Mary Harris snatched up the rusty ax and, like a she-panther, sprang at the savage.
CAN WE STAY RICH?

A Post Editor's report on America's fabulous wealth, which we spend faster than ever before. What are our chances of going broke?

Part One

For three weeks recently this reporter, an illiterate in matters of business and finance, wandered about the country asking men who were supposed to know about such things a few questions of the type a puzzled college freshman might ask of his economics professor.

The questions, in essence, were simply these: What has happened to the American economy in the past ten years? What caused it to happen? And what seems likely to happen next?

The bankers, merchants, psychologists, economists, sociologists and Government statisticians questioned came in many shapes and sizes. Their fields of interest varied, and so did their points of view. Irrespective, however, their reaction was the same. They took off their glasses, breathed heavily upon them and polished them earnestly. Then, vacant-eyed, they stared off into space while their thoughts assembled. Finally, they would speak, in tones tinged with awe and incredulity, as if they sought to describe some great upheaval of nature.

They began by pointing out that never before, in all the world's history, had any nation known such a flood tide of prosperity, nor one so long sustained. Never on earth before had so many people produced so many goods and services, earned so much reward for their labors, acquired for themselves more of the material things which make life happier and more comfortable.

Never before, also, some of the more dour ones pointed out, parenthetically, had more people loaded themselves with more things they didn't really need, nursed more ulcers, swallowed more tranquilizer pills and found in the midst of their material possessions less serenity of spirit.

All were agreed, however, that the great boom of the past decade was a thing of majesty and splendor, whose many blessings far outweighed its few unhappy by-products. It was an economic explosion of atomic force that changed the

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Here's where the money goes... a nation of carefree spenders on the biggest buying spree in history.

A Richmond, Va., housewife gets a new TV. For furniture and household appliances, the nation spent 15 billions in 1956.

Supermarket in Mobile, Ala.: This family helped run the national grocery bill up to 71 billions.

A St. Louis couple shops for a new car. In 1956 Americans plunked down 14.6 billions for automobiles.

This back-yard swimming pool in Los Angeles began as a do-it-yourself project until owner Fred Bofird (in excavation) decided to pay $9000 for a professional job.

Living it up at the Café Continental in San Francisco. Thirsty Americans spend about 9.2 billion dollars a year for liquor, according to a recent Government estimate.