

# What makes a happy marriage?



Mrs. L. B. Pearson



Mrs. John Diefenbaker



Mrs. R. N. Thompson



Hon. Judy LaMarsh

**J**UNE is the month of weddings but in every month in the year countless relatives and friends wish the brides and grooms in over 130 thousand marriages in Canada, "Every happiness!" When you expressed these sentiments at the last wedding reception you attended, if the bride had asked you, "What makes a happy marriage?" what would you have answered?

This is the question which we asked eight of Canada's most prominent women and their answers are well worth considering and comparing with your own. Most of them speak from experience as married women, and as an interesting contrast, Judy LaMarsh, former minister of health and welfare, now secretary of state, is single and she made this sensible comment:

**I should think it is self-evident that the most important ingredient in a happy marriage is two happy people. The most important ingredient for each of them is trust for each other."**

In writing to ask for a brief definition on happy marriage, I mentioned that I thought this was a vital topic which should receive more attention, even if it never could compete with the publicity which marital quarrels of prominent people, especially movie stars, receive. I added that perhaps the unexpected compliment from one of our three children which I valued most, was a chance remark made by our 21-year old. We were discussing future possibilities before leaving home to work in another province. This was the compliment:

**"If, when I marry, there's as much happiness in my home as you and Dad have found, it will be fine with me."**

The Prime Minister's wife, Mrs. Lester B. Pearson answered:

**"We, too, have had a very happy married life and have two happily married children — and nine grandchildren!"**

Then she added:

**"It is rather difficult to answer briefly but I will try: In my opinion, the first essential of a happy marriage is mutual love and respect with an accepted recognition of the fact that each partner is an individual, whose opinions, though they may be different from those of the other, must be sincerely and respectfully considered."**

Mrs. John Diefenbaker, wife of the official leader of the opposition, pointed out that, to her there were three ingredients for a happy marriage:

**"A lot of love, good humour, unselfishness" and she stressed the im-**

**portance of cheerfulness, not because of circumstances, but in spite of them.**

Her final comment was:

**"A set of values worth keeping and a memory of a good family life are worth inestimably more than a bank balance."**

All the wives at Ottawa of Canada's leading men are very busy people, and when Mrs. T. C. Douglas, whose husband is the leader of the New Democratic Party, received my request, she was concentrating on packing for a short holiday, but she took time to dictate this sentence:

**"I believe the most important ingredients for a happy marriage are mutual understanding and a recognition of the right of every member of the family to develop their own personality in their own way."**

Marriage has been compared to many things and Mrs. R. N. Thompson suggested that there were similarities in the ways to bake a delicious wedding cake and to produce a happy marriage. The former Social Credit leader's wife wrote that such a marriage:

**"Takes much preparation, careful blending, a long period of slow baking, and it is always more delicious when it is allowed to age. . . . A husband and wife should divide and share alike their cares, joys and sorrows. Such a union demands respect for God as well as each other."**

Women senators in Canada are a very small group, only eight have ever been appointed while 81 have been elected to the British Parliament since 1919. The Canadian women senators have an outspoken representative in Mrs. Josie D. Quart who recently asked at a meeting of the Progressive Conservative Council of Toronto: "What about the poor woman in Parliament? If she is aggressive, she is accused of being unladylike. If she is too ladylike, people fear she's not good enough to administer Parliament."

Senator Quart's letter in answer to ours was one of the most comprehensive, and a delightfully human one in its practical suggestion. In it she mentioned her 23 grandchildren from four sons and a daughter, all happily married. She said of her own life:

**"I do not wish to set myself up as an authority on marriage. Although my husband passed on some months ago after 48 years of wonderful partnership . . . I have many theories about marriage, but as you want a positive approach may I submit the two following suggestions. First, I believe that any conflict in marriage can**

**be solved by patience, understanding and voluntary adjustments. Second, a principle which my husband and I lived up to and passed on to our five children prior to their marriage—and which I may add is succeeding—is this: for both partners to promise when they marry never to let the sun set on their anger and never to omit the goodnight kiss. Maybe these suggestions do not express the positive theory you are looking for but all I can say is that they worked in my family for generations, for this suggestion of the goodnight kiss was passed on to me by my mother who told me that she received a similar one from her mother—my grandmother, and their marriage produced 18 children; so this recipe must have worked!"**

A number of other letters mentioned children in the home. Most successful parents, unlike many adults, have not forgotten what it is like to be a child. Senator Mariana B. Jodoin makes this emphasis:

**"My opinion on a happy marriage is very simple: a great deal of respect between husband and wife, understanding, to uphold each other in the education of their children, to look upon the problems of youth in remembering our own and knowing their inexperience in life, having not yet attained our age."**

Happy homes are the concern of every government and three years ago at Bonn my husband and I had the privilege of interviews with members of the department of family affairs of the federal republic of West Germany. Canada has no such department but those serving on the Divorce Committee of the Senate must reach valid conclusions about elements which are likely to produce instability and grief and those which usually result in permanence and satisfaction in the married estate. Thus the letter of Senator F. Elsie Inman has real value:

**"I have lived a good many years and enjoy and am interested in people. I have had the opportunity of observing many couples, some very happy, some not so happy, and some whose marriages turned out to be tragic. For a number of years I have been on the Divorce Committee of the Senate and from observations made and from my own experience I have arrived at these conclusions: In my opinion, a truly happy marriage is based on compatibility, a sense of justice, the ability to give and take and, of course, a deep affection and respect for each other."**

## Views from Eight of Canada's Most Prominent Women

By Nancy Cleaver