

Will TV really change America's family habits?

ONE NIGHT just about a year ago, Phil Young came home from his advertising office a tired but not unhappy man. He walked through the living room of his home in Dobbs Ferry, N. Y., looking for his family and then headed toward his den. As he entered this room, he saw a strangely disturbing sight—16 pairs of eyes glowed up at him from the floor. "What's going on here?" he asked. And from among the eyes his two children answered reproachfully: "Shhhhh, daddy." Television had come to Phil Young's home.

His two daughters (Gale, 10, Jeanie, 6) and 14 neighbor children were sitting on the floor in the dark entranced by television's Howdy Doody show. This is the sensationally successful program starring a puppet which may become the Punch and Judy show of our time.

Today, Phil Young's children still sit for hours staring fixedly at the television screen. There has been only one change in their viewing habits: they have been taught to keep some room lights on while watching programs. This helps prevent eyestrain.

But Phil Young and his wife, Natalie, have noted a slow change in their own feelings about television. A year ago there were only a few programs they

found entertaining. Now they are enthusiastic about several. They say, for example, that they rarely miss the Ed Sullivan and Milton Berle variety shows, or the Kraft Theater and the Theater Guild—both dramatic programs. Other favorites: Peter Pixie's Playhouse, Mississippi Showboat, the Bob Howard show, Candid Microphone, the Philco Playhouse.

Phil Young is a man who likes to get a good long night's rest, but he finds this is difficult with a television set in his home. He, his wife and especially the children now go to bed much later than had been their custom. There are other changes, too. They go to the movies, attend sports events and listen to the radio less frequently now.

Apparently the experience of the Youngs is common among other television families. Surveys taken by advertising agencies, *Variety*, *Television* magazine and by researchers from Hofstra College, Long Island, show that attendance at outside recreations declines after most families buy a television set.

The Hofstra College survey found that total participation in entertainment outside the home dropped 24 per cent. And movie attendance dropped 20 per cent. If the nation's one

million television families went to the movies 20 per cent fewer times a week, the loss in revenue to the movie industry annually would be about \$11,333,333. No one knows if Hofstra figures hold true consistently for the nation, but you can see that television is no insomnia cure for a movie or a radio magnate. To make matters grimmer for the radio and movie people, the Hofstra interviewers found that the devotion of an owner to his television set was not the result of its novelty. A year after buying a set, the average owner's movie attendance was about as low as during the first week.

One heartening thing for everyone, the Hofstra report revealed, is that people found commercials on television more pleasant than those on radio. But Phil Young has spotted another less cheerful trend. "The quiz show on television," he maintains, "is sometimes annoying, now, because it has not been fully perfected for TV."

Mrs. Young is as articulate and close an observer of television as her husband. She has this advice for new set owners: "If you want peace in your home, don't put the set in the living room. The children will run it constantly—even when you want to read a book."

The Youngs have found the best way to control their children's television enthusiasm is by agreeing roughly every Sunday on which programs they will tune in that week. Some control is necessary because the children love everything on television except news programs. Mrs. Young cannot understand why, but her daughters are spellbound by the old silent movies she remembers seeing as a child. They love the Keystone cops, the pie throwing contests and exciting chases in 1913 automobiles; and they even watch travelogues.

Mrs. Young remarks hopefully that at least the girls may be learning history that way. And from what she's seen of the interest children take in television, she has come to believe there must be a great deal to the current move toward visual education in schools.

Mr. Young, too, is amazed by the reactions of the children. The dreamy-eyed little boy in the picture at left, for example, loves to watch wrestling on television. But even more than they love to watch muscle-padded wrestlers bat one another around, the children love to see Milton Berle.

Mr. Young says half seriously that he believes "Milton Berle is destined to replace Babe Ruth as the idol of the young in America."



TEMPORARY ANGELS: serenity, sweetness and calm hang over the Young home despite all the young visitors. Reason: they are entranced by a favorite TV show.

