



Mamie and Ike will celebrate their next anniversary at their home in Gettysburg.

My Friend MAMIE

(Continued)

Feeling I'd played on her sympathy, I sought to give her an "out." "Don't you have to discuss it?" I was thinking, of course, that Ike might have some other plans.

"Why should I have to discuss it?" she retorted. "I make the social engagements in this house, so I'll expect you."

Once again I'd seen a demonstration of Mamie's positive approach to what she regards as her own domain. Outside of that domain, she is reticent. When world events are being discussed by people she considers better qualified to talk—her husband, for instance—she sits by quietly and listens.

Early in 1951, we kissed them goodbye. The General had accepted the post as commander of SHAPE and NATO, and they were to live outside Paris until June, 1952, when he came home to accept the presidential nomination.

During this time, our letters flew back and forth. Mamie's were always friendly, personal, and full of "girl talk." She'd ask me to buy little things she'd seen advertised in the New York newspapers, and as I was by this time fashion director of a large New York department store, nothing was easier for me to do.

Shopping for Mamie has been one of the small ways in which I've sought to repay her friendship. Our tastes are so similar it has never been a problem for me. Mamie had always admired my hats, so it was natural that I should introduce her to Sally Victor, who has made her hats since the famous gray one she wore at the first inauguration.

A charming memory comes to mind in regard to the inaugural hat. I was sitting in Mamie's bedroom at Morningside Drive while she was having the final fitting. Her young granddaughter, Barbara Anne, was there, parading around with a crown on her head made from cut-up newspapers. Mamie was telling her a story, and Barbara Anne

kept asking, "Then what happened?"

So Mamie, about to become the First Lady, about to appear before millions on movie and television screens, about to take her place in our history, went right on with her fitting while she con-

tinued, "And so, the beautiful young princess..."

I believe Mamie would prefer to be with her grandchildren than with any of the famous personalities she meets as wife of the President!

Since Mamie has been in the White House, I've naturally seen less of her. The demands on her time are constant. When I'm in Washington, however, she always manages to squeeze in a personal visit, even if it's only for a half

hour, and we sit and chat like old friends. If the call is in the morning, Mamie will be sitting up in a great double bed, wearing a pink bed jacket and a pink ribbon in her hair, and looking as fresh as a spring morning. Piled

around her on the bed will be stacks of letters and papers demanding attention. And believe me, they will receive it.

Mamie uses her bedroom as an office, and she is as organized as a top

executive. All the mail (hundreds of pieces weekly) will be answered; all household problems will be discussed (including state dinners, which she supervises to the last detail); every present will be acknowledged (and she

receives many). She is tireless in getting out work. No trivial thing she ever promises to do is forgotten. I have occasionally asked a favor, and if she says she can do it, it is done.

Speaking of presents, Mamie loves them. She takes an almost childlike pleasure in unwrapping a package. I've never tried it, but I'm sure a red apple, prettily tied, would bring the same shine to her eyes as an heirloom. It is fantastic to me that she never confuses her gifts. When she is using one of mine, she'll say, "Remember, Maggie? You brought this bag to me from Paris the summer of 1953."

HER MEMORY is phenomenal. No doubt she has written down the dates of her friends' birthdays, but whether written or not, they are never forgotten. On every birthday and every Christmas, there is a card or gift, for just as Mamie loves to receive presents, she also loves to give them.

Once, on my birthday, the phone rang. I answered, and before another word was said, "Happy Birthday" was being sung to me by the First Lady!

Which brings me to Mamie and the telephone. It is via the telephone that we keep in touch. I call during that morning hour when I know she's in her bedroom-sitting room, and we catch up on all the little personal details of our lives—our families, our grandchildren, our wardrobes. Mamie converses as relaxedly as a neighbor over the back fence, and at the end of a conversation which may have lasted 40 minutes, she'll say, "Maggie, I'm sorry. I know you're busy and I've kept you so long!"

I wish everyone's telephone manners were as good as Mamie's. When I call her, I give my name and in a matter of minutes she's on the phone. True, though, I've learned when to call. It's always during the morning hour which is split between her household duties and keeping in touch with her many old friends.

And when she calls me, she is on the phone waiting to speak. I learned my lesson on this score when I was working in the store. I was told the White House was calling, and thinking it was the long-distance operator, I finished what I was doing and sauntered leisurely to the phone. There was Mamie herself, waiting to talk. I apologized for keeping her waiting, to which she replied, "That's all right, Maggie. I know how busy you are."

By this time next year, my friend Mamie will be a private citizen once more. She and Ike probably will be living in Gettysburg in their own home for the first time in their married lives.

Perhaps I shall see her more often. But see her or not, I feel as close to her as I do to my friend next door. I know that wherever I am in the world, I can lift the phone and there she'll be, saying cheerfully: "Hi, Maggie dear, what can I do for you?"

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DANNY THOMAS

Star of the Danny Thomas Show, CBS-TV

