

## Meet Scott Carpenter—

# Our Next Man in Space

Here is an intimate glimpse of this astronaut who finds romance and glory in flying—and the wife who shares his adventures



gram, his wife is even more so. Mrs. Marjorie Slayton, for instance, has always maintained that the astronauts' wives had been preconditioned by their husbands' experience as test pilots.

On the other hand, Rene Carpenter tells how she used to watch the kitchen clock when Scott was testing planes in Maryland. Each minute he was late convinced her that Scott had crashed. Does she feel differently now? "I still have some qualms," she says.

Scott trained as a Navy flier in the closing years of World War II, then returned to Boulder to study aeronautical engineering at the University of Colorado, where he met Rene. He supplemented his GI aid by work as a lumberjack, hod carrier, and jackhammer operator, which probably accounts for the exceptional development of shoulders, chest, and biceps on his otherwise slender frame. Even now he is an extraordinary gymnast who can climb a 20-foot rope hand-over-hand in a few seconds and perform effortlessly on exercise bars.

THE COUPLE makes a point of the fact they have "worked" to make their marriage a success. "You can't take anything for granted that's important," Rene says, which sums up their methodical approach to everything from raising a family to discussing Scott's career.

As an example of "working" at marriage, Rene tells about their honeymoon. She and Scott isolated themselves from the world in a crude cabin deep in the Rockies. Scott chopped wood and added to their provisions by hunting and fishing. Rene learned her housekeeping with a minimum of conveniences. The experience, she says proudly, brought them closer together and helped shape their whole concept of marriage.

This concept includes long sessions discussing each other's problems over coffee or milk at the kitchen table. When Scott is away, which is often, he writes 17- or 20-page letters detailing each phase of his training. Rene responds with long diarylike letters.

In outward appearance, Rene seems to have a tendency to "take charge" of the Carpenter family, but intimates claim

this is deceptive, resulting from Scott's habit of clamping up around casual acquaintances. In Navy parlance, friends say, he "runs a taut ship" in the privacy of his home.

"Scott is very conscious of the fact he doesn't get to spend as much time with his children as other fathers," says his mother. "Yet he's a strict disciplinarian with them. I think this is especially hard for a father who has to be away from home a lot and who has lost a young one." Timmy, the Carpenters' first-born, died in 1951.

THE CARPENTERS have succeeded so well in sharing their lives that Rene doesn't wait for husbandly instructions when a crisis arises. For example, Scott had returned to service in 1949 and, after Korean missions, became a Navy test pilot in Maryland. He wanted desperately to join the Mercury program, but felt he had only a slim chance because he had so little jet-flying experience—400 hours compared with the 1,600 to 2,500 hours of other astronauts.

Even more mortifying was his approaching assignment—two years of sea duty aboard an aircraft carrier and, worst of all, in a nonflying role. Just before his ship was to leave, Rene received word at home that, despite Scott's lack of jet experience, he could join Mercury if he was still interested. Rene didn't hesitate: she wired his acceptance first, informed Scott afterward.

The Carpenters live in a project-type duplex a short distance from the Manned Space Flight Center. They have four children, Mark Scott, 12, Robin Jay, 9, Kristen Elaine, 5, and Candace Noxon, 4. At the end of this school term, they will move to Houston, where the Space Center is being relocated.

"I think all the astronauts' wives are looking forward to the move," Rene says. "It'll be something permanent to work on, or so we hope. But we have so many other things to think of now."

In this case, the "we" is quite appropriate. As his mother and wife have said, astronaut Scott Carpenter shares his life with those he loves, and his coming adventure in space will be no exception.

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