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PARTY LINE TALK WITH A POINT
(A Short Skit on Child Safety)

PURDUE UNIVERSITY
Agricultural Extension Service
Lafayette, Indiana
PARTY LINE TALK WITH A POINT

by
Mary Dean Williams, Woman's Editor
INDIANA FARMER'S GUIDE

CAST

ANNE: - Young mother (Speaks of toddler son Jerry)

LOIS: - Young mother (Speaks of two daughters — Susie, school age, and Karen, toddler age.) Read offstage, with sound to simulate voice coming over phone. (*)

RADIO VOICE: - Any good voice, offstage.

(*) Talking into pitcher will serve to give this effect.

TIME

The morning dishes are done, but the day's work not yet begun. It's the time when young mothers often take a "phone break" to call a friend and compare homemaking notes.

PHONE RINGS . . . . . . .

ANNE: - (answering phone) Hello.

LOIS: - That you Anne? What are you doing? Can you talk now or should I call you later?

ANNE: - No, this is fine. I just finished my dishes and have only one more thing to do in the kitchen — it can wait.

LOIS: - What's that? I want to hear about it if it can wait! Sure you're not busy with Jerry?
ANNE: - A slow-running sink can always wait! As for Jerry, one time is as good as another for a phone chat. Actually, there's only one time I know exactly what he's doing, and that's when he's asleep! You know how it is, Lois -- what's new at your house this morning?

LOIS: - Well, we had quite a scare last night and I'm not sure that we've quite recovered from it yet.

ANNE: - (excitedly) Why, what happened? Oh, wait just a minute, Lois. Here comes Jerry with my bottle of hair spray. Oh well, go on -- I can watch and see that he doesn't waste too much. What gave you a scare?

LOIS: - Medicine in the wrong tummy, and too much of it. And it was all my fault -- but I think it taught me a lesson.

ANNE: - Go on. No, wait a minute -- I'll have to take this spray away from Jerry. Jerry, don't do that! He's trying to do just like he's seen me do.

LOIS: - What's that?

ANNE: - Hold on a minute, Lois -- that spray is too expensive to waste and he's found out how it works. Here Jerry, give it to mother -- that's a good boy. Now run out to the kitchen and find your push-toy -- I think you left it there. Go on, Lois.

LOIS: - Well, until the last of her temperature is gone, Susie is to take small doses of aspirin -- so I got the kind for children. Then thinking the dose was so small, I guess I just got careless.

ANNE: - Careless? What do you mean?
LOIS: - Well, instead of leaving the tablets in the box and putting it out of reach, I poured them out in a saucer and put it on the dresser so Susie could reach it when I reminded her that it was medicine time.

ANNIE: - Well, Susie is old enough that that should be all right to do.

LOIS: - But what I didn't think about was Karen's eagerness to do everything her big sister does. She never meddles with things and I didn't give that a thought.

ANNIE: - Why of course not. Then what was the trouble?

LOIS: - Well, while I was putting our supper in the oven, Karen apparently decided she wanted to do like Susie was doing. I guess when she climbed up and helped herself to the medicine, that Susie must have been dozing -- she's always so limp when she is sick.

ANNIE: - I can understand that, with a little temperature.

LOIS: - Anyway, I came in and found Karen going to bed -- she said she'd just taken some of Susie's "pretty" pills, and that she'd better get in bed. She even showed how she had climbed up to reach the top of the dresser. I knew then that I'd better not take any chances, so I called the doctor.

ANNIE: - Could you tell how many tablets she had taken?

LOIS: - No, not exactly, but judging from what was left, it looked bad. And when I told the doctor about it, he said he'd meet us at the hospital -- that he'd better pump out her stomach and take no chances. He said that when aspirin is taken in excess by a child under 6 years old, that it can prove very dangerous. Did you know that, Anne?

ANNIE: - Oh I guess I've read it, but never thought too much about it. Is Karen all right now?
LOIS: - Yes, but it was an experience we never want to have again. When he told us she would be all right, the doctor said that every young mother should try to be a safety expert in her own home.

ANNE: - Safety expert? What did he mean by that?

LOIS: - He went on to say it was because there were so many things in the home that could be dangerous for young children. He asked if I'd ever heard the morning radio program for homemakers that features a few safety rules each day -- said they were aimed at making home a safer place for children. Have you ever heard it?

ANNE: - Yes, I believe I have, but hadn't thought too much about it. My kitchen radio is on right now, and I believe that program is starting. Let's both listen and then you call me back afterward. Besides, I must see what Jerry is doing in the kitchen -- he's awfully quiet.

LOIS: - I'll call you right back.

(ANNE LEAVES PHONE AND RADIO IS HEARD FROM OTHER ROOM:)

RADIO VOICE: - Before we bring our news and views to homemakers this morning, let's list today's safety hints for children. Attention, young mothers -- here are some "do's" for today; DO keep matches out of reach of children; DO place kettles on the stove so that handles will not tempt exploring fingers; DO store medicines and household chemicals where they cannot be reached by children; DO form the habit of reading labels -- they are on containers for the protection of you and your family. Remember, guarding the safety of your children is a responsible privilege -- treat it as such. And now, on with our program.

PHONE RINGS ................
ANNE: - Hello.

LOIS: - Here I am again -- do you mind? The doctor is due any minute and I wanted to hear what you thought of those suggestions. I guess that's what the doctor thinks will make us safety experts.

ANNE: - Well, it came at a time that made me feel it was pretty sound advice. When I got to the kitchen I found Jerry on the floor, trying to take the lid off the can of chemical I had bought to use in the kitchen sink.

LOIS: - Oh, no!

ANNE: - He had gone through the kitchen drawer until he found something that looked like "the way to open a can." He was just beginning to make some progress. Thank goodness the people that make that stuff put the lid on tight.

LOIS: - Did you notice what she said about reading labels?

ANNE: - Yes, why?

LOIS: - Well, while she was talking, I was combing my hair and when she said that, I picked up my bottle of hair spray. You know what it says on that label?

ANNE: - No, I never paid any attention to the label.

LOIS: - Well, it says that it is flammable and should not be used near heat. It also says that one should avoid spraying near the eyes.

ANNE: - Well, I guess we should give labels the study they deserve.

LOIS: - Yes, we can't blame anybody but ourselves if we don't. The manufacturers give safety information on the label even if some of it is in small print.

ANNE: - Well, I guess there must be a good reason for putting a label on everything -- I'm going to start watching that. I just never thought of it that way.

LOIS: - Say, what would you think of us mentioning these things to the rest of the morning-coffee crowd? After all, they all have children -- that's what brought us together.
ANNE: - I'm all for it. I guess we've both had proof that even though we hear and read these things over and over, it takes a near-accident to someone we know to really impress it on our minds.

LOIS: - And after all, making home a safe place for our children is our biggest job right now. We'll work on it together, Anne. I see the doctor parking his car -- have to go now. Bye.

ANNE: - Bye now.

ANNE: - (Sits at phone a moment, as if reflecting, then calls) Jerry, oh Jerry, where are you? (Talking as she exits) I need to be a safety expert all right -- how that boy loves to explore!!
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