



# Rockefeller's Life

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First, there was Mother,  
loving and wise; then



Tod, his witty, strong-  
minded first wife;



and now there's  
Happy,



the vivacious  
young woman who could  
cost him the Presidency—  
or help him capture it

egating suits for use only at dances and at the Sunday school class he taught. Even today he prefers informality to formality and is chronically in need of a haircut. Although President Kennedy and he at one time patronized the same New York tailor, he doesn't care how he is dressed and often wears rumpled double-breasted suits that are unflattering to his stocky figure.

Nelson ran for president of his class but was defeated. He did win the vice presidency, however, and he also earned Phi Beta Kappa honors. "Nelson insists," a classmate reports, "that he made Phi Beta Kappa chiefly to compete with a friend who had made it before him."

Abby Rockefeller stayed close to her son during these days. With her husband, she continued to impose the economic rigors in which they so earnestly believed. So at Dartmouth, the wealthiest student on the campus received an allowance of \$1,500 a year that had to cover everything—board, room, tuition, books, clothes, and travel. Ten percent had to be set aside for church and charity contributions, and his parents also expected him to save an additional 10 percent. When his allowance was spent, moreover, it was not replenished. Many of his classmates had cars, but Nelson could afford only a bicycle. Some-

times he had to work in the school cafeteria to raise money to take a girl out.

One campus story is that a professor who met Nelson on the street and extended an invitation to come to dinner 'sometime,' received in reply a swift "How about tonight?" Reason: Nelson had only 12 cents in his pocket at the time.

After Tod returned from the Sorbonne, Nelson invited her to a Dartmouth dance. "We had a good time," he wrote his mother. "She is always full of good fun and never dull." Meantime, Abby was cultivating Tod on her own. She invited the Clark girl to an Easter-vacation party and also included her in a trip to Cairo.

Nelson made his mother his confidante. In one letter he described Tod as "good sport, good mind, witty." On his 21st birthday he wrote: "I'm beginning to think that I really am in love with Tod, whatever being in love means. I can shake it off for a while now and then, but it always comes back, and I've never been able to develop a real affection and an admiration that is as all-inclusive for anyone else. She is the only girl that I know who measures up anywhere nearly to the standards set by you, Mum. But don't get worried. I'm not going to run into anything in a headstrong way."

A week after Nelson was graduated from Dartmouth in 1930, he married Tod at Bala-Cynwyd on Philadelphia's Main Line. He had known her since he was 16. He was now 22.

A childhood friend of Tod's says, "Nelson was drawn to Tod because she was no conventional product of an exclusive girls' finishing school . . . Among other things, she is a collector of rare plants, an amateur ornithologist who maintains bird-watching stations on two continents, and she has made an outstanding contribution to the education of nurses. She has an independent mind and strong convictions."

### A Public Career Begins

Tod was prepared for a wholly nonpublic life befitting her own inclinations. But, in 1940, Nelson accepted a \$1-a-year post from President Roosevelt and made his bow in Washington. Later he became Undersecretary in the new Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which, along with Milton S. Eisenhower and Arthur S. Fleming, he had proposed.

In 1954 President Eisenhower appointed Rockefeller as Special Assistant to the President for Foreign Affairs. But, though he was close to power, he had none. Stirred by the possibilities of high office, he began to dream.

Tod would have been happier in New York or at the Rockefeller's Pocantico Hills estate, but she stoically accepted the role in which she had been cast. Their private life during the Washington years was serene. A neighbor of the Rockefellers reminisces: "We always thought Nelson and Tod were very close. She was attractive, strong, bright. But she was the stronger of the two. Maybe it was that which led to the later estrangement between them. Talk was that they were divorced because Tod hated the governor's mansion and wanted privacy. But we knew that by the time they were divorced, they already had been estranged some nine years."

Through the years in Washington and after his return to New York in 1955, Rockefeller treated his children—Rodman (born in 1932), Ann (in 1934), Steven (in 1936), and the twins, Michael and Mary (in 1938)—very much as his own father had treated him. He could be stern about money. Once, while he was conversing with a friend, one of his sons approached him. "Dad," the boy said, "I've just got \$5 left. If I just had \$5 more, I could go to the dance."

After a pause, Rockefeller replied, "Gee, that's too bad." Then he resumed his conversation.

He instilled self-reliance and independence in his children. And when his teaching bore fruit, he was very pleased. He used to be proud when Michael talked of finding a career in which he could serve people, just as he was proud when Ann married an Episcopal minister, Robert L. Pierson, who chose a needy Bronx congregation instead of a fashionable Park Avenue one. There was satisfaction, too, when his son Steven—then

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