

Prince Philip

(Continued)

grownups, too—would have been happy for her to marry the man of her choice, divorced or not.

Townsend appealed to them because he was an RAF Battle-of-Britain pilot during the dark days of World War II, and because he was middle-class—"not some sprig of foreign nobility," as Philip has been called. Naturally, Philip wasn't the only hatchet man, but his influence with his wife was tremendous. One reason Philip is said to have opposed the marriage was that his favorite relative and benefactor, Uncle Lord Louis Mountbatten, who originally introduced Philip to Elizabeth, didn't approve of the match.

Before Margaret made her fateful decision, she talked with Elizabeth and Philip before an open fire in Windsor Castle. She said little. Brother-in-law Philip carried the family ball, warning Margaret of the consequences of a marriage to Townsend. After Margaret wrote her simple note renouncing Townsend on October 31, 1955, Philip was heard to exclaim to a friend, "And a bloody good thing, too."

Townsend, who lost his job as royal equerry as a result of his romance with Margaret, recently became engaged to Marie-Luce Jammagne, 20-year-old daughter of a wealthy Belgian cigarette manufacturer.

Philip's "interference" in the Margaret-Townsend affair may have been the turning point in the Duke's popularity with the Queen's subjects.

But today the real concern of the Queen of England and her subjects is her own uncertain, mercurial personal relationship with her husband. What originally attracted Elizabeth to Philip also makes him attractive to other women. In many ways, the Queen's husband resembles her great-grandfather, Edward VII, who liked young women and old wine.

Philip Mountbatten would leave a trail of broken hearts if he weren't a Prince Charming out of a fairy-tale romance. On a U. S. visit, he so charmed a Washington woman reporter that she sighed, "Philip could run for Congress on the Republican ticket in Texas and get all the women's votes."

PHILIP'S BOHEMIAN ways first began to trouble the Queen and raise Palace eyebrows when he continued to attend convivial stag luncheons of the "Thursday Club." The 24 members of this exclusive, raffish club met in the upstairs room of London's Wheeler's restaurant on Old Compton Street.

One of the club's leaders was a close friend of Philip named Nahum Baron, a good-looking society photographer who began to get commissions for royal sittings soon after Philip married Elizabeth. Baron's avocation was collecting the names and addresses of beautiful girls. While Elizabeth attended to her royal duties, Philip is rumored to have attended stag parties at the Baron Mayfair home on Brick Street.

The rumors of Philip's playboy activities persisted even after Baron died of a heart attack in 1956. In November, 1956, the Queen, at her advisers' urging, sent her husband to Australia to open the Olympic Games, presumably to give him something "official" to do and to put an end to the London tongue-wagging. But even with the Duke away, the rumors continued.

On February 7, 1957, the nearest approach to a court scandal since the 1936 abdication of King Edward broke wide open. Prince Philip was then at Gibraltar on the *Britannia*, near the end of a four-months' tour which seemed unnecessarily drawn out. The royal-rift flames were fanned by the announcement in England that Philip's World War II naval buddy, closest friend, and private secretary for nine years, Lt. Comdr. Michael Parker, was being separated from his wife, Eileen. Mrs. Parker, who later won an uncontested divorce from her husband on the grounds of adultery, complained that it was no fun being married to a man who was away from home so much. Parker, who was on the *Britannia* with Philip, explained that his job required him to be away. But to avoid further embarrassment to Philip and the royal family, he promptly resigned.

Meanwhile, millions of Britons, whose deep love of their throne is often hard for Americans to understand, wondered why the Prince didn't immediately fly home from Gibraltar. Among the excuses offered were these: (1) Philip didn't want to use up scarce gasoline for a special flight; (2) As a senior officer on the *Britannia*, it would be un-Navy-like for him to see his family before crew members could get home to theirs; (3) the *Britannia* had to take the Queen to Lisbon for a state visit, so her husband wanted to make sure that it was shipshape.

In any case, on February 17, 1957, Elizabeth flew to Portugal to meet her husband on a much-ballyhooed "second honeymoon." After seeing her briefly, he emerged from an airplane cabin with a wide smear of lipstick on his face. But the "second honeymoon" on the *Britannia* lasted only a day or two—even after a four-month separation.

Still, Philip often showed that he can be a thoughtful husband. On one occasion, when the Queen was sitting alone at a party, the Duke strolled over to a stag line of rigid young lords and said, "For Heaven's sake, ask the Queen to dance! The poor thing's been bored all night."

Despite their long separations, Philip has a profound influence upon the Queen. The debonnaire Duke has taught his wife much about the world from which she has been sheltered all her life. He helped transform her from a plainly dressed, somewhat frumpy girl into a fashionably gowned woman. It was due to his teasing that she went on a diet to lose 20 pounds.

No matter how much Philip's behavior seems to indicate a deep rift in his royal marriage, it is obvious that Elizabeth is deeply in love with her wayward husband. "Her affection for Philip is written all over her face when he enters a room," observes a court insider. She once described her husband as "the only man I could ever love."

If the Queen of England were plain Mrs. Elizabeth Windsor Mountbatten, her life would be simpler—and probably happier. She is married to a man who, while courting her, was called a "young fool" by her father. Could the late King George VI have been prophetic back in 1939 when he remarked, "There goes Elizabeth, a poor lonely girl. Will she be lonely all her life?"

Today Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain and the other Realms and Territories, probably is one of the loneliest women in England—just as her husband seems to be one of the unhappiest men.

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