

DAILY Actor

THE DINING ROOM by A.R. Gurney

ARCHITECT: Big room... light room... commodious room... And one of the reasons we should consider breaking it up.

Now bear with me: What say we turn this room into an office for you, and a waiting room your patients?

Hold on. Relax. *(He begins to spread a large blueprint out on the table, anchoring its corners with his tape measure and centerpiece. Aggie has finished polishing by now. She gathers up her silver and polishing stuff and leaves)* The patient trusts the psychiatrist, doesn't he? Why can't the psychiatrist trust the architect? *(He begins to sketch on the blueprint, with a grease pencil)* Now, here's the ground plan of your house. Here's what you're stuck with, for the moment, and here, with these approximate dimensions, is your dining room.

(Drawing with his grease pencil) Now suppose... just suppose we started with a clean slate. Suppose we open this up here, slam a beam in here, break through here and here, blast out this, throw out that, and what do we have? Well, we don't have a dining room anymore. That's what we don't have.

Here. Right here. Look. I'm putting in an eating area. Here's the fridge, the cooking units, Cuisinart, butcher-block table, chrome chairs. See? Look at the space. The flow. Wife cooks, kids set the table, you stack the dishes. All right here. Democracy at work. In your own home.

Now, let's review your day. You come down to breakfast, everybody's fixing his or her own thing. *(He goes out through, the hall, reappears through the kitchen door)* Eggs, cornflakes, Pop-Tarts, whatever. You eat, chat, read the paper, say goodbye, come in here to go to work. Do you have a nurse or a receptionist? *(Beginning to move around the room)* Well, you come in here to the reception room, maybe adjust the magazines on a table, here, maybe add your newspaper to the pile, then you go through a soundproof door into your office.

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You turn on your stereo console here, maybe select a book from a wall unit here, and then settle behind your desk module here. You read, you listen to music. Soon – buzz – a patient arrives. You turn off your music, put aside your book, and buzz him in through the soundproof doors. He flops on the couch here (*He creates the couch with two Upstage chairs*), tells you his dream, you look out the window here, he leaves, you write him up, buzz in the next. Soon it's time for lunch. You go in here, have lunch with the wife, or one of the kids, and maybe stroll back in here for a nap. More buzzes, more patients, and soon it's time to go in for a good, easy, cooperative supper with your family.

What I want is the chance to get in here, so I can open up your whole ground floor! Now what do you say? Take your time. (*He starts out*) Tell you what. I'll send you my bill for the work I've done so far.