"THEY'D HAVE SOME WORK, TOO!"
The Story of the Morgan Family
by Jimmy Butler

Away from the busy cities and highways there is a small but productive monument to the stamina and hard work of a man and his family. Morgan's Woodwork Shop in Wyoming R. I. is this monument. Here, on the banks of the Wood River Roland Morgan and Grace, his wife, have raised their family of 10 children. Life hasn't been smooth for the Morgans, four of the 10 children were afflicted with permanent blindness as children.

Morgan and his wife are everyday people ... he has worked at Electric Boat in Groton, Conn. for a number of years and Grace has had her work cut out for her since the first baby came along. After the four children--Lewis, Ronald, Terry and Linda--became blind, life went on. All the regular things had to be cared for including Roger, Greg, Gerald, Suzy, Roland Jr. and Judith; thus the blind children had to blend in. Blending in with a family of active people when you're blind is not always so easily done. In the case of the Morgan Family--it was very easy. Morgan and his wife are full of energy and love, and all the children follow suit. A few years ago the whole family decided that together they would begin doing "creative woodworking." This plan was for the whole family and blindness didn't rule anyone out.

The woodworking began in the basement--it was fun and orders began to come in and the sawdust began to fly. Sawdust in the kitchen, chips in the living room, and wooden dowels upstairs didn't appeal to Mrs. Morgan. Something had to be done, so they decided that a workshop was to be built. It was ... and it was built by the work of everyone in the family. Roland Jr. (now 18) was the foreman, with his guidance, the blind members of the family did their share of the work needed to build the workshop. Lewis, the oldest of the blind Morgans, remembers that it was tough work ... "but we made it and I'm glad, because this Woodwork Shop is really great."
The Woodwork Shop has proven to be of tremendous value ... in it they market all types of handmade, wooden chairs, tables, bar stools, etc. along with knitted afghans, and other handicrafts made by the whole family. The knitted afghans are all made by Linda. She knits and crochets beautifully ... and only because she was taught by a lady who is also blind. Whenever you mention the afghans Linda smiles and almost seems eager to start knitting one for you.

The chairs are built by all the Morgans. Greg, Dad Morgan and Roland Jr., with Gerald helping build the parts requiring machinery operation, as it would be too dangerous for the blind boys to operate the equipment used, not that they couldn't (after meeting and talking with the boys I'm sure they could do it.) Judith, Suzy and Momma take care of staining, etc., and the four blind people finish them with Hong Kong twine or authentic rush in a lovely and sturdy basket weave. The chairs are rugged and pleasing to the eye, like the one "Grandma" had when she was a girl.

Although everyone is involved in the Woodwork Shop one of the main reasons it came into being was the need for the blind children to have something to do with their time. "Dad" Morgan felt a need, and being quick thinking, thought of the woodworking as a means to help his afflicted children obtain a sense of independence and a real feeling of doing something useful. Well, these kids took to the idea like "bears to honey," and so did the rest of the family. Sympathy is no. wanted nor needed for any of the Morgan family, blind or not. They work, study and play just like you and I.

Terry and Ronnie both have had some formal training for the blind. Terry also has had six months of college at U.R.I. Everything that they learn, they bring home to the others. Each of the kids are willing to teach anything they can to anyone eager to learn.

The blindness in the Morgan family is permanent, and apparently seems to be from a hereditary source according to the report given by Mrs. Morgan. Alas, permanent blindness may seem hopeless to us, but not to the Morgans. Ronnie says, "The shop has got to get bigger, we don't have enough room now," Lewis says, "This is how I make my living," Terry and Linda both agree that the future is full of hope and happiness. They all hope that by telling their story in the Shopper's Guide others may realize that there is no need to despair ... work a little and life will be more fun, more exciting for everyone ... and they're not talking just to blind people either! When asked if they ever thought that their story might bring about some competition all they had to say was -- "THEN THEY'D HAVE SOME WORK TOO, AND WE'D BE HAPPY FOR THEM."

Editor's Note: If you have a free afternoon this weekend, drive to Wyoming, RI, and visit the Morgan's Woodworking Shop ... you'll never regret patronizing these fine people with a real concern for others. S.B.