

FORD (Continued from page 9)

Ben owns a 65-foot yacht called the Onika, after his father's last boat. Actually, this is the third "Onika" Ben has owned. When I asked him why he didn't call it Onika III, he looked surprised.

"It would be ostentatious," he said, "to advertise how many boats you've had."

THIS ABHORRENCE of ostentation is typical of all the Ford brothers—and particularly of the youngest, William Clay. Bill Ford, at 34, is probably the wealthiest of the three brothers since his wife is Martha Firestone of Akron, Ohio, a lady who is decidedly wealthy in her own right. They have three children: Martha, 10, Sheila, 7, and Bill, Jr., approaching two.

Bill Ford is in charge of the highly important product-planning and styling staff of the Ford Motor Company. Like Benson's boating, Bill's interest in design came from his father. He still remembers breathlessly the day Edsel Ford first brought home the prototype of the Lincoln Continental.

"I was only 15," he remembers, "and my father let me drive it."

Fourteen years later, Bill was in charge of turning out his beloved Continental—and he echoed his father's feelings when he insisted on conservative style lines.

"Henry," he recalls, "wanted to turn it into a European-type hot rod."

In this disagreement, at least, Bill pre-

vailed. But as the youngest member of the family, he has had some difficulties, too. A few years earlier, for example, he had been invited to sit in on union negotiations—a green youngster fresh out of college, learning the family business. The UAW negotiators gave Bill a hard time at the conference table, and he took it impassively, day after day, for three months. When the contract was finally signed, Bill was presented a plaque by the union, congratulating him on his patience and perseverance.

Although all the Ford boys are athletic, Bill was—and is—the most talented. He is also the only one of the three to graduate from college. Bill played varsity soccer, tennis, and hockey at Yale and is an outstanding amateur golfer despite an injury to his leg three years ago. Bill's principal outside activity at the moment is the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn; he is in charge of both, and loves to putter around the Museum. This fits his strong affection for his grandfather.

He is also national campaign chairman for United Cerebral Palsy this year and is a trustee of the Thomas A. Edison Foundation, which encourages American youth to pursue careers in science and engineering.

Where the other brothers may be slightly embarrassed by some of their grandfather's excesses, Bill is likely to come to his defense. His feeling for the founder of the Ford Company is a decidedly warm one.

"How else could I feel," he asks, "toward a kindly old man who let me drive when I was seven years old and shoot his guns when I wasn't much older?"

These are the Ford brothers—a remarkable triumvirate in view of the hurdles of wealth, nepotism, and eccentricity they had to take in stride. Apparently all three have cleared the obstacles and are running in the straight-away where they can be judged on their own finishing power. So far, it looks strong and healthy.

There has never been a divorce in the Ford family, and no indication of any sort of scandal. It's also extremely doubtful if any of them has ever been to a psychiatrist—or even considered going. The brothers live their own lives socially, but they see each other frequently and the entire family gets together about a half-dozen times each year at the home of their mother—who still lives in the Gaukler Pointe mansion where she and Edsel Ford raised the third generation of a fabled family that has risen to its responsibilities and expectations.

But for all their hobnobbing in high financial circles, the Ford brothers are still capable of the most disarming sort of provincial Americanism. When Jacob Malik of the Soviet Union came to a party Henry gave in New York, Henry greeted him with a cordial handshake and a cheerful, "How are you, Mr. Malik?"

The Russian eyed him cynically and asked: "Who taught you to greet opponents that way—your State Department?"

"No," said Henry quickly, "my mother."

Perhaps this is the sort of thing the Tass correspondent in New York was thinking about when he left an impromptu luncheon which a number of newspapermen had with Henry Ford II.

"If you had more capitalists like Ford," this gentleman is reputed to have said, "I might even consider turning in my party membership card."



William Ford, with wife and two daughters, is the youngest but wealthiest of brothers.

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