

# Outlook on Lifestyle

## Sister-in-law accuses him of being a child abuser

### DEAR MEG



Meg Whitcomb

DEAR MEG — My sister-in-law, who never liked me, has accused me of child abuse. She says I beat up my kids. My wife and I have three very energetic sons. I spend a lot of time with them, and we get along great. Occasionally I whack them on the bottom, but I never "beat them up." My wife approves, and the boys think I'm fair.

My sister-in-law made a complaint and provoked an investigation. My wife, my boys and I were given the third degree and our neighbors were questioned, too. This has damaged my reputation. Most people assume accusations are true.

My lawyer tells me there is absolutely nothing I can do about my sister-in-law in a court of law. How

should I respond to this woman on a personal level? And how about my wife? — FURIOUS FATHER, NEB.

DEAR FURIOUS — Family violence and what to do about it has gotten a lot of press lately, and there has been an enormous increase in reports of suspected child abuse. This is, on balance, a welcome development. But the flip side is that wrong-headed, misinformed busybodies get into the act, too. Result? People's reputations suffer.

With no legal recourse, putting pressure on your sister-in-law to retract her statement might only stir up the controversy again. I'd let things stand. But you and your wife should let her know she's no longer welcome in your house. That should forestall any future invasion of your privacy. I hope your wife will go along with it.

DEAR MEG — Ernie and I have been divorced for five years. He con-

tinues to support me and my two children from an earlier marriage. Ernie's problem was that he tended to roam.

Ernie sees that we have everything within reason. He pays all our bills, buys me new cars, and the house is in my name.

We see each other all the time — go to dinner, the movies, and we still sleep together. We get along much much better since he moved out and, yes, I still love the guy.

Here's my question — Should I push for remarriage? If you were in my shoes, what would you do? — GERRI, IND.

DEAR GERRI — I'd settle for the status quo. From what you say, Ernie still likes to roam away from home. Do you want to be the wife he leaves behind — again?

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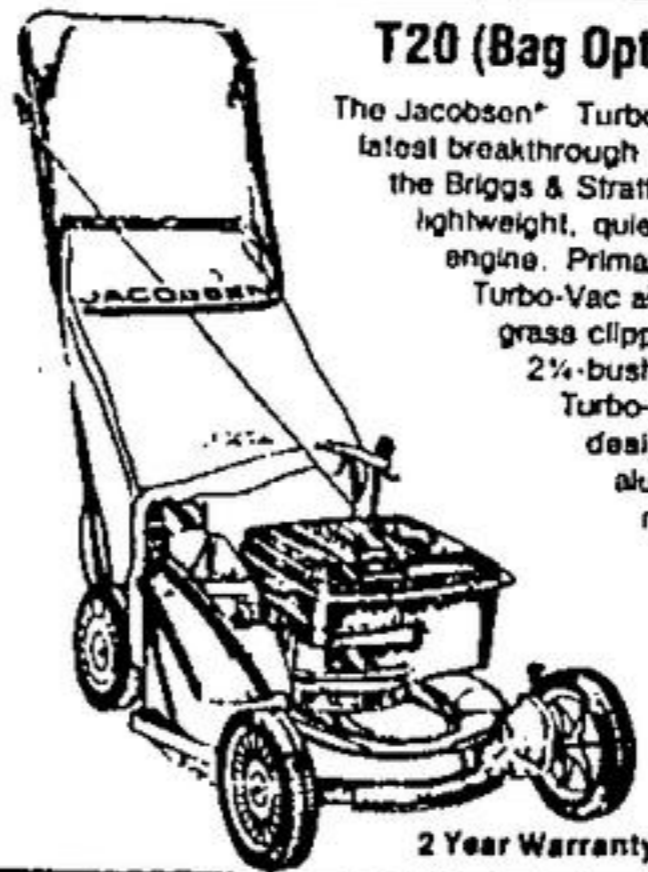
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