

The Women in Nelson

NELSON ROCKEFELLER'S marriage last May to vivacious Margaretta (Happy) Murphy raises two questions: Has the Governor followed in the footsteps of the Duke of Windsor and forfeited a "kingdom" for the woman he loves? And why, when caught in a conflict of strong desires, did he choose as he did?

Only the future can settle the first question. But the answer to the second lies in understanding the Governor as a man—and seeing him within his own family, particularly with the women who have influenced and shaped his life.

The second Mrs. Rockefeller means so much to him that he apparently is prepared to trade the possibility of the Presidency itself for happiness with her. The magnitude of this decision is obvious, for many of his friends believe the ultimate target of his political ambition always has been the Presidency.

John C. McClintock, consultant to the Inter-American Development Bank and a very close friend of the Governor, told me recently: "The mainspring of Nelson's conduct has always been competition with his grandfather, John D. Rockefeller. The grandfather was a great man; Nelson has always wanted to be an even greater man. His target, therefore; the Presidency."

Margaretta, too, arrived at the decision to marry only after great inner turmoil. Few persons know of the long tightrope she had to walk before deciding to end her marriage to Dr. James Murphy and wed the Governor.

Rockefeller's position as one of the wealthiest men ever to hold public office did not lure her. She herself is a multimillionaire and is descended from a distinguished family whose members include a founder of Princeton University, the Union commander at Gettysburg, and a 19th-century mayor of Philadelphia. Nor was Happy (as her friends call her because of her bubbling personality) lured by the desire to be First Lady of New York—and possibly of the United States.

"Political razzle-dazzle is not for her," said Wallace Harrison, the famous architect and one of the Governor's closest friends. "Essentially, Happy is quite simple and unspoiled; she's a home person more than anything else. She has no

interest in world affairs, although she's a bright, serious person. She is happy, as her name indicates, but not rah-rah."

What did draw her into the marriage was genuine love for Rockefeller, the man. It was a love which she tried to fight but couldn't.

The months preceding their marriage last spring were lonely ones for Nelson Rockefeller. "Throwing his energies into his work as governor and into his political future," says a close friend, "could not fill the void left by the estrangement from his wife and the separation and divorce that later followed. And he felt the death of his son Michael more intensely than he wanted us to know. He turned to his brother Laurance, the strongest friendship he has known within his own family. But apart from that tie, his private life remained a lonely existence."

Loneliness was no way of life for a man with Rockefeller's boundless energy, a restlessness that makes him a man constantly in motion. He even makes walking a challenge. "If you're going to walk," he told a friend, "you might as well get some good out of it." Arriving at his Monte Sacro cattle ranch in Venezuela at the end of a strenuous gubernatorial campaign, he mounted a horse and climbed a 5,000-foot mountain to visit a rain forest at the top. Returning from the five-hour trip, he went for a swim!

Rockefeller's loneliness also was in sharp contrast to the patterns of a lifetime. He always had enjoyed warm relationships. For instance, with his mother, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, there had been a frank, open camaraderie.

Reared in a Close-Knit Family

No committee meeting or other outside interest—and she had many—could keep her from seeing Nelson, his sister, and his four brothers off to school. When they returned, she was waiting. To help them with their morning prayers, which they took turns in saying, she copied Bible verses on bits of cardboard. Prayer time, which was at 7:45 a.m., also became the occasion for the children to air their personal grievances and for the family to weigh each case.

From 5 to 6 in the afternoon, the mother read aloud to the children. After supper, she supervised their homework. Nelson had difficulty with multiplication, so every night she made a special point of hearing him recite his tables.

Nelson's parents knew the hazards of bringing

up children in the rarefied atmosphere of supreme wealth. They knew that while most persons come of age in families concerned, even worried, about earning money, their children would grow up in a home concerned chiefly with spending it wisely.

Abby and her husband, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., were determined that their sons should not be effete creatures of wealth, but "regular guys." As a boy, Nelson's allowance was only 30 cents a week. He could earn an additional 10 cents by hoeing the garden or by catching 100 flies. Moreover, he was taught to keep a record of his expenses in a ledger, which his father examined each week. For good books he received a nickel; for bad ones, a nickel penalty.

The Rockefellers did not send their sons to upper-crust private schools. Instead, all the boys except John III attended Lincoln School, a co-educational institution where they mingled with students from every walk of life—some with scholarships endowed by the Rockefellers.

Self-Confidence Was a Way of Life

Abby always strived to instill self-confidence in her children. At Lincoln, learning to play tunes on a harp and enacting the role of a beggar in a school play, Nelson first began to show this self-confidence, which is now famous. In his senior year he greeted a new teacher by saying, "You're new here. I've been around for quite a while. If you need any help, let me know."

The summer after Nelson was graduated from Lincoln, he and his family were at their place in Seal Harbor, Maine. Abby noted that he found every possible excuse to visit the Clarks of Philadelphia, who were summering at nearby Northeast Harbor. His interest was in the tall, lean tomboy of the Clark clan—Mary Todhunter Clark, whom everyone called Tod. He danced with her more than with any of the other girls of the summer colony. No one laughed more lustily than he at her splendid mimicry at charity shows.

But there was a temporary parting of the ways. Tod went back to Foxcroft at fashionable Middleburg, Va., but served notice that she would not go to Wellesley as her parents wished. She wanted social work, not Society. At her family's behest, however, she did take a year at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Nelson went to Dartmouth. He strode the campus in corduroy pants and sweat shirts, rel-

COVER:



There's no telling where a pretty girl in a parka is headed for these days—but we bet it's the ski slopes! Photo by Jim Pond. See new ski fashions on page 10.

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