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# ALEXANDRA—New Pattern in

*She has a fresh approach to her duties and a sense of spontaneity that has broken all the Old Guard rules of royalty—and the British love her for it*



With a shy smile and modest wave, Princess Alexandra returns the greetings of crowds that cheer her at public appearances.

**H**ER SERENE Highness Alexandra Helen Elizabeth Olga Christabel Windsor picked up the champagne bottle and swung it high above her head, then whacked it with most unroyal vigor against the bow of the aircraft carrier *H.M.S. Jaguar*. The bottle smashed to smithereens, but the ship stood still.

In the horrified silence that followed, a voice from below yelled, "Give 'er a shove, yer 'ighness." Before the officials knew what was happening, Alexandra chuckled, leaned far over the rail of the launching platform, and gave the dripping bow a push.

The carrier miraculously slid down the ways. And Princess Alexandra of Kent, then 21, came away from her first big solo public function nicely unaware that the eyes of a curious and enchanted British public were upon her.

Since that time, unaided by press-agentry and mainly due to a naturally vivacious and unpredictable personality, she has moved slowly into the spotlight. Today, at 24, she often finds herself called upon to act on behalf of the British royal family (she is a first cousin of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret).

Perhaps the most amazing thing about Alexandra is the fact that in a country where royalty's every move is followed with the kind of fanatic devotion reserved for movie stars in America, she has only recently been "discovered."

One reason is her unusual upbringing. She is the only daughter and the second of three children of the Duchess of Kent and the late Duke, who was killed in a flying accident when Alexandra was five. (Alexandra's eldest brother is the present Duke.) The Duchess of Kent kept her daughter firmly under wraps, most unroyal ones at that, during her entire childhood.

**A**LEXANDRA was the first British princess to attend boarding school. Later, she went to finishing school in Paris. There she received no special concessions but lived as modestly as her fellow students. Of Alexandra's finishing-school days, her headmistress has said: "She was quite a charming girl but such a prankster, you understand; she never could attend to her lessons."

After finishing school, Alexandra spent six months as a student nurse in London's Hospital for Sick Children before being groomed for her royal role. In 1955, she was given a lady-in-waiting, and her activities began to be reported in the Court Circular. But because Princess Margaret's ill-starred romance with Peter Townsend was dominating the headlines, Alexandra still escaped the full newspaper coverage given royal activities.

Certainly, Princess Margaret has always held the lion's share of the spotlight, and she always will hold a good deal of it. But now that she is married, it seems likely that Alexandra, the only unattached British princess besides the Queen's 8-year-old daughter Anne, will take over many of Margaret's duties.

Happily, she has the *joie de vivre* and the flair that runs

# Princesses

By ROBIN MILLER

in the British royal family: the ability to invest each event with the sparkle of romance and the sense of grand occasion. But she has combined it with an unpredictability and spontaneity all her own. As one reporter put it: "She has already established an entirely new pattern of behavior for royalty."

Take her Far Eastern tour last fall. Everything was against her at the outset. She was the youngest princess ever to tackle a royal tour alone. She had had little previous experience. She had almost no advance publicity. She was going to spend most of her time with the fiercely independent and critical Australians. Worst of all, she went in place of the popular Princess Margaret.

But no sooner had she landed than Alexandra set about cracking conventions as casually as nuts. As she got into her car after the first official luncheon, she sat on the top hat of the Governor of Queensland, Sir Henry Able Smith, and squashed it flat as a pancake. Officials and onlookers gasped—but Alexandra gaily waved the battered headgear in salutation to the crowd as she drove away.

After that, it was one success after another. In Canberra, for instance, "the Bobby Princess," as the Australians immediately named her, attended another luncheon, this one with an imaginative guest list (drawn by ballot at her request) of stenographers, farmers, clerks, etc. The meal began in a tense hush until Alexandra turned to Australia's Prime Minister Menzies and said audibly, "Oh, this dreadful silence; what can we do about it?" The general laughter broke the ice, and the luncheon was a resounding success from then on.

Since Princess Margaret's marriage, Alexandra furnishes royal patronage to such good causes as seeing-eye dogs and gymnastic societies.



On the Brisbane River, Alexandra insisted on taking the wheel of the royal launch as they passed through the docks, then tooted deafening blasts on the whistle in response to the ocean liners' and tugs' sirens. At a ball in Melbourne, she danced indefatigably until 2 a.m. (royalty usually leave at midnight) and enchanted her hosts by cuddling young Koala bears on the lap of her dazzling ball gown.

It is not surprising that Alexandra was given a send-off usually reserved for reigning monarchs, nor that she received a thunderous welcome on her return home.

**T**HE QUEEN has been delighted with her work, and it was a tribute to Alexandra's prestige with the royal family that she was one of the five godparents at the christening of Prince Andrew, Elizabeth's third child, born last February.

Alexandra lives in London at her mother's apartments at Kensington Palace (provided by the Queen). She is very close to her brother, the Duke of Kent, and shares his exuberant high spirits and sense of fun. But she doesn't have the wild streak he showed a few years ago when he wrecked three cars and attended parties that made headlines after ending in brawls.

So far, Alexandra has shown no signs of romantic attachments (though the British columnist who predicted that Margaret would marry in 1960 has also predicted Alexandra will marry in 1961 and has described a European king not unlike King Baudouin of Belgium).

Whatever the future holds, Princess Alexandra's genuine enjoyment of her duties and her irrepressible personality have made her Britain's newest royal love.



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