This play would work very well for a radio program. It also can be shortened rather easily by limiting the contest to one or two days.

ACT I

SCENE I

The living room of the Johnson home. Bill is reading the evening paper and Sarah is knitting.

Bill: This County Safety Program has quite a spread in the paper, Sarah. Are any of your clubs participating in it?

Sarah: Oh, yes. I think every organization has a committee on it, but I'm not assigned to any of them. I think it's a good idea, of course.

Bill: Yes, it is a good idea. I know lots of homes and farms around here that need extra attention given to fire hazards and to new safety devices. Our place is in good shape, though.

Sarah: (complacently) Yes, we don't have to worry. You've always been foresighted, Bill, about eliminating hazards before accidents occur. And, since our home is so modern, we don't have to worry about old fashioned wiring and heating systems in the house. I wish everyone could be as fortunate as we are. I can't recall an accident around here...

Sound: Child's scream; followed by crying.

Sarah: It's Timmy! (rushes from room, then returns, leading crying child.)

Bill: (arises and meets mother and son) What happened, fellow? Tricycle too much for you to handle?

Sarah: (inspecting leg) He's hurt, Bill. Look at this nasty gash and bruise.

Timmy: (tearful and indignant) Janie left her old skates on the front steps and I fell on 'em, I did!

Bill: Janie knows better than that. Janie!

Sarah: What was I just saying about no accidents? This is just the kind that could have been serious, too.

Janie enters---

Bill: Say, young lady, your skates were left on the front steps and caused your little brother a painful fall.

Janie: I didn't leave them, Daddy. I was going right back.

Bill: You left them for a minute and that's all the time it takes to have an accident. And we've had it.

Sarah: Bill, maybe we should take advantage of this county program to develop some good habits among the children. Our equipment and home may be accident proof, but they're only as safe as the people who use them.

Bill: We'll have a family council meeting just as soon as Lois comes home from the 4-H club, and Dick gets back from Boy Scouts.

Curtain

SCENE II Living Room

Bill: And so that's what happened to Timmy. Now what shall we do to prevent more of these little accidents?

Sarah: Daddy and I think that safety should be everyone's responsibility.

Dick: We were just talking about the County Safety Program at Scouts tonight. We're going to collect old newspapers and magazines because they're fire hazards, and then sell them to earn money.

Lois: The 4-H girls are making safety posters for the County Program.

Bill: I'm glad your organizations are doing something, but what can our family do?

Dick: Let's have a contest and have a prize for the winner.

Lois: Let's each look for safety hazards and decide how to correct them and give points. Then the one with the most points wins.

Bill: That's a good idea. The points might be a problem, though. Shall we say five points for one like finding the skates on the steps, and ten for one that isn't quite so easy to find.

Dick: Then Timmy gets five points to start. He found the skates.

Timmy: (nodding solemnly) Janie was a bad girl.

Sarah: (smiling) Yes, Janie was a bad girl, but I think she's heard enough about it.

Bill: Now, let's each look for things around the house and farm that might cause accidents. Each day we'll meet and tell the things we've found, and get our points. Then, shall we say in three days, we'll add the scores and see who wins.

ACT II (Bill and Sarah are the only two in living room)

Bill: Well, Sarah, how do you think our system is working.

Sarah: It's quite a game. The children are acting like Junior detectives. They're very secretive too. I'll be curious to hear what they've found.

(enter Dick and Lois)

Bill: How are you two getting along on our game?

Dick: It's not a game, Dad. It's a contest! And it's serious business.

Bill: Of course it is. Have you found lots of hazards?

Dick: Quite a few.

Lois: What if two of us find the same hazard? Who gets the points?

Sarah: That's a good question. I suppose we should divide them, don't you?

(enters Janie, followed by Timmy)

Bill: Now, who's first?

(momentary silence)

Bill: Then I'll give mine. First, I noticed that the car brakes needed adjusting, so I had them fixed today. Five points for me. Next I found an extension cord in the barn that hangs so low that I had to duck under it. You know a person could almost hang on it, the way it was. I fixed that. Five more points. Pretty good, eh?

Sarah: Pretty good, Dad, but I have three. First, I went through the house, and found five small rugs that aren't skid-proof. I sewed rubber jar rings on the back side of each of them. Next, I took the pressure cooker to the county home demonstration agent, and had her check it for safety, and it really needed checking. You remember that we had

some chips in our everyday dishes and glasses? Well, I threw them away and bought replacements while I was in town. Someone could have been cut on them. Fifteen points, right?

Dick: Am I next? First, I noticed that our TV antenna leans, because one of the wires is broken. I'll need help to fix that. Next, I noticed that your rifle was leaning in the corner of the back porch, Dad, instead of being on the rack. I put it back. Third, I checked the car and found that one of the tail lights was not working, Dad, and one of the turn signals on the back of the truck was mashed too. There was a big dead limb on the oak tree and I pulled it down and burned it.

Bill: I noticed that you did that, son. That was a very good idea.

Dick: On Timmy's swing set in the yard, one of the chains was broken and the swing was dangling. I fixed that.

Timmy: Oh, goody.

Dick: That's all, I guess.

Bill: That's very fine, Dick. I think you deserve 10 points for seeing that gun. I sure slipped there.

Timmy: Give him 10 points for my swing too, Daddy.

Bill: Is that all right with everyone?

Lois: Yes, give him 40 points. Now, here are mine. Mother, you put the beaters in the electric mixer while it was plugged in. The dial was turned off, but if you had bumped it or something, you might have lost a finger. That's one. Then you used a metal spoon in the bowl while the mixer was running, and you should have used a rubber scraper. Third, there were two paring knives in the cutlery drawer instead of on the knife rack. Fourth, the electric coffee pot was plugged in when it was empty. Fifth, the sewing scissors were out where Timmy could reach them. Sixth, the automatic washer wasn't unplugged between washings.

Seventh, a pan was left in the oven, and if we'd turned on the broiler, the pan might have been ruined. And eighth, the pilot light was out on the kitchen range, and gas was escaping.

Sarah: Fine, Lois. Those are all important things.

Bill: I think Lois should get 10 points for the pilot light discovery. Escaping gas is pretty dangerous. So Lois has 40 points. Now, Janie, how about you?

Janie: I didn't find as many things as you, so I can't win.

Bill: The contest isn't finished, Janie. What do you have?

Janie: First, the pitcher of milk was left out of the refrigerator, and I don't like warm milk.

Bill: Good for you.

Janie: Mama left her coffee cup and saucer on an end table, where Timmy might upset them. Next, Timmy was trying to climb the apple tree and I made him get down so he wouldn't fall. And last, Daddy left his saw on the back porch where Timmy could get hurt on it.

Timmy: Janie left her skates on the front steps and I got hurt too.

Bill: Good job, Janie. That's 20 points. Now Timmy, how about you?

Timmy: I hid Janie's skates where she can't ever find them, so I won't fall on them again.

Sarah: Now, I think Timmy has a good idea.

Janie: I don't.

Sarah: I mean the idea behind what he did. Shall we make it a rule that toys left like the skates are to be put away for a week, to remind the owner to take care of them? And then let's give Timmy 10 points

for the idea.

Bill: Fine. He can give me the skates to put away and then he won't have to keep them hidden.

ACT III (Family is again seated in living room.)

Bill: Well, kids, we've finished a second day in our contest. One day to go. How are we doing?

Sarah: Things are getting harder to find. There are too many hazards of course, but we have to look for them. What did you find today, Dad?

Bill: The lawnmower and scythes were left in the yard, and so was a can of gasoline. Also, the electric hedge trimmer was left on the porch. And the rake was left, tines up, at the garden gate. A roll of barbed wire was loose in the barnyard where anyone could fall over it. I found three fence breaks, where animals could break through. How many points do I get?

Sarah: I count about six items. Will 30 points be enough?

Bill: That suits me. How about you, Mother?

Sarah: I've been looking at appliances today. I found three plugs with bad connections. The toaster has a peculiar rattle when its toasting. We have no extra fuses for the switch box, and no candles in case our lights fail. I'll take 10 points for those. I checked the medicine cabinet. It's too full of cologne and shave lotion, and lacks such essentials as ointment for burns, and nose drops. I'll get that restocked tomorrow. In the living room, the lamp cords were all too long, and are really tripping hazards, even though I try to keep them out of the way.

Bill: That sounds like 20 points all together. Now, Dick--

Dick: In the tool shed I noticed that most of the tools are just kind of stacked. The axe and the pick were laying on the floor. I made places to hang most of the tools, and I'll need your advice on part of it, Dad.

Bill: I'll be glad to help. That's a job I've been putting off.

Dick: You know how we burn trash close to the strawberry patch? Well, we ought to move the incinerator. When there's straw on the berries that's an awful fire hazard. I cleaned out the ash dump under the fireplace, too, and I believe we should have the furnace checked by a repair man. Then, my last item is the front door lock. It works just part of the time, and we ought to repair it or replace it.

Bill: Fine, Dick. I think you're choosing excellent examples. That's 25 points. Now, Lois----

Lois: In the big green chair, a spring is loose and starting to poke through the material. The leg on one kitchen chair is a little wobbly. You know the one. In the front yard, there was a little hole that Spot dug last summer. The grass grew high there, and filled it, so that you couldn't see it, but could step in it and twist your ankle. I filled it with dirt and patted it down good. That's all I found today.

Bill: That's good for 15, Lois. Now Janie ---

Janie: I looked through my toy box, and through Timmy's and threw away all the toys that were broken or had sharp edges. It took me all day to do a good job.

Sarah: Since you went through Timmy's toys as well as your own, I think you should get double credit. How about you, Tim.

Timmy: I went through the trash cans, and saved all my best toys that Janie threw away. I fixed them so they're good now.

Bill: I guess you deserve credit for your effort, Tim, but Janie was trying to help you. Now, tomorrow we'll report and find who wins the contest.

ACT IV (Again the Living Room, Bill and Sarah alone.)

Sarah: Bill, I think this idea is wonderful. Weren't we smug to think our home was accident-proof? Not only are we making it a safer place, but we're teaching the children and ourselves to look for potential dangers and to do something about them. Dick seems to be particularly resourceful.

Bill: Yes he does, and at his age he should be. Now, have you thought of a suitable prize?

Sarah: No, I haven't; I thought you'd take care of it.

Bill: I have some ideas. Here come the children.
(enter four children)

Bill: So we'll wind up our contest now. But let's not stop looking for hazards. If you point out any especially good ones in the future, I might add a little bonus to your allowance. Some of these suggestions mean a money savings to us. Others might save our lives.

Sarah: Yes, safety does begin at home, and we must continue to work for a safer and better home. Daddy and I are very pleased and proud of your ideas. Now what did you find today, Daddy?

Bill: I checked some of our big trees and found some hollow ones that should be removed. I looked over the cold frames, and ordered glass to replace a few broken panes. I also ordered two new fire extinguishers for the barn. That's 15... Right?

Sarah: I found a cracked glass pane in the guest bedroom window that must be replaced. I went through the attic and spare closets, and sorted all those old clothes we've been keeping. I have boxes full of them, to give away, and we have so much more space

now to store more things. For years, I've kept the matches beside the kitchen range and thought they were too close. Today I moved them. Last of all, I cleaned some of the cabinets. The cleansers and cleaning solutions are right next to the pots and pans. Since some of them are poisonous, they just don't belong in the kitchen so I moved them. Does that add up to 20?

Dick: In the dining room today, I found an electric outlet carrying six appliances, all at once. There was a loose board in that cover over the old cistern and I repaired it.

Bill: We should cement that. We'll do it, too.

Dick: While we're doing that, we ought to patch that little broken place in the front sidewalk. In the basement, the paint shelves are a mess. I straightened out some of it but I think we should move all that to the garage where ventilation is better.

Bill: Good boy, Dick.

Lois: I put some of that red reflector tape on the mailbox, and I moved those rocks that were too close to the drive. That's all I could find.

Janie: There are some sharp toys in the sandbox and I moved them.

Bill: Jobs are a little harder to find, and that's a good sign. Timmy, do you have a report?

Timmy: I locked Spot in the tool shed. He was barking at birds and I was afraid he'd hurt them.

Dick: So that's how he got in there.

Bill: Well, mother, we can be pretty proud of our boys and girls. It looks like Dick is the winner, with 85 points. Lois is second. You and I tie for third, Janie is fourth, and Timmy fifth. Now, for the prizes. This was a mighty important project and worth a good reward. How about 10 dollars for Dick, 8 dollars for Lois, 5 dollars for Janie, and 2 dollars for Timmy. A new dress for Mother?

Sarah: And don't forget Dad. Then I was going to suggest that this weekend we take a nice trip to the Lake, and celebrate our safety project that began at home and is going to continue there.

Historic Document

Cooperative Extension Work In Agriculture and Home Economics
State of Indiana, Purdue University
and the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
H. G. Diesslin, Director, Lafayette, Indiana
Issued in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914.