

CHAPTER II



JOB FUNCTIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE SPOUSE



Karen O'Neil has served as partner to Robert M. O'Neil, President of the University of Wisconsin System, since his appointment in 1980. Karen O'Neil is a graduate of Vassar College and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has taught both at the secondary level and in continuing education for adults, serving as lecturer in continuing education for women at Indiana University, staff member of the Partners' Program of the Indiana Executive Program and as consultant to the Spouses' Program of the Executive Curriculum at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is the mother of four school-aged children.

A DAY IN THE LIFE: SOME REFLECTIONS



by Karen E. O'Neil

What is it like to be the wife of a university president? I have been asked that question with some regularity since I became one several years ago, and while I have developed a series of stock answers, I am always tempted to say, "Want to know what it's really like? Let me tell you about last Wednesday," or Thursday or Friday, or whatever day I'm currently struggling to recover from.

This week it was Monday. Let me tell you about it. Monday begins at 6:30 a.m. when my hardworking partner—The President—awakens me with a cup of coffee and two minutes of conversation before he heads off to the office on his bicycle, a means of transportation (weather permitting) he refuses to forego despite its unpresidential demeanor. I muster four children out of bed and through breakfast before our housekeeper arrives at 7:30, help head the search for the sneakers, backpacks, homework assignments, and correct change required for bus, lunch, field trip and diet yoghurt which are the stuff of life for those between the ages of 6 and 15, and look longingly to the three hours I've set aside for myself to write a speech which seemed like a good idea at the time I agreed to do it, but now feels more like a heavy burden.

So far, so good—until I glance out the window. As if as an omen of what sort of a day this will be, lightning flashes, thunder booms and instead of finding myself behind the typewriter at 8 a.m., I am behind the wheel of the car, depositing four children at three different schools.

8:30 a.m. I answer the three phone calls that have accumulated since I left the house, give instructions to the housekeeper about how things will need to be organized for the event we plan to host in the evening, and repair to the study. One more pause for a call to the office and some business conversation with the President, a ritual we have developed to assure that we will have at least one chance a day to talk privately, without interruption, and while there is no danger that either of us will fall asleep in mid-sentence. Three hours have

now become two. The general noise of furniture being moved downstairs tells me that the university crew has arrived and preparations are underway for the evening. I relax and get to work.

11:15 a.m. I emerge from the study just in time to check details for the evening and get downtown for lunch. This is not to be my day. Our helpers have arranged the house for a sit-down dinner for 50. We are not having a dinner, but a meeting and a reception for 75. It is too late to call back the movers, so our tiny but heroic housekeeper joins me in re-arranging all the furniture, including five tables, each of which weighs more than she herself does.

12:30. I arrive at lunch both late and frazzled, but my companion, a legislator who manages at once to be both a dear friend and one of our University's most loyal advocates understands without explanation, which is, of course, one of the reasons she is such a dear friend. We cover in record fashion children, families, professional aspirations, and the current status of legislation affecting the University. The news of the children is good, the news of the legislation is bad, the professional aspirations—although present—are temporarily on hold. I am back in the car and just in time to drive for swim team, trumpet lessons, the makings of a Halloween costume, and a pair of shoes acceptable both to a teenager and her mother, and the few things I've forgotten to pick up for this evening's reception. Home just in time to put together a reasonable semblance of dinner before activities commence again.

6 p.m. On Monday afternoons, the President puts aside his administrative responsibilities in order to exercise his professorial skills, and we try hard to see that this once-a-week teaching stint culminates in something resembling an orderly, family meal. Preparations are interrupted only once, when a six-year old cry of distress tells me that the toilet is overflowing. Too late to find the plunger, I make a quick decision that the other seven bathrooms available in the gracious public residence with which our university provides us will have to suffice.

Dinner proceeds apace. The Professor is so pleased with his successful class that I decide to forego passing along the gloom I have garnered at lunch, although it is doubtful that I will be able to make myself heard amidst the general uproar in any case. I quickly check the house, remove three chocolate chips and a rolled-up copy of *Mad Magazine* from one of the remaining seven bathrooms and prepare to meet our guests.

8:00 p.m. All is well. Since the meeting is of a women's organization I will do the greeting alone, giving my husband a rare and welcome opportunity to spend the evening with the children. The house looks beautiful, the chairs are in their

proper order and the guests seem pleased to be here. Unfortunately, no one has informed me that among them will be a generous university friend who has just donated an elegant tea service for use in the President's House. Predictably, it is not the service we are using this evening. I cannot bear to disappoint her, so while our visitors assemble for the meeting that will precede refreshments, our evening helper and I join forces to quickly rearrange the table, finishing our task just in time for me to offer a few words of greeting to the group.

I repair to a quiet spot on the stairs (an overflow crowd has consumed all the chairs) and try to collect some energy for the social part of the evening. My brain is awash with effort to concentrate on the words of the speaker, conjecture as to how bad the bad legislative news is, concern as to whether I've really done justice to this morning's writing project, and the burning question of whether harm can come to a ten-year-old if he paints his arms with glow-paint for Halloween. And this is only Monday.

What does it mean to be the wife of a university president or chancellor? For me, some of all of the above, I suppose. And for my peers, something else again. Indeed, there are no two of us who experience in quite the same way the role in which we find ourselves. In fact, if there is one thing that is most striking about coming together with a group of university presidents' wives, it is to be found in what a varied lot we are. These days there are probably as many ways to define the role of president's partner as there are women who fulfill that role, communities and institutions they represent, and partners who have brought them to it. We differ in background and in training, in age and experience, in professional commitment and interest. Some of us are involved full time in activities generated by our husbands' institutions, and some of us devote full time to our own professional or volunteer pursuits. Others of us struggle to keep in place university activities, personal undertakings, and family responsibilities all at the same time. Yet we find in one another a community of interests and life experience which gives us a sense of comradeship and mutual understanding which transcends our differences.

Few of us would doubt that our activities do in some sense constitute a job; and there is some curiosity in that fact. After all, one is not a university president's wife as an independent fact of life, but as a circumstance of being married to a president. It is not a position to which one is elected or for which one is even individually selected. Only half of the wives of presidents currently in office were even interviewed before their husbands were appointed, according to the survey of spouses at NASULGC member institutions. In only a very small number of institutions does the job bring with it a description of responsibilities; in fact, the overwhelming majority of spouses find that no one

at the institution ever communicates to them directly either responsibilities or expectations for them. And yet those of us who find ourselves in the role of married partner of the president have little doubt that responsibilities and expectations do exist, and that whatever our individual accommodations to them, they will have implications for us and for our choice of activities. And, remarkably again, we are a strikingly satisfied lot, occasionally frustrated by our lives, but far more often than not, finding in them opportunity for activity, for service, and for personal growth which is both exciting and unique.

All of us who function in this role do so as the second person in what has traditionally been considered a two-person career. To be that second person at a time when expectations for women are rapidly changing, when the title "the wife of" no longer carries with it a complete and satisfactory identity, presents a special challenge for those of us who find ourselves exactly in that position. As public partners we are subject to a unique challenge, a challenge which takes place around the demands and expectations of the partnership, on the one hand, and the private needs, goals and expectations we have for ourselves as individuals, on the other. To be sure, everyone who functions as part of a marriage partnership needs to balance individual and jointly held goals. But when married partnership becomes public partnership that balance reaches crucial importance. Public partnership carries with it strong pressures, again a stronger and more clearly defined identity than might be necessary in an ordinary situation. It is those conflicting needs—support of the partnership, on the one hand, and a strong sense of self, on the other, that lead to the basic dilemma of public partnership, a dilemma which gives those of us who are such partners the common ground we find among ourselves. Each of us faces the central challenge of how to be a partner while remaining a person, and while each of us may make an individual accommodation to that challenge, it is one we face together.

Just why this should be lies in the special nature of the life that university administration brings with it and the kind of person who seeks that life. A university president or chancellor, in most instances, not only has a more than average commitment to public service, but is willing to make great sacrifice, often personal, in order to carry out that commitment. Such a person is willing to make a far greater commitment to work than is the average person. For most heads of educational institutions a sixteen-hour work day and a seven-day work week are not uncommon occurrences; work is rarely, if ever, out of mind. University administration further means being away from home a great deal of the time—speaking, meeting, representing, evaluating; it is a kind of work which requires if not continuous, then very frequent, travel and many, many evening commitments. Some of these involve the spouse, but certainly not all.

It is a uniquely public life. A university president is seen quite literally as the embodiment of his or her institution. He is directly answerable to his constituents, whether at home or in the office, and in some very basic sense is seen as belonging to them. A fundamental part of a president's work, in fact, lies in making known his views publicly and in publicly influencing the views of others. Finally, it is a role which bears great responsibility and stress which cannot easily be turned off at the end of the day or the week. It is a kind of work which carries with it difficult decisions, difficult interpersonal relationships, difficult public exposure, and these add up to a kind of pressure which can rarely be far from mind.

What are the implications of this life for the partner of the person who leads it? I would suggest that what is created for her is a paradoxical situation, a situation which calls upon her on the one hand to be more independent and resourceful than she might otherwise be, but at the same time creates a kind of dependence and a kind of reflected identity which sometimes makes independence difficult to achieve.

Marriage to a man who is deeply preoccupied with his work, who is frequently absent from home (or who may be psychologically absent even when he is physically present) requires a wife who is capable of being highly independent, able to function on her own, competent to assume more than an ordinary share of the burden for household and family management. If she lives in a public residence, and the great majority of presidents and their families do, supervision of that household may be especially complex and challenging. Further, partnership with such a person requires that a wife recognize that her life, and in some instances the lives of her children as well, will, like her husband's life, become public. She, too, will be seen to some extent as the embodiment of the institution. What she says, how she looks, where she goes may be scrutinized in these ways. She must be prepared to deal with the press, sometimes friendly, sometimes not. She must accept the fact that her husband's activities will be regularly reported upon, and indeed, she will be frustrated when they are not; and she will not have much of an outlet for her frustrations if what appears on the 6 and 10 o'clock news and in both the morning and evening newspapers are his defeats rather than his triumphs. She may be called upon to represent her husband to his constituent communities, either directly or indirectly, whether that means welcoming a group to campus, attending a public function, or simply remembering to be friendly to everyone she sees at the supermarket because if she doesn't know them, they are more than likely to know her. She will have to learn to hold her tongue, even when she knows the untruth of what she hears. She will have to accept the fact that even her own private rela-

tionships may be colored by her husband's position, that others may make assumptions about her life—of opulence, of glamor, of privilege that may be far from accurate.

She will have to be prepared to deal with all of this whether or not she participates actively in his presidency. Indeed, she may be intent upon pursuing a career totally independent of his, and for which she is eminently well qualified only to find that she may still be subject to a kind of criticism which says that she would not be in her position unless her husband was in his. It requires a strong and self-confident person to deal with such a life, to be prepared to withstand the brickbats as well as to enjoy the kudos, to keep her perspective and remember who she is, to do well all that she is asked to do. Add to this mix now the size of the job, its pressures and stress, its real importance in the eyes of the world. Again, I would suggest that it requires an independent and resourceful person to help her spouse keep his perspective, to depressurize at the end of the day or of the week, or help him work through the problems that he faces and the tough decisions he needs to make, to do no more sometimes than listen, and to remind him that if theirs is indeed a partnership, he is but one member of it.

But at the same time, there is another side to the life of the university president's wife, a side which in some ways works against the qualities one needs to deal well with it. At least some of the signals which come her way bespeak dependence rather than independence. At least some of what her life entails bespeaks a reflected identity instead of a strong and independent one. How much time has she left for independent activity and pursuit when she is asked either directly or by default to assume more than the average amount of responsibility for home and family? How much freedom is there to explore and pursue personally fulfilling opportunities, whatever they may be—professional, volunteer, recreational—when so much time is consumed by her partner's career? What happens to independence and a sense of identity when a great portion of time is spent in attending functions simply as a spouse? What happens to her own personal relationships when others begin to see her as a conduit to her husband? What happens to a sense of self when there is little time to nurture it? And yet without it, where is the strength and energy to be found to meet the challenges a life such as hers requires? How can she help her spouse regain perspective if she has none of her own? How can she withstand the pressures of a public existence or assume the added burden of being, at least occasionally, both parents let alone one without some independent and self-confirming activity? And perhaps most important, what happens to partnership if all the stresses and strains of one's experience direct the activity and

energy of both partners towards furthering the goals of just one of those partners?

The real challenge of public partnership—the task which faces each of us who find that a private marriage partnership has by virtue of our husband's career choice assumed a public dimension—lies, then, in resolving that central dilemma. If we are only partners, what happens to us as people? If our own sense of self and our activities are crowded out, what happens to the self-esteem all of us need to meet the challenges we face? We hear much these days that would indicate that the expectations for the two-person career have given way as the assumptions on which it rested have changed. To be sure, those assumptions—that the second person in such a career would invariably be a woman and that no other career opportunities would be available to her—are no longer valid today. But perhaps equally important in the redefinition of the two-person career may have been the fact that it rested on a false premise. The two-person career defined a partnership which may not really have been partnership at all. It was not voluntary: it took for granted the wife's participation. It did not take into account two sets of equally valid goals or aspirations, nor did it envision equal needs or interests. It was a career pattern which simply assumed that the needs of one partner could be met by fulfilling the needs of the other, that vicarious satisfaction was real satisfaction.

Most of us who find ourselves in the position of public partner today would reject such a definition of partnership. And yet finding a workable balance between the needs of the partnership, on the one hand, and our own individual needs, on the other, remains a constant challenge. Surely it would be an unusual person who did not experience at least some frustration in a life situation in which all of her activity and energy were directed towards furthering the goals of another, even of someone she loves—who did not resent, at least a little, rarely receiving the direct satisfaction of recognition for her very real part in a job well done. Yet the other extreme, abandoning the demands of the partnership altogether, presents its own series of problems. The two-person career developed in the first place because the size of the job and the demands it entailed were simply too big for any one person to successfully fulfill alone. The two-person career truly demanded the energies and services of two people because both were needed to carry out the job successfully. Even if the other assumptions behind that traditional career pattern no longer hold true today, nothing has happened that makes the job of university president or chancellor any less complex, demanding or overwhelming in size than ever it was. Size does not diminish because one partner chooses to ignore it, nor will the stresses and strains the job brings with it disappear because only one person is left to

experience them. To be sure, many of the tasks that were once the exclusive province of the president's wife can be carried out by paid staff. But the potential for mutual collaboration and support between marriage partners is after all at the heart of that partnership, and few of us would find it either feasible or satisfying to abandon that mutuality completely.

So the dilemma remains with us. And it is in its continuous reworking, in the constant shuffling and reshuffling of individual and jointly held goals that those of us who are public partners today find our mutual rapport and our support of one another. Our solutions are as varied as we are and as singular as the institutions of which we are a part. But we are well aware that we are a unique and fortunate generation. We are perhaps the first generation of women who have truly experienced a choice in making our private accommodations to our public roles, who are truly free to decide how much of our time and energy we feel comfortable in investing in the public part of our lives, and how much time we need to reserve for ourselves and for our own independent activity. If we are by and large an enthusiastic and satisfied lot, if we feel privileged and fulfilled in finding ourselves in a position to offer our energy and intelligence to the institutions we serve along side our husbands, it is surely in large part because of our recognition that how we fulfill that commitment is a matter of choice. Whatever frustration we may experience as a result of the fact that our institutions rarely communicate to us directly their expectations for us, we are well aware that what we gain by this silence is the crucial opportunity to define our roles for ourselves.

We do not arrive at that choice by accident. Our predecessors paved the way for us by sharing some of the constraints they experienced at a time when their contributions were too often taken for granted and too rarely recognized. Our institutions have responded to our needs by offering us staff support when we have needed it. And our own partners have frequently acted as our advocates, both in helping us protect our time and in calling attention to our contributions. And nothing has been more crucial to our growth and development than the opportunity afforded us by organizations such as the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges to come together to share our experiences and concerns and to develop a network of colleagues to whom we can turn for both information and support.

And so as I sit on those stairs on Monday evening, understand that this is the place where I have chosen to be. To be sure, I am tired. To be sure, I have different plans for Tuesday. But I am comforted by the thought of my colleagues from Maine to California whose feet are probably aching, too. I am cheered by the thought of my predecessors who have recognized, as I do, that there have

been far more satisfactions in the day just passed than there have been frustrations. After all, I have had the real pleasure of welcoming to our university home a group of people who are glad to be there. I have exercised my brain independently, at least a little. Each of those children has been kissed at least once. And I have the deep satisfaction of knowing that somewhere on the third floor that hardworking partner of mine—the President—is enjoying the luxury of being prodded by his young son to wake up and finish reading a story. If I wonder, now and then, where I will find the energy to gain my feet again, I am reminded of an adage shared by all my peers, by each of us who has the unique good fortune to find herself in the role of public partner. After all, we know it to be true that “a common woman is as common as a common loaf of bread . . . and will rise.”




Adele McComas describes herself as the partner of James D. McComas, President of Mississippi State University since 1976. "I have been his partner in teaching and university administration since 1961 at four universities—New Mexico State University, Kansas State University, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and now, Mississippi State University." She writes, "We have two children—Cathleen, 19, and Patrick, 17." She holds a B.S. degree in biological sciences from Miami University of Ohio and she gained another B.S. degree in nursing from Case Western Reserve University. She has served as a staff nurse in the Department of Neurosurgery at Ohio State University and in the U.S. Public Health Migrant Grant in New Mexico.

THE PARTNERSHIP AND HOW IT WORKS



by Adele McComas

he partnership with a college or university president or chancellor is a partnership in one of the most unique roles two people can experience. When one says my spouse is a president (chancellor) of an institution of higher learning, it initiates more questions than it answers. Each presidency is different. Our role is determined by size, complexity, focus, priorities, and geographical location of our institution. It is influenced by the size and character of our urban or rural community.

A broad definition of the role is given by Joseph A. Kauffman. He sees today's president as providing "leadership to keep all concerned, both inside and outside constituencies and forces, keenly aware of the central purposes, values, and worth of the higher education enterprise." He states that "institutions were created to protect and transmit something of value to people."

A more specific definition of the president's role is added by each institution. During the interview process we can gain insight into the expectations from trustees, students, faculty, alumni, and the community. Our role is also influenced by the traditions, practices, and expectations of the previous role occupant.

The partnership with a president of an institution of higher learning can be a most exciting, challenging, and rewarding life for a spouse to experience. It also is a role in which some stress and frustrations are experienced. There is a great challenge in carving out our role with our partner, and we each do it in our own way.

After reviewing the literature we can conclude that there is no definition of the spouse's role or job description that will apply to all. Marguerite Walker Corbally in her book *The Partners* states, "It is next to impossible to describe the 'job' of the president's wife without understanding the sense of partnership felt by couples and their perceptions of her place in that partnership."

When and how does the spouse fit into this new partnership? It is difficult to define or predict role behaviors, thoughts, and experiences that may serve as a

beginning. How can I tell someone else how the partnership works? I am aware of my lack of expertise to speak to this. Maybe I can best do so by sharing some thoughts and experiences from our partnership. I bring to this an appreciation for how much there was for me to learn, some from other people, some from trial and error.

If I am to be a full partner in this role, my husband must first see me as capable of fulfilling the expectations this partnership has for me. I feel this was our partnership in all of my husband's previous roles in teaching and administration. My support comes from his saying "we." He includes me and is sensitive to when he obligates my time and efforts. There have been times during his career when I have been employed full-time or part-time with my own profession. I find being involved with him in his role as president and with our two children no longer allows me time to pursue a career, but this has proven satisfactory. I have always been included in my husband's work by him, and his support allows me to be creative in my own way in my spouse role.

In our partnership we meet many social demands in hosting and participating in a broad range of functions. While we are dedicated to helping our guests enjoy themselves, we attempt to have a purpose which will provide overall benefits for our university. We are about the business of encouraging support for our institution of higher education, to increase the quality of experiences for faculty and students. We seek assistance from legislators, alumni, prospective donors, community leaders, and special guests. There are a variety of ways this can be approached, and we find most of our entertaining is in our official residence. We like the more personal atmosphere that a home can provide. We will entertain approximately 2,000 people a year in the president's home. Some groups will be as large as 200-300. This means that at times it becomes more impersonal. Our vice presidents, deans and their spouses are often generous with their time in assisting us to create a more personal atmosphere. This has been especially helpful with our new student orientation programs when we have open house for the parents, and when we have faculty receptions.

We work closely with the director of our development foundation in fund raising, and while my husband is involved with the details of the gifts, contributions are never requested in the home. We focus only on acquainting donors and potential donors with our university and its people resources.

We like to include faculty and students on a guest list when it is appropriate. Frequently we will host a luncheon, dinner, or reception at the special request of faculty who are having programs and speakers. It is our option if we wish to do this in the home or in other facilities on campus.

The size of our university allows us frequent contact with student groups. We

respond to their requests whenever we can, but are careful not to let our assistance become "tradition." This keeps student activities theirs. We find students appreciate our efforts to respond. The past two years, the campus Greek organizations have held a barbeque on the back lawn with 500 students attending each one. Our request to them was to park in a lot near the residence and to leave the lawn in the same condition they found it. These requests were met so well this may become tradition!

We find our responsibility for entertaining enjoyable, not only because of the assistance we receive from within the university but because we enjoy the people we entertain. We meet so many who enrich our lives and are receptive to the goals and needs of the university. We work to provide a warm, relaxed atmosphere so people can be comfortable in the home and with each other. My husband has the wonderful ability to always remember everyone's name. This is more difficult for me, so while he is making the most of the introductions, I focus more on maintaining the environment and schedule. We appreciate the formal environment the home provides for us and have added our own ideas which help to make it less formal at times.

When we have needed new china or furnishings for the home, I am most appreciative of my husband that he handles these requests. It becomes a request that would be "helpful to the partnership," not one "the spouse would like." He feels it is important for him to sensitize members of the staff in decision-making positions to the needs that come with the responsibility to entertain. Attention must be given to upkeep and furnishings replaced as necessary. This is not only helpful to us but will be helpful to the next occupant. Recently a generous donor to our development foundation identified \$40,000 of the gift to be used for furnishings in the president's home. He obviously recognized the important role that the president's home plays in the social and educational life of the university.

While we are in a partnership where support for others is expected from us, we also receive support from so many who love their university. Through our partnership we have developed a special "family" relationship with many alumni and members of our development foundation. We frequently attend weddings and other family events when invited. We find these friends are reinforcing and encouraging to us during stressful times.

One of the most supportive people to us is a skillful receptionist. Her understanding support often contributes to our partnership running smoothly. On Friday she sends a copy of my husband's schedule to me for the next week, indicating the times I am involved; these times have been previously confirmed with me when invitations were received or arrangements made. During very

busy times my husband and I may know each other's thoughts and concerns, but the communication concerning events and facts about them decreases. She is aware of this and may call to remind or inform me as to details.

Communication plays an important part in the partnership. The spouse is dependent upon many others to have all the information needed to carry out her duties. It has been helpful to me to receive copies of letters and invitations involving both of us. Many times I will receive copies of correspondence, pamphlets, or other materials from the president's office and other offices marked "for your information." In turn, I share information with them that may be helpful.

As I visit with others in my same role, I find each has developed a system of communication that works for them. Ways of communicating vary with how involved the spouse is and the structure of the university. Most have a designated staff member in the president's office responsible for communicating with them. Some have a staff member in the home who can assist. A few also work closely with designated persons in the alumni and development foundation offices. Guest lists for events sponsored by these offices can be helpful to the spouse.

As partners, the most noticeable change the presidency brought to our lives has been that there is no one close to us who shares our same role with the same concerns. We do not have anyone readily available with whom to exchange thoughts as to how we meet specific responsibilities. This isolation and the stress that comes with the increased demands on our time and effort have contributed to the development of a very close partnership. We are each other's confidant, supporter, friend, and critic. Being a critic is necessary, too, for there may not be those who feel free to be our constructive critics. There is so much we share only with each other. We find it is important that I have been informed about the major concerns of the office, as we frequently receive phone calls at the residence, and when my husband is not there it is important that I know the urgency of the call.

People around us soon become aware of how much we share with each other. I become sensitive that what I say might be interpreted by others as representing my husband's thoughts and opinions. This helps to determine how I become involved in community activities. It is important for me to make my interests clear as community organizations and clubs frequently request the support and involvement of the president's wife. I select community activities with greater care because of the limited amount of time I can give to them. I choose those of interest to me where I feel free to express myself.

In our community, there are frequent requests from groups and organizations

to meet in the president's home. Our guideline is to allow these groups the use of the home which have membership accessible to most individuals within our community. We can in this way reflect our support for that which contributes to the quality of life for all in the community.

There are many concerns that bring stress to the partnership. The most stressful we have experienced involved the emotional aspects of losing seasons in Southeastern Conference football. During these times it is impossible to protect other members of the family, as they, too, answer the phone and hear comments. Such stressful occasions cause spouses and children to depend on each other more for reinforcement and support.

Stress comes when there are budgetary difficulties. There may be needed and justified expenditures for the president's home, but these will have to be minimal during a poor budgetary year. Stress is experienced when legislative efforts indicate there will be inadequate budgets, and faculty are apprehensive as to how this will affect their salaries and departmental budgets.

Occasionally, our board of trustees sets priorities or assigns roles that can cause stress among institutions and between an institution and a board. We attempt to meet this situation by not personalizing the decisions made and we seek to maintain good relationships with board members and their families.

Stress can occur within the family. We involve our children in university activities but have learned this can easily intrude upon their own activities. We attempt to protect them from the situations that cause us stress, unless it is unavoidable.

We live in a lovely two story official residence on a beautifully landscaped seven acres at the edge of the campus. Yet, just being here means we are at work. We bought a small home in the country with three acres of land and much privacy. My husband has a large garden which he says is his "golf." During the winter we will frequently build a fire in the fireplace, read, or watch television. There are those rare times when we have someone drop by for a hamburger. Our children frequently use it for their activities. I am becoming more protective of family time away from the campus. This is as important to our children as it is to us, as they also must cope with the increased stress the presidency brings to them, as well as the many opportunities.

Along with the unique challenges this partnership brings to us, we find it also selects our friends and does so much to dictate how we use our time. Realistically we have come to realize that it is difficult to separate our personal time and lives from our official responsibilities.

Along with these many challenges, our university life brings associations with the finest people possible. Our university community provides a variety of

social and educational opportunities. It provides a healthy and safe environment for our children and good local schools. There are the numerous intellectually stimulating activities. We find our lives greatly enriched by the people and the experiences we share.

The role is diverse and complex and no one of us can have all the answers as to how the partnership with a university president works.

If, as spouses, we continue to work together, listen to each other, share with each other, we can all become more effective. Each partnership has its unique challenges and makes its unique contributions to the purposes of higher education.

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Deborah Toll, wife of John Toll, now president of the University of Maryland, has been giving parties to promote universities for 14 years. A native Long Islander, she started when her husband was president of the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Deborah is a graduate of Wellesley College and the mother of two small children. She is a writer/researcher with an interest in international economics and finance. She has worked for Condè Nast, Business International and for Alvin Toffler, the author of *Future Shock*. She serves on the boards of arts organizations in both Washington and Baltimore.

THE ROLE OF THE SPOUSE: ENTERTAINING AND FUND RAISING



by Deborah Toll

illiam Randolph Hearst once invited Will Rogers for the weekend at San Simeon where a large company was assembled. Mr. Rogers was warmly entertained, and the next week Hearst received a large bill. He called Rogers and said, "I invited you as a guest!" Rogers replied, "When people invite me as a guest they invite Mrs. Rogers, too. When they ask me to come alone, I go as a professional entertainer."

Important prospective donors to the university are often, like Will Rogers, firmly committed to marriage. Both husband and wife usually attend ball games, lunches, alumni events, and dinner dances. Often both parents help their children decide where to go to college. No one is more devoted to the university than a married couple who met while attending the university. They consider themselves part of that large, warm, aggregate—the university family. This sense of family can be decisive in the amount of money the university raises.

The new president's wife may find herself without preparation plunged into the social milieu of alumni, donors, faculty, and university friends. She may go out night after night to social events with virtual strangers. Her presence can help to make the evenings social rather than official business. Conversation with her affords those strangers a measure of the university president. She will be invited by people she likes and admires to beautiful homes and she may wish to invite them in return. Other couples met in the university environment may become close personal friends. Tempting opportunities to help the university by becoming acquainted with groups previously indifferent to the institution will arise, whether in the form of an invitation to play tennis or go with some music loving members of the legislature to the opera. She may join a board or a committee or otherwise be drawn into the company of the invariably well dressed, highly organized, successful achievers who comprise the university's elite corps of volunteers. From bank presidents to community leaders who head benefit committees, these volunteers convey that nothing is too much to ask of them if it is for the university.

If the spouse has a demanding career of her own or is ambivalent about her role, university social life alone will present a time and resource problem. When she should be at the keyboard of her personal computer, she is standing at the closet choosing an outfit for yet another three party evening, one part of which is "black tie." She may find that it is possible to go out every night of the week "for the university," and after some years of such social networking decide that not a single evening was wasted or extraneous to what she perceives as the university mission.

This effort, which includes board memberships, lunches, teas, development swings along east and west coasts, evenings with potential donors in cities 150 miles away and basketball trips where alumni gather, may total between 20 and 60 hours a week. The weekend of Friday night, Saturday and Sunday with one's husband can result easily in spending a total of 20 or more hours fielding for the university. Vivian Shapiro, wife of Harold Shapiro, the President of the University of Michigan, remarks: "getting up the energy night after night to meet people who are strangers can be exhausting."

Here it is interesting to note that in the 20 top universities that raised the most money in 1981-82, only four presidents' spouses worked full time. Five spouses work part time for pay but spend the majority of their time on the university. Lucy Hackney, wife of Sheldon Hackney of the University of Pennsylvania, spends roughly 25 hours a week as a practicing attorney and 40 on university work. Among the full time working spouses were those at Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago. The latter is an interesting special case because the president is female.

As the spouse goes about with her husband, she will find a lack of understanding of her role and will be asked, "What do you do?" As any first lady can testify, the importance of the partner's role, including social events, is often overlooked. Eleanor Roosevelt, with a disabled husband, became his eyes and ears around the country. She conveyed the President's interest and helped to pull the nation together by an awareness of its suffering. As she travelled, she gained a clear understanding of what could be done. All first ladies are mindful of Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy and, although their main role is to ride shotgun for their husbands, they are expected to appreciate the opportunities of their position and do good.

Nancy Reagan's press Secretary, Sheila Tate, was quoted recently in the *Washington Post* as commenting that Mrs. Reagan is in a "no-win" situation. This observation exemplifies another difficulty of the first lady's role—the ability to rise above staff. Spouses may have to counter the sense of being a

secondary, shadow identity in order to be effective in social situations where they are present because of their husband's job.

The desire to please one's husband can provide a motive for the efforts of the spouse on behalf of the university, as can the warm approval and support of important board members. If board members treat the spouse both as a prized asset and as a member of the team, she may care about the institution and speak positively about it whether she is spending full time on university work or has her own career and is spending evenings and weekends on university social life.

A sense of enjoyment and the ability to radiate personal happiness is essential to good social life. But the truest mandate to promote the institution may come from the spouse's own belief in education as the surest way to advance mankind. This motive, traditional among president's wives, leads to a sense of *noblesse oblige*, probably the most powerful and effective style of leadership for the spouse.

In any leadership role, a person is well advised to consult one's own conscience rather than rely on public opinion as a guide to action. As the wife of the president at Stony Brook, a growing campus in the SUNY System, I was cautioned by women's groups on campus not to do anything for the university. And I did very little until I was invited to tea at the home on Park Avenue of Elizabeth Luce Moore, the chairman of the SUNY board. Mrs. Moore was the child of missionaries in China as was her brother, Henry Luce, the late co-founder of what is now the Time, Inc., Corporation. She conveyed a strong sense of being imbued with the need to help one's fellow human beings. She was utterly convincing in explaining that the university presented such an opportunity to me and I left feeling I could not fall short. Judy Ikenberry, wife of the President of the University of Illinois, has said, "Society has been very, very good to me, and I want to pay it back." Expression of this motive is most effective when one is seeking funds for the university—if the spouse is enthusiastic, others will be too. (It's more than just a job).

When expectations of the spouse's role are expressed, or when the spouse herself has had experience at another university, it is easier to ask for enough resources to handle the entertaining function and its related fund raising activity.

Most presidents' wives have had the kind of experience related by Lucy Hackney. At dinner at the president's house, Lucy often seats major potential donors on either side of her. One Monday, following a Saturday night dinner, a check arrived for \$10,000 from the man who had been seated on her right with a note that he had come away with such a good feeling that the university was in capable hands he wanted to express his appreciation. Conversation at the table

that night had been only about the university and friends in common.

The periods of time spent with individual prospective donors need not be especially frequent, but these should be quality times and extended over a fairly long number of years. The chancellor of a major university campus has said that there is probably a three-year lead time needed to establish a relationship with a prospective donor before a specific request to meet a university need can be made effectively.

Kermit Hansen, chairman of the board at the University of Nebraska, says: "In my experience in fund raising two people always do better than one. That's a central technique. Something always happens to throw you off your train of thought. For example, the wife of a prospective donor may wonder: If my husband agrees to this gift, does it leave me destitute as a widow? The presence of the chief executive's wife serves to allay this concern."

Durward B. Varner, former president of the University of Nebraska and now President of the Nebraska Foundation, invites his wife to travel with him on fund raising missions with expenses paid. He considers his wife as part of the team and says: "wives are a kind of secret weapon for the university. They should never have to worry about money (for fund raising activities). We can afford to do it properly."

Hugh Cunningham, Director of Information Services at the University of Florida—which has gone from raising \$6 million to \$30 million in the 10-year tenure of its President, Robert Q. Marston—describes Marston's wife, Ann, as the unsung heroine of fund raising. Lunches and dinners at the president's house are the high points of the weekend the donors spend on campus, Cunningham says.

Fred Bennett, director of development at the University of Connecticut, has worked with four presidents and their wives on major campaigns and calls the role of the spouse "indispensable." The wife assists in identification, "cultivation" (a word used by fund-raisers; wives say "establishing friendships") and, in some cases, active fund raising programs. Most campaigns, he indicates, require at least one big west coast and east coast swing and extend over a three-year period. The campaign may include 50 to 75 meetings attended by the wife, as well as cocktails, lunches, and dinners for donors and their spouses.

For example, the campaign may try to establish organizations in 20 to 25 cities across the country. Each organization holds "kick-off" dinners and these are attended by the president and his spouse. Wives of presidents "add stability, a degree of trust in the president and help generate a higher confidence level," Bennett says. He adds that he has seldom found a presidential wife who does not enhance her husband's image.

"There is an aura of respectability about the president's wife that builds confidence and trust," he says.

Vivian Shapiro at Michigan is a social worker who now is spending most of her time on the university and has a special interest in fund raising. She has raised money as a personal matter to re-do the art library, but sees herself as a "strong support member" of the entire university fund raising team. Fund raising is added onto the president's job and frequently there is less time and energy for him to devote to many details. Thus, she believes that if she did not make an effort to make people feel welcome and comfortable and ask questions about them as people, the university fund-raising effort would be more difficult—and not half as much fun. In terms of their total life, "it is a way to share, instead of being all work."

In a major campaign, she sees herself participating in the general area of an endowment for student financial aid. She has flown to the west coast to meet alumni on a fund raising swing and entertained donors at the house.

At a large state university with tens of thousands of alumni active in the life of the area and in local government, the president's wife and the president's house can be centers of the establishment and there can be great variety in the university's involvement. The topics of concern and interest can range from economic development and formation of high tech centers to attract industry to the linkage of arts groups. The president's wife is in a position to know everyone of importance in the state if she chooses. She can organize useful combinations of people and from these combinations benefits can accrue to the University.

Judy Ikenberry at Illinois is very supportive of the university foundation in fund raising.

"When the foundation calls to ask if I will give a dinner for a prospect they have scheduled to visit, I am always delighted," she says. "Some of our graduates have done marvelous things and deserve recognition. We develop a suggested guest list and talk about the kind of event. There will be a meal, but should it be a big dinner? We look for guests in the same area where the money is likely to go—civil engineering for example. We look for those in the community who would be pleased to be invited and are prospects for another time because we hope they will see someone who is giving and the joy it brings. We may also give a thank-you dinner. The ideal size may be 20. Guests are told whom the party honors."

Many university hostesses find this technique useful. Sue Young, the wife of Chancellor Charles Young at UCLA—which raised \$46 million in 1982-'83—

frequently has small dinner parties for 16 guests. These are social evenings at which guests already are—or possibly might become—major donors. Sue says, “The residence provides the ideal atmosphere for getting to know our benefactors on a more personal level.”

Although many president's wives, who regularly may have dinners for 60 and more, consider 18 or 20 a good small dinner party for a donor, there is also a place for the small, intimate dinner of only six. Vivian Shapiro believes that the most important aspect of such a dinner is showing that the president and his wife have the time for the donor. Millie Shain, whose husband, Irving, is the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, likes small lunches when donors are in town.

She is proudest of the Bascom Hill Society professorships, which allow private donors to support research faculty. Large cocktail parties are given which permit members of the President's Club who have already given \$10,000 or more to meet others who have funded Bascom Professorships of \$250,000 or more and are satisfied with their contributions.

Successful fund raising depends heavily on the board having an understanding of the wife's role and the provision of adequate resources to do the job. Marie Dodd, former head of the governing board of Georgia, suggests that husband and wife present themselves at the final interview and discuss exactly what their relationship is and what the wife expects to do. Lucy Hackney of the University of Pennsylvania says that her previous experience at Tulane, when her husband, Sheldon, was president, meant that when they came to Pennsylvania, she knew what to ask for at once.

To raise funds effectively the spouse must have good conditions for entertaining. Money should not be asked for at the presidential residence, but the subject may arise anyway.

One ex-head of the University of Tennessee System said that of six gifts of over one million, five were first mentioned during evenings at his home. Home is also a place where board support can develop.

Highly illustrative of the importance of good understanding and working relationships supporting the spouse's role in fund-raising was the “Tennessee Today” campaign of three years ago that raised \$57 million. O.B. Lashlee, vice chairman of the Tennessee governing board, says: “Most of our presidents and chancellors came up from the development ranks. We feel that makes the best president, able to deal with the legislators and alumni and help with fund raising. The search committee interviews the wife when the committee is down to the final three or four candidates, and at that time the trustees, alumni and development people have a chance to weigh in. If at the interview I felt that a

man's wife could not be an asset and could not be a part of the university, I'd vote against him because in our way of doing things—and you can't argue with success—the wife is so important."

The actual expectation—? "Well, that she will assist her husband in doing everything that he does, that she will serve as a hostess at the house, or at any type of social function, and accompany her husband on trips such as those to Development Council meetings."

And what does this mean for University of Tennessee President Edward J. Boling and his wife Carolyn? According to Mr. Lashlee, "They are the hardest working folks we've ever seen—nearly 24 hours a day, and except for two-week vacations, they give up darn near everything else."

Carolyn goes everywhere with Ed, including visits to major donors, and "last Saturday she was out at the football game in the cold and the rain with the rest of us, and acting as if she liked it," Lashlee commented. And, as a bottom line: "We have even discussed it, and I have told Carolyn there would be no hesitation on my part in recommending compensation for her. She told me, 'I feel like I am doing this because I want to, not because I have to.'"

Money for entertaining would not present any problem for Carolyn Boling, nor for Clare Mackey at Michigan State, who said when asked if they had a budget, "We have what we need." But other wives have small, inadequate houses and budgets that do not reflect the size and the importance of the university.

Regardless of the circumstances, the entertaining function is vital to fund raising. Shaping staff and resources requires both an understanding of systems analysis and the art of giving great parties. An open, active and organized approach will help establish a professional approach with the secretarial, catering, and development staff which should understand how the university raises money, gains political and press support and makes friends through its entertaining.

A quick review of every party the following day is a good idea as is a record of seating, menu, decoration, guest list, cost per head, and purpose. Even if a staff assistant and the computer in the development office keep a record, only the hostess will be able to note some of the intangibles such as: "Mrs. T. was happy to have met the governor and wishes to volunteer for a state committee." The IRS will allow tax deductions for office expense of the spouse including a computer should they not be supplied by the university.

A quick and useful system, both to remember guests at large parties at the house and to harvest acquaintances made in crowds, is to keep a stack of 3x5

roll file cards handy. It makes it easy to note names and data. These can be snapped onto the roll file devoted entirely to potential guests. Everyone has a coterie of friends, and it may be necessary on short notice one day to give a very large party. At that time, a quick call to a secretary to "round up the usual guests" may serve to bring 200 lively people to the door. Without the roll file cards it may be difficult to think just who would enjoy a particular evening, but with the card system the president's wife can develop music lists, art lists, press lists, alumni lists and so forth. These cards do not take the place of the development office's computer print outs, but they do serve on occasion to produce a useful, personal party "for fun."

The spouse who may have a full time career or part time job should be able to delegate everything she does not actually like doing, but she should retain control. Guests will hold her responsible for arrangements if her name as well as her husband's is on the invitation even though the party may not be at the president's house.

The first bottom line for every presidential spouse is to avoid embarrassment, particularly at state institutions. Flower arranging, menu planning, sending invitations, arranging car pools for guests, silver polishing, preparing hors d'œuvres, stacking away newspapers, etc. should all devolve on someone else so that the hostess is able to concentrate on the guests. She may find that her best approach to her own parties is through the front door 15 minutes before the party is due to start.

University resources may not at first seem up to this standard. At a university where a skilled fund raising program may not be fully developed, the board and the development office must be brought to this point by steady pressure. Good enough records must be kept to prove that guests have donated well beyond the cost of all entertainment.

Although she may not cook, the successful hostess must devote time and interest to the party. She will have more credibility and control than anyone else present. Especially at her own house she must know every guest's full name (yes!) and as much about the guest as possible. She must introduce everyone to everyone else if the party is held indoors. Guests will do what she says without resentment and automatically try to please her by taking up topics she has introduced. She can mix them up, set them up with glowing introductions, and see that they meet and talk with other guests. She may well remember the old Aga Khan's secret: "No guest ever feels the evening wasted if he has felt himself to have been 'brilliant.'"

Guests are flattered if they see effort has been made for them. Burning candles, a glowing fireplace, gleaming silver, flowers, and decorated food help.

Shy hostesses should remind themselves that people often are pleased just to be "out."

While she worries, guests are getting ready to plunge into discussion and need just the slightest push toward one another. In large parties extra hostesses may be appointed, usually ebullient friends who will report back and round up the lonely couple or break up a group that looks like it is standing together only because the people in it know no one else. Sit-down dinners should be arranged with place cards to avoid unseemly scrambling. Older people prefer it. Separating husbands and wives at different tables may come as a shock in some areas but is successful in promoting good conversation. The hostess may want to appear briefly at a table of strangers to make sure they have all had opportunities to meet one another.

One evening when I was feeding my children in the kitchen at Stony Brook, a Wall Street lawyer with outstanding conversational ability whom we had entertained several times at our expense telephoned. He said he wished to give the university 300 acres of waterfront property on Long Island Sound and would I please find out how to take the land, and by the way, what was that wine I had served last time?

In large institutions the pay-off from entertaining may be lost in the development office. The presidential couple may have difficulty with some brash young staff members who may ask: "Why can't all of us be invited and all the guests wear name tags so we can see who they are?" It is important that, if development staff members are invited, they describe themselves as information officers. Saying that one is a development officer at a presidential party can be like saying that one is a psychiatrist. Thereafter the conversation is never the same.

A good hostess will go far beyond staff's efforts. She will make sure that every woman's name is known, see that invitations are hand-addressed, and spend time developing foolproof seating plans.

Good relations with staff, particularly in secretarial staff in her husband's office, can spell success or failure for the president's spouse. University staff members forward mail and messages and they can provide knowledge about whether an event is worth attending. An alert staff member will relay minutiae vital to good entertaining.

For example: "The new head of marine sciences was just here and boy, is he attractive."

"Bachelor?"

"No, his wife is coming, but isn't here yet."

"Let's put him down for the philanthropists' dinner" (an occasion where the boards of all the local hospitals have been winnowed by the development office and members invited along with some prominent university scientists working on 'designer genes').

Staff can also present problems, as several presidents' wives have testified. Hierarchical, obstructive secretaries can turn out to be possessive people who attempt to cut the wife out and have to be worked around.

It is important that the chief development officer be sophisticated, because the wrong impression of the university's fund raising intentions can take years to overcome. For example, a comment that \$10,000 may be expected "if you go to a lunch before a basketball game " could turn away valuable community leaders who could be of help in other ways with local power brokers.

Fund raising and entertaining at the house are subtle. Money is seldom mentioned unless the donor senses that he will receive pleasure by doing so in that setting. One fund raiser has pointed out that after buying a big item like a car, boat, or house, most people feel depressed for several days afterward, but giving money away results in a sense of exhilaration, of having done the right thing.

The president's wife needs to be sensitive to this and able to respond appropriately. She also needs to know who has made noteworthy contributions because these people often become very friendly, suddenly embracing her enthusiastically in public, or putting both arms around husband and wife and drawing all three closely together. It is something special. But even with mass entertaining, a good hostess can develop at the president's house a kind of charmed inner circle, the outer circle being the huge events that occur elsewhere on campus.

The rewards of all the effort are personal for the wife, but material for the university.

A PICTURE ALBUM



The daily activities of the wife or husband of a university chief executive officer is diversified, to put it mildly. They range through assorted separate careers, university duties and functions and, sometimes, there is time for a welcome break. As one of the presidential spouses describes it; We: 1. Pursue our own professional careers . . . Dr. Ruthellen Bloustein, pediatrician and wife of President Edward J. Bloustein of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, examines a cooperative patient;



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2. Spend considerable time at the important tasks of arranging the presidential home for social occasions . . . Patricia Ryan, wife of President John Ryan of Indiana University, arranges flowers in preparation for a gathering in her home;



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3. Sit on platforms at academic ceremonies . . . Mary Eleanor Jennings and her husband, Edward, President of the Ohio State University;



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4. Sometimes manage a presidential mansion . . . Molly Bartlett, whose husband, Thomas, is President of the University of Alabama System, stands on the portico of the official president's residence in Huntsville, Alabama; (Photo by the Huntsville Times)



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5. Take advantage of a break to keep up on an important physical fitness regime . . . Clare Mackey, the wife of President Cecil Mackey of Michigan State University, practices her tennis service;

6. Deliver formal addresses . . . Dolores Wharton, whose husband, Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., is Chancellor of the State University of New York System, addresses a Chancellor's Report Dinner;

7. Stand at receptions . . . Kathryn Sample, whose husband, Steven, is President of the State University of New York, Buffalo, takes part in a university reception;

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8. *Oversee costume fittings for a musical performance . . . Opera Singer Mildred Posvar, wife of Chancellor Wesley Posvar of the University of Pittsburgh, adjusts costumes before a performance;*



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9. *Take part in local bazaars . . . Jean Aldrich, wife of Chancellor Daniel G. Aldrich, Jr., of the University of California, Irvine, tries some sales techniques at a bazaar;*

10. *Cheer at athletic events . . . Libby Gardner, whose husband, David, now serves as President of the University of California System, roots for the home team at a sporting event held at the University of Utah, where her husband formerly was President.*



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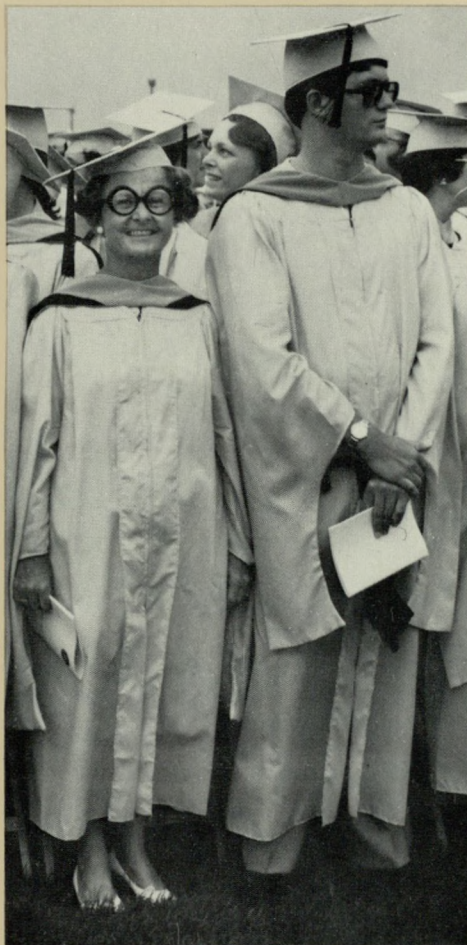
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11. Achieve advanced degrees . . . Jerry Trabant, wife of President E.A. Trabant of the University of Delaware, registers pleasure after receiving her M.S. degree at the University;

12. Are involved in the arts . . . Nancy Silverman, whose husband, Paul, is President of the University of Maine at Orono, chats with Opera Star Eileen Farrell;

13. Stand with the president at university receptions . . . Dr. Stanley Johnson, husband of Chancellor Barbara S. Uehling of the University of Missouri, Columbia, joins her in the receiving line.

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