

A Day With Ann Landers



"In Wisconsin they asked me to run for Congress . . .



"... but there's no room for amateurs in Cook county politics . . .



"... so one day I called the newspaper and asked about the Ann Landers column."

ANN LANDERS'
nationally-syndicated column appears exclusively in the
Torrance Herald



"Listen to this letter! Isn't this pathetic?"

She gets dinner started (it's Willy's day off) . . .



. . . then starts for the office.



In the Chicago Sun-Times newsroom, she checks her mail with Lilyan Campbell, her "No. 1 secretary" (She has eight).



Eppie doesn't smoke or drink. Her idea of relaxation from the tension of work is to stroll from the den into her living room, tune up her violin, and play for awhile.

(Story and Pictures—Wisconsin State Journal)



But always the family comes first: husband Jules Lederer and their daughter, Margo.

When Eppie Lederer was an Eau Claire housewife with a strong bent for politics, they urged her to run for Congress.

She said no, thanks—"my home and my family mean too much to me—and went right on being a housewife.

Then a move to Chicago led her to redirect her practically radioactive energies from amateur politics in Eau Claire county, Wis., to big time journalism.

Now It's 'Ann Landers'

Her home and her family still come first, but these days she signs her mail "Ann Landers."

The chic Eau Claire matron who'd never held a job in her life is working a grueling 10 to 12 hours a day struggling with other people's problems and loving it.

In four years, she has become the nation's No. 1 advice writer with 25 to 40 million readers every day, the articles about her in national magazines, and a column that has grown a fantastically 1,001 per cent.

Sitting in the sunny den of her Lake shore Dr. apartment, she pours you a companionable cup of coffee and explains how it all happened.

Ann Landers, columnist for the Torrance Herald and 357 other daily papers, in private life is Mrs. Jules Lederer, originally of Iowa. Her husband is president of a manufacturing firm with interests in Illinois, California, and Puerto Rico. Their only child, Margo—a sophomore at Brandeis University "studying anthropology and boys," her mother reports cheerfully—has reached her 19th birthday.

The old-fashioned "advice-to-the-lovelorn" writer was a grandmother type who specialized in folksy platitudes. Ann Landers sets a new style.

Eppie Lederer is a small, stunningly-designed woman who looks like a movie star and has the concentrated drive of a falling brick.

Everyone Knows Her Age

As straightforward in her personal relations as she is in her column, she recently informed her readers in print that she is 41 years old. She's a celebrity known from coast to coast but she won't take a cocktail, even just to hold, or a cigaret. It's no grandstand crusade; she just doesn't like the stuff and is honest—and gracious about it.

Eppie has curly black hair, smoky blue-grey eyes, beguiling dimples, a mind as fast as an IBM machine, and the warm heart of a woman. She deals daily with human anguish and despair and is still moved near tears by it, because she really cares deeply about people.

She considers her Negro maid Willy "my very dearest friend," and all eight of her secretaries call her "Eppie."

The Lederers moved to Chicago five years ago after nine years in Eau Claire where she's been county chairman of the Democratic party.

She furnished their apartment at 100 Lake Shore Dr. with a sleek grey, black, white, scarlet, and green living room; pasted match stick covers in a gay pattern on one wall of the den; and started looking for something new to invest her brains and energy.

"I quickly found there was no room for amateur politicians in the Cook county Democratic party," she summarizes briskly. So she picked up the phone and asked the Chicago Sun-Times whether she could help with the mail received by the paper's Ann Landers column which she admired.

"Odd you should call just now," they told her. "The author of the column died last week."

Joined the Competition

Eppie—totally without experience or qualifications other than interest in people and zest for the work—was invited to join a slate of 28 professional writers competing for the job. After a nerve-racking six-week elimination test, they called her back.

"You are the new Ann Landers," they said.

That was when she found out she'd be writing not for one paper but for 26.

"It was like falling into the ocean and then learning how to swim," she remembers.

Larry Fanning of the Sun-Times and her husband showed her how to get organized, and the new Ann Landers column started to grow from its 26 papers to 358 as of this week.

This is success—but it isn't easy.

"Ann Landers" day begins with breakfast with her husband whom she loves and admires outspokenly—"He's a doll, doll, doll!"

When he's left for work, she settles down in nightgown and robe in the den. She reads all the Ann Landers mail except booklet requests—thousands of funny, poignant, tragic letters a month—and makes sure that each bearing an address gets a personal reply. She dictates answers to many; indicates to her secretaries how to respond to the rest.

Uses Columbus Method

The column itself she writes at home on an electric typewriter, employing "the Columbus Method! you hunt for it and then land on it."

The job is interrupted by phone calls from the secretaries; telegrams from doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists she consults as advisers; special "confidential" additions to her column she wires to individual papers when someone in urgent need of help fails to send an address.

She doesn't stop for lunch. Willy serves it on a tray and "it's always the same so I don't waste time about it: two soft-boiled eggs, two pieces of buttered toast; and coffee. And about half a box of candy."

In early afternoon, she dresses, attends to some personal matters—meal-planning, shopping, having a dress fitted, or her hair set. Making a quick choice on a spring afternoon between a Persian jacket and a mink cape, she picks up two briefcases and an oversize purse and sets off in her black Cadillac for the Sun-Times building where she has a desk in the news room.

She Serves the Meal

The rest of the day she works there, her No. 1 secretary beside her, answering letters, polishing the columns—"I've got to be enthusiastic about every one of them"—consulting with editors and syndicate executives, hurtling downstairs to confer with her seven other secretaries in their big office.

By the time she gets home, Willy has set the table, started dinner, and departed.

"Willy does the less interesting jobs, like potato-peeling," Eppie says frankly. Eppie finishes the meal and serves it. She loves cooking, especially the creative aspects, is an expert on sauces and seasonings, and has no truck with cookbooks.

"After dinner, we usually work, my husband at his desk here—me, at mine, over there," she says, pointing at opposite walls of the cozy den. "We have almost no social life at all.

"Work is too much fun."

READ ANN LANDERS EACH SUNDAY and THURSDAY in THE HERALD

You can count on MORE from THE HERALD because MORE goes into THE HERALD—YOUR ACCEPTED, COMPLETE NEWSPAPER