

MOTHER OF TENNIS STAR HIS TRAINER AND PAL; FLAPPER ALL RIGHT, UP-TO-DATE PARENT SAYS

"Don't Tie Boys and Girls Down With Inhibitions" Is Advice of Woman Who "Chummed" Vincent Richards to His Victories

GRANDMA'S IDEALS ARE NOT THOSE OF THOSE OF PRESENT IS HER SAGE OBSERVATION

Mrs. Richards Expounds Her Theories on How to Raise Children: "Keep Them Happy and Don't Worry" Her Advice

Strength and dignity are her clothing; And she laugheth at the time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; And the law of kindness is on her tongue. She looketh well to the ways of her household, And eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call her blessed. —Proverbs.

THE mother who made a champion! The dietitian whose training table is the family bard, whose laboratory an old-fashioned kitchen.

The trainer whose training house is her home, whose field is a community lot, whose athletes are her own children.

Her book of rules is the Bible, her system of development is based on sound common sense.

Can such a mother be? Right! She is Mrs. Mary Richards, mother of "Vinnie" Richards, nineteen-year-old tennis champion, of Yonkers, N. Y.

There is much in her of the grand old mothers we read about, but she is graced, too, with the vigor and tolerance of modernity. Perhaps it might be said that she represents an apparent paradox in twentieth century motherhood: she combines the severest conviction that a mother's place is in the home with the profound belief that woman no longer should be the cloistered, pampered creature of a Victorian era and earlier.

Child Has Its Rights, Admits This Mother

"A mother must make up her mind to stay home to take care of her child—all the time—until the child can take care of itself," she says with intense emphasis, and adds, smiling, "and that's something, I suppose, which some of us mothers think a child can really never do."

And right on the heels of that, with equal conviction, she insists: "We must let the girls—and our women—get about; we must let them mix with life. They are not too delicate for that."

This apparent contradiction, however, serves only to complete Mrs. Richards' outlook on life. It is a sensible outlook. And it sums up to this in three paragraphs:

The world on the whole is a beautiful place. It is a place to be active in. It is a place full of tears. But it is the duty of folks to find as much happiness in it as possible. And the way to find happiness is to drink in stoutly the strength of religion, and to develop a sound body. These two lead the way to a healthy, active mind.

A girl must have as much freedom as a boy. Woman as much chance to live, and expand mentally, as man.

But when woman becomes mother she is under deepest obligation to her child. It is her duty intelligently to watch the child, to care for it with a concentration of attention that permits no interruption.

Mrs. Richards believes that mothers of today are interested enough in rearing their children, but that they are too prone to cultivate a "let George do it" spirit; that they are too willing to allow other agencies to play mother to their children.

"I have made the home the center of all my children's activities," says Mrs. Richards, prefacing her ideas on champion-making.

And her children are all successful in the so-called cold cruel world. "Vinnie" is the most renowned, if not the most active. But Ralph and Raymond, her other sons, and older than "Vinnie," are business men of repute. When they were younger they were stars in the field of local track sports. Her daughter, Gertrude, is a nurse in China, and was one of the leaders of health service in Yonkers. During the war she spent thirteen months overseas.

Young Tennis Champion Prepares to Be Lawyer

"Vinnie," the youngest of her children, is the only one who remains with her in the Yonkers home. And he is a student at Fordham now, preparing for the law later.

"And I always have chummed with my children," she continued. Mrs. Richards is a youthful appearing woman. A smile lingers continually at her mouth, and her soft eyes caress rather than look at you. Over her shoulder, on the mantelpiece, ranged a number of silver trophies. "Vinnie" and Ray have won. On the table in the study is a beautifully made scrap-book.

"From as far back as I can remember I have kept scrap-books for the children," she said. "It began with the babies. They've always wanted me to read the funnies to them and I found the weekly issues. It was play for all of us."



Mrs. Mary Richards and Vincent as a little boy

ations won't grow up in the atmosphere of the corner saloon!"

Mrs. Richards paused a moment, as if to collect thought for a calmer resumption of the conversation.

"Vinnie" and my other boys were strangers to tea and coffee until they were old enough to buy it at the restaurants. They may buy it today. I suppose they do, but they don't like it.

"In the end," she resumed, "my thoughts about the health of children simmer down to this: I never want to give the doctors too much work. We depend too much on the doctors when health is largely a matter of a properly balanced living, and a refusal to worry too much."

Mrs. Richards carried her antipathy to worry even into the realm of scholarship.

"You know, I'd never let them worry too much about their lessons. I'd see that they'd do their lessons, and do them well. But I refused to let my children worry about them."

"If there was any difficulty I taught them to come to me with it. I got them accustomed to coming home with their legitimate difficulties. I believe that mothers today are too stiff from their children. They don't chum enough."

Mother Real Confidant for All Her Children

There isn't a subject under the sun which I haven't discussed with "Vinnie"—from baseball to girls. Besides, I always took care to respect his opinions. The opinions of generations change. I never say to "Vinnie" that he must not do a thing he wants to do, because boys and girls and young men and women never did it when I was young. Times are changing. There may be a whole lot of sense in his point of view, in the point of view of the newer growing life."

She doesn't take stock in the old adage that a child is to be seen and not heard.

"I want to hear my children. I want to know what they think. I want to discuss with them their problems. I want them to feel that I want to."

"And I insist on plain talk. I want no reticences. They only build walls between parents and children. And walls only send children out of the home and elsewhere—and to worse places—for their opinions."

"A boy who can't dump his troubles at home, at the feet of his mother, loses courage. And courage, it seems to me, is necessary in this world of battles."

It is this courage which Mrs. Richards believes can be recruited only in the wisely conducted home and in church.

"It is the parent's fault if a child or a young man is not brave. The home should not be synonymous with condemnation of a boy's or a girl's growing ideas. It should be a laboratory of investigation for the mother. She should, broadly minded and with the understanding that they may be good, investigate her child's ideas. And if the child is right, she should have the courage to tell him so. She must never be stubborn in that direction."

But it is in church—any church—where the real source of courage is, Mrs. Richards believes. "The church is the staff to lean on. It is the pilot of only too frail ships. It is the solid thing, the thing most can grip with a sense of profound assurance. It is the foundation for life. What can a person possibly do if he hasn't the church and religion to fall back upon?" asks Mrs. Richards. When a person is young he is busy, he does not have time enough to really miss religion. But when he is old—he needs something so much to keep him going, with disillusion crowding him, and defeat and regret slacking his feet.

"Good Sportsman" Made by His Religious Ideals

"From the very earliest I have taught 'Vinnie' to find first of all a power in religion. And it makes him a good sportsman. He has the strength and the enthusiasm to fight, and he has the courage to be fair."

Mrs. Richards is most unequivocal about religion. She happens to be Catholic, a member of St. Dennis' Parish, but when she speaks of religion she speaks of any man or woman's religion. Being religious doesn't mean that a child will become namby-pamby,

means that they must have some interest uppermost in their minds each minute. Indeed, it may be loading for a little while. She heartily approves intelligent loafing—because then it isn't really loafing at all. Each minute of the day must be filled with some kind of memorable life.

Kept Her Boy Busy and He Kept Happy

"Vinnie has always been busy. He has had very few moments for idle, useless vegetating. He has had interests besides tennis. So that when he wasn't playing tennis—which he played more or less continuously—he enjoyed some other form of activity. And I favor the same sort of living for a girl."

"The average American girl is competent to take care of herself. She is not reprehensible because she may be a flapper. I approve of flappers. I like their bobbed hair and their short skirts. It makes for comfort and happiness. I like the so-called flapper's interest in athletics, and I think she ought to dress on the track as the men do. It's not only hygienic, but it's reasonable that the girl needs as much freedom of movement as the boy."

Mrs. Richards left the room a moment to bring back some early pictures of her children.

"This one in bobbed hair will give a better idea of Vinnie when he was four years old. He was a healthy child then—and bright-eyed. He's in his Buster Brown suit, and we are standing on the steps, where the boys used to begin and end their races, in the secret practice before a meet."

She paused for a moment and then said apologetically:

"After all, I haven't said much about my system of making champions. I've touched here and there. I guess it is all a matter of common sense. If you want your children to develop into healthy men and women you have to give them a chance to. And I tried to do that."

"I start out with a wholesome enthusiasm in the potentialities of children. They can all be anything; but to cultivate any sort of individuality in themselves they must be taught to learn to respect themselves, their own bodies, their own thoughts. You can't teach them that, if you begin dragging them from the very start. You have to give them a chance. You have to accept them on their own

terms. Mothers, instead of coddling children, should play the game with them; should make the home a kind of general clearing house and headquarters for every activity, mental or physical, in the lives of their children.

Says Any Child Can Be Champion of Some Sort

"And in the end the children will be champions of one sort or another, even as Vinnie is a champion in tennis."

Mrs. Richards makes it a point to witness all of her sons' games which are played in the vicinity of Yonkers, N. Y. She rarely misses a tournament at Forest Hills. She used to attend the track meets, in which her sons ran, and when Vinnie was thirteen and a star on a "kids" basketball team, she was a spectator of the contests he played in.

"I always go to see him play with a light heart," she said gently. "It's a matter of habit, I suppose, and a matter of relationship, but I never have the feeling that Vinnie will lose. And, of course, he rarely does. And he doesn't mind my watching him play. We've been out for so long that we don't have that influence on each other."

"My, no! He's never watched me in any athletic contest," Mrs. Richards laughed. "I was married when I was seventeen, and I didn't have time to be athletic. Besides, in those days parents didn't believe that daughters ought to try the more strenuous sports."

"Nowadays the girls have the right idea. They want to know something of the world before they get married. And the desire and its fulfillment make for better mothers and fathers. There's no doubt about it; boys and girls are steadily improving. They're healthier, and they are competent, and satisfactorily progressive."

Vinnie plans to be a lawyer. After he has finished his preparatory work at Fordham he will enter college. And he chose law of his own free will. And that's another matter she is rather willfully minded about. She objects to the parent who attempts to influence her sons and daughters in the choice of a life work. Children ought to dedicate their lives to the service they like best, entirely regardless of what their fathers or mothers think. A parent might discuss the matter with the children, and ought to see that the children have before them the problems of the particular work they want to do. But so far as any pressure is concerned, she is convinced that parents should leave well enough alone.

Gives Boys Free Rein to Choose Own Careers

"I didn't even influence Vinnie into taking up tennis. He somehow caught that interest from the start," she said. "The tennis court was there, and he got into the habit of using it. And when I

me he does that manfully and with all modesty."

Vinnie has no enemies in the city of Yonkers. The inhabitants all know his little car, which tumbles about the streets at almost any hour of the day. They all like him. They say that he is the youngster who put Yonkers on the map.

"He's a good kid," they'll tell you. "He learned how to hold a racket over there on Van Corland Park avenue—you can see the court for yourself if you want to."

And there's no doubt that court has a deal of historical interest to the natives of the town, and one suspects they are highly gratified if they discover in their own sons an inclination to waste a little time there, even when they might be doing some more or less important errands.

"I forgot to tell you that Vinnie likes to read," said Mrs. Richards. "So do I. I'm fond of reading, and I've been known to let a meal go to finish a good book. I encourage Vinnie's reading—it's another pleasant and leisurely way to keep busy and freshen up the mind."

Reference has been made to Mrs. Richards' pleasant smile. It is something that even a casual visitor cannot easily forget. An essence of her smile seems to brighten up the very rooms she lives in. It has the pleasing property of pervading the air like an agreeable perfume. It comes of an exceptionally wholesome mind, of a faith in the ultimate goodness of life.

One feels that Mrs. Richards has the penetrating mind—the mind that

Tilden Lauded Vincent And Bowed to His Skill

WHAT Bill Tilden, world's champion hard and grass court tennis player, thinks of Mrs. Richards' champion:

"Vincent Richards is one of the most dangerous players in the country."

This statement was made after the then eighteen-year-old boy defeated Tilden in the State tennis singles championship at Providence, R. I.

"In my final match at Wimbledon for the world's championship," said Tilden, "against Norton, of South Africa, I was playing just about the same as I played against Richards, so you see where Richards stands."

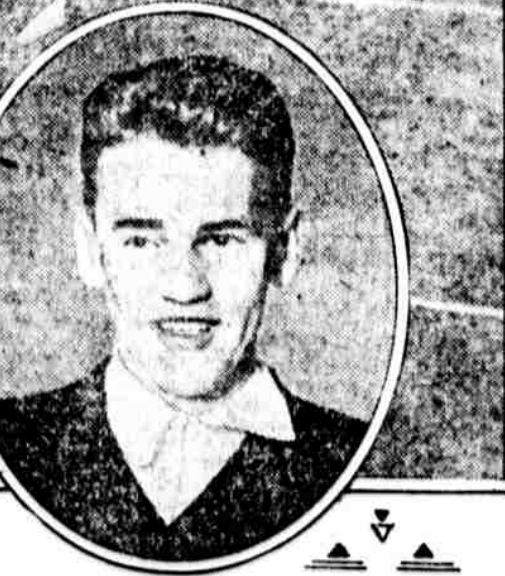
Since then Tilden at Forest Hills has defeated the boy.



Vincent in action and his "chief trainer." Vincent is shown in two of his most characteristic attitudes when adding to his already long list of laurels



"Vinnie" Richards on the courts



"Close up" of the young tennis marvel

saw that he liked tennis I gave him every opportunity to play the game."

Mrs. Richards owns to one especial delight she cherishes in Vinnie's success. Strangely enough, it isn't the fact that he usually wins—though she is happy that he does win. Mrs. Richards is especially happy in the fact that Vinnie has not been spoiled by adulation.

Fostered by Bill Tilden, heralded throughout the country as one of the best in tennis of the day, at nineteen chosen to represent the United States in the greatest of all international athletic events—the Davis Cup matches—the youth's rise has been phenomenal. At thirteen he won his first tournament. At fifteen he entered the national doubles with Big Bill Tilden and became, with Tilden, a national champion. In the national junior meets he grabbed both turf and indoor championships. Any boy, experiencing this generous applause of athletedom, might reasonably develop what is known in the vernacular as "swelled head."

Doesn't Want "Big Head" to Spoil Her Champion

"Vinnie," said his proud mother, "has no conceit. He is not self-servative in the objectionable sense. I don't want him to be. I simply want him to hold his own, and it seems to

me that he does that manfully and with all modesty."

It is what Mrs. Richards calls "her sense of humor."

And perhaps the most valuable quality she has, though she has others in generous abundance.