

PAT NIXON (Continued)

able to talk to them in their native tongue.

Mrs. Nixon's role as the Vice President's traveling companion threw light on another trait which would play an important part if she becomes First Lady: she has no intention of taking a back seat or accepting the customary role of a President's wife as far as public appearances are concerned.

"I would have loved to have gone sight-seeing when we went abroad," she confesses, "but I couldn't have done my country much good that way. Nor if I had just followed my husband around wherever he went. That's why I mapped out a plan of activities for myself, consisting of separate visits to places of importance." Then she adds with a smile: "Quite often the local papers gave me more coverage than my husband."

She also has proved that she has self-control in the most trying situations. In Venezuela two years ago, she grimly walked through a Communist mob that hurled rocks and spat at her, and calmly reached across the bayonets of the guards to offer her hand to an astonished spectator.

A tremendous asset to Mrs. Nixon as First Lady would be her youth (she's 48) and her stamina, which have enabled her to keep up with her husband under difficult circumstances. On one tour, for instance, Mrs. Nixon slept on the plane night after night and was ready for another country and another reception the next day.

She Has Few Pastimes

Pat rarely relaxes, and has little time or inclination for bridge or other leisure activities. Her only pastimes are occasionally watching TV and reading biographies, novels, and fashion magazines—almost anything but mysteries and Westerns, which in recent years have been White House favorites.

Obviously, the pace and obligations of the White House would present no particular difficulty for her. In fact, she has never had anything but a "public" life since she married Dick Nixon on June 21, 1940. Soon afterward, he was called into the Navy. While he was still in this country, she followed him from station to station. When he went overseas, Mrs. Nixon lived in a boardinghouse.

In 1946 Nixon entered politics, and his wife was busier with his campaign than with her home.

With few exceptions, American First Ladies are not known for their chicness of dress, and Pat Nixon would not spoil the record.

All but her evening dresses are ready-made, and show it. Yet Mrs. Nixon herself has intentionally chosen styles which, she feels, are befitting a woman of her position. "I never thought clothes were the greatest thing in life," she observes candidly. "I'm the type who likes to look neat. No

one would ever catch me wearing a wrapper or walking around with pin curls even in the privacy of my own home."

Another reason for Mrs. Nixon's conservative dress is that the Nixons were forever living close to the limits of their budget. Right now, practically all their earnings are tied up in their \$75,000 home. Even with the \$35,000 plus \$10,000 for expenses allotted to the Vice President, keeping up a big house with three servants, frequent entertaining, and other obligations leave little for her wardrobe.

As a result, her dress is, and will continue to be, more acceptable in Wichita, Kans., or Battle Creek, Mich., than in Paris or Rio de Janeiro.

The Nixons Like Privacy

There is a general belief that the White House, if it is to become Pat Nixon's domain, would not be quite as open to curiosity seekers as, say, it was under the Franklin D. Roosevelt regime. Pat loves her privacy, and while she is not antagonistic toward the curious, she prefers to have her family left alone when not on official functions.

For that reason, she was grateful when the Nixons moved from a street where sight-seeing buses parked in front of their house so frequently that they had to dash to their car when going out.

They now live on a dead-end street, impossible for buses to maneuver, affording much-appreciated privacy.

Mrs. Nixon is in firm control of the 11-room English-Tudor home. But despite efforts by women reporters to paint her as a "homebody," she rarely cooks and never shops. She makes out the menu and grocery list, but leaves the rest to her cook and servants. She supervises closely, however, and the furnishings, a hodgepodge of styles, are polished to perfection despite a population of four cats, two parakeets, and one famous dog, Checkers.

Her early upbringing has given Pat Nixon few qualifications as a hostess for large gatherings, but she learned as the wife of the Vice President that protocol officers will provide all the official help she might need. Mrs. Nixon plans her own menus and seating arrangements for parties of up to 24 guests at her home. When larger numbers are involved, she supervises the menu and flower arrangements, but lets the State Department protocol officer work out the seating.

"I want my guests to feel they can relax," Mrs. Nixon told me. "That's why I discourage having the men disappear into the den for their coffee, leaving the women with their small talk. I also don't like to see cabinet officers who work together every day sit next to one another. Often we invite people who come from quite different walks of life, because we feel it makes the evening more interesting."

The Nixons do not appear to have many strictly "social" friends. The people they associate with most frequently are probably the Herbert Kleins



Good-will envoy Pat's gentle charm makes friends.

and the Robert Finches. Klein is Nixon's press secretary and special assistant; Finch is an old friend and his administrative assistant.

A big problem would be to make sure the prestige of the President's office doesn't go to the heads of their daughters, Patricia, 14, and Julie, 12.

To a certain extent the problem exists already, and she and the Vice President are trying to counteract it by speaking as little as possible of the official functions they attend. "I don't want the girls to brag that their parents had dinner at the White House last night," Mrs. Nixon says. "When we go out, we just say we had dinner somewhere."

Both she and Mr. Nixon try to participate in as many of the youngsters' school activities as possible. In the past, this included Pat's taking turns in car pools, chaperoning parties at the Nixons' or at other homes, and attending PTA meetings.

"Dick is home only a couple of nights a week," she told me, "but when he is, he devotes as much time as he can to the children and tries to save his work until after they turn in at night."

Although the girls used to attend public school, both are now in a private school, the Sidwell Friends School, and will stay there. Pat says that this way "they can be together."

It's Often a Lonely Life

Pat Nixon's life as the wife of the Vice President is often a lonely one, and it promises to be much more so if her husband wins the November election. Unlike most men in high office, who have a variety of pastimes and means of relaxation in which a wife can participate, Richard Nixon is completely absorbed in his political ambitions. There is practically no time for any activity that does not involve politics or government, practically no time to relax, to take it easy, to devote to his children. Thus Pat has to carry a far greater responsibility in rearing their daughters than most mothers.

The last vacation they took together as a family was the one day last summer when he joined them at Virginia Beach. It is a rare occasion when they sneak away for dinner in a small Spanish restaurant, or to the Columbia Country Club, or to a movie. Even when they travel together, it is on official business, and their conversation, more often than not, concerns official matters.

"I have given up everything I ever loved," Pat Nixon once confessed in a moment of weakness.

Maybe that's why she insists: "I live from day to day. I don't like to think ahead. I just try to do the best I can. I don't have time to visualize what the future will hold because I am too busy doing the best I can, every day."

(Next week's issue will present Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of the Democratic presidential candidate. It's the second in the FAMILY WEEKLY series, "The Women Behind the Candidates.")

Mrs. Nixon makes guests like President and Mrs. Garcia of the Philippines feel relaxed at her home.

