

Ferdie J. Deering

JAN 19 1982

Like Charity, Killing Can Start at Home

MURDER, like charity, often begins at home. It is not known how many of the 24,000-plus murders committed in the United States last year were intra-family killings but obviously many of them were.

Oklahoma news stories of recent weeks told of husbands who shot their wives and then committed suicide; sons who shot their parents; a husband who strangled his wife; and a man who killed his brother-in-law when the latter tried to enter his home.

Similar reports come from other states to make domestic homicides look almost epidemic. Reasons sometimes appear superficial. A West Virginia father killed his son after the young man had accused his sister of cheating in a Monopoly game. An Ohio man slew his family of three and his mother-in-law in a child custody dispute.

Whatever the immediate cause of such tragedies may be, the trend is evidence of the continuing deterioration of family life.

Frictions severe enough to arouse relatives to the utmost violence are

not new. According to Holy Scriptures, Cain slew Abel in the earliest days of mankind in a sibling religious rivalry.

No doubt similar incidents have occurred all through history. Even royalty has not avoided such tragedies. Kings have had ambitious sons murdered, queens have poisoned kings and offspring have stabbed their elders in order to inherit thrones.

Greed and jealousy are sufficient motivation to arouse the selfish to murderous inclinations whether it is a peasant who desires a certain mate or an erudite citizen grasping for an inheritance.

Today's lifestyles do not tend to draw families together for common protection and support. Working parents, teen-agers with cars, moral permissiveness and downgrading of religion encourage individuals to demand their "rights," regardless of others.

Movies and television occasionally present family life in loving, co-operative circumstances but more frequently the theme is friction, in-

stability, adultery and violence.

In a collection of letters from teen-agers in trouble, U.S. News & World Report published one from a 16-year-old who complained of a lack of love among friends, moms and dads. He asked "Why?"

"Whereas families once associated themselves with others in companionship for happiness, we children are supposed to exchange thoughts with videogames, attend movies or attempt to atone for the loss of amity among parents with us by maybe copulation as a substitute," the discerning teen-ager wrote with wisdom adults often lack.

Most children have witnessed thousands of murders on TV by the time they enter high school. It should not be surprising if they regard killing as an acceptable means of obtaining money, prestige or whatever else may be desired in the eternal search for happiness.

Murder is not for everybody, to be sure. Homes are less likely to experience such tragedies if a loving companionship truly exists among relatives.