

Our Marriage Is Secure. We Share Ambitions, Enthusiasms and Hopes

For the Future. Most of All, We're Very Much in Love. There'll Be ...

no divorce for us!

By Barbara Rush

- JEFF AND I know we'll have a long, happy marriage.

To doubt this never occurs to us. Even to discuss it would seem as silly as debating whether there will be a dawn tomorrow.

And we aren't afraid to make this statement even though we both work in Hollywood where marriages so frequently suffer from conflict of two careers in one home, from separations caused by work, from possible temptations and distractions that go with movie making.

We've had three wonderfully happy years together. Warm, glowing, even-going years. Not dizzy-making, naming, pyrotechnic years. We've had some disagreements, naturally, but never a real fight or argument that would call for tempestuous reconciliation and cause emotional scars which never heal. Neither of us is the super-charged flamboyant type—so we aren't impelled to throw things or scream or haggle.

So our marriage isn't threatened. Instead, we have what the marriage counselors would call "everything in our favor," although we hadn't drawn charts on this before we married!

Our family and educational backgrounds are similar; we have no wide disparity in heritage or religion that called for serious "adjustments." Temperamentally we are rather alike, although Jeff is more even tempered than I; it's impossible to pick a fight with him!

We share ambitions, enthusiasms, hopes for the future. We have our fine young son Christopher, now a year and a half old, and we agree we'd like two more children. We've bought a home which we feel is just right for us. We have no discord with our respective families; in fact, Jeff is the one young man I know who adores his mother-in-law! Our hopes are high and our expectations great. We have no doubts.

I think one of the finest compliments ever paid to us came from a friend who told me recently, "You and Jeff are both such *reasonable* people; I don't expect you ever to be in headlines. And that doesn't imply that either of you is dull or stodgy. But you aren't fireballs of temperament. There's no doubt in my mind about the success of *your* marriage."

But if anniversary celebrations were to be regarded as indications, you'd think our marriage was jinxed!

We didn't even see each other on our first anniversary because I was working all day in *When Worlds Collide* and Jeff worked all night on location in *Lure of the Wilderness*. On our second, Jeff was in England working in *Sailor of the King* and I couldn't accompany him because Chris had just been born.

Then on our third, which was last December 1, we had great plans for a gay evening—dinner at our favorite restaurant and even some dancing later. (That was a concession from Jeff for he isn't fond of dancing.) I had a new dress and was nearly as excited as I had been three years ago before our wedding day. After all, this was the first time we could celebrate an anniversary together. So what happened? Poor Jeff came home with flu and had to go to bed!

JEFF's no Astaire on the dance floor (I'm much better than he is, says Barb), but to please her, he dances with her when they're out.



no divorce for us!

Continued

A POPULAR twosome, the Hunters' friends are many. (Anne Francis and hubby Barn Price, here.) Since Barb's mom lives so close, they never lack for a baby sitter.



BUSY careers mean separations for Barb and Jeff. Her latest location jaunt was to Moab, Utah, for *Taza, Son of Cohise*.



WHILE Barb was working in Utah, Jeff was on p.a. tour to tout new pic. This is only kind of separation they'll have, sez Jeff.



But such disappointments are so trivial when we have happiness every day—as I have with Jeff.

He is essentially a very kind person, out-going, out-giving, even tempered. He has the fortunate faculty for calming me down when I get irritated or upset. I don't have a fiery temper but when I'm tired I'm inclined to let things irritate me; I know I'm wrong at the time and try to correct it. Furthermore, Jeff is very patient. I'm more high strung than he, but after living with him three years I'm becoming more calm and patient, too. And for this I'm grateful.

The only time Jeff ever becomes angry is with himself. He gets upset sometimes if he thinks he isn't doing as much as he should—or as well as he should. He's such a perfectionist that he sets out to do so much! He's interested in so many things and does them so well!

When we moved into our new house he immediately wanted to start wallpapering one room and putting new wood paneling in another—while he was working in *Princess of the Nile*. He has a really swashbuckling role in that—like one of Douglas Fairbanks Senior—for which he fences, swims, rides, fights, does all sorts of stunts. He's exhausted when he comes home from the studio; he couldn't begin to do extra work around the house. But he wants to!

Jeff is an unusually well-rounded young man, that rare combination of athlete and scholar. As an actor he's *dedicated* to his work; he started training for it as a child, continued all through school and college, even with professional experience with stock companies during vacations. But he also managed sports and scholastic pursuits—with distinction.

Football was a big thing in Jeff's life from the age of 11 when he won a Wisconsin-wide contest held by the Milwaukee Journal for passing, drop kicking, punting and place kicking in the juvenile football division. In high school he became co-captain of a championship team.

When he went to Northwestern University he couldn't play college ball because of a broken arch-bone sustained in a late high school game so he switched interest to skiing, tennis, swimming and archery. Since he came to California he became interested in skin diving.

But he's also a fine pianist, a talented artist and a great photographer. And now that we have the house he has bought power tools and is doing all sorts of building with them! And, he reads very widely, too. Jeff never is at a loss to fill his time. And that's an understatement!

I've never been so athletic as he, but still we manage to share sports. We have a badminton court at our house and enjoy it. We swim together. We ski together, even though I shall never ski so well as he does.

I never worry about Jeff when he's enjoying skin diving or skiing or any other hazardous sport because I know he does them so well. And don't you agree that excessive worry, especially when expressed, can cause trouble in a home?

I used to think it odd that Jeff didn't dance too well. That's one thing I do better than he does. But now I realize that he has marvelous coordination while I have rhythm—and they're not the same.

Oh, yes. There's one thing on which we disagree. Jeff, quite understandably, hopes that Chris will play football someday. I say no! But we don't get into a hassle about it; it's a long way off, and the final decision will be Chris'.

Because Jeff has such wide interests, I'm sure he'll have plenty to share with Chris (even if not football!) and he's really looking forward to the time when he can.

Jeff was an only child and admits that often he was lonely. In his childhood his father, Henry H. McKinnies (Jeff's legal name still is Henry H. McKinnies Jr.) was out of town much of the time because of his business as a sales engineer, but Jeff recalls that when his father was home they had a great time together, playing ball or working on electric trains. Later when Jeff was a bit older there were fishing trips to the Wisconsin lakes and in Canada. Such things Jeff wants to share with Chris. But not hunting. Although he's a good shot on targets, he can't bring himself to shoot animals.

Jeff and I share enthusiasm for music and photography. I play piano, too, and we really enjoy playing duets. We have a fairly good record collection and really use it. And although it's a bit early to foretell anything about Chris, we think he'll be musically inclined; certainly he *responds* to music! He has been very healthy and seldom fretful, but when he is, if we turn on some music he calms down immediately!

When Chris is just a bit older we want to get a dog for him. Jeff had a succession of dogs while he was growing up. He says he was especially fond of pets because he had no brothers or sisters.

But now Jeff has an "adopted" family—mine.

It's most unusual how my mother and my sister Ramona and Jeff have developed a deep and abiding affection for each other. We all are extremely close. And I think this is truly another reason why our marriage will endure.

Our new house—new to us, that is—we call "Old Bird" because it was designed by a builder named Byrd and is eleven years old. On the property there is also a smaller house, really a large guest house complete with kitchen, which is only two years old and this we call "Early Bird." Mother and Ramona have the smaller place. Three days a week Ramona stays at her sorority house at the University of California at Los Angeles, but week-ends she is always around—and brings crowds, of her college friends to see us.

Jeff says he always wanted a sister and now he treats Ramona, who is 19, as if she were his real "kid sis" rather than an in-law. He supervises her homework and makes sure her car is in top shape. When I couldn't go to the premiere of *The Robe* because of work, Jeff took her—and, of course, she loved it. Ramona and I lost our brother Douglas four years ago and his death left a big gap in our lives. Now Ramona has "adopted" Jeff just as he has her.

And Mother—well, I must confess—Jeff is more considerate of her than I am. I'm inclined to "take her for granted" sometimes. It's Jeff who will say "Let's take Mother out to dinner with us," or "Let's invite her to the movies with us."

Mother has always been close to us, but always insisted on living by herself, having her own life. When we had our apartment, she had one about three blocks away. Now, in Early Bird, she's even closer but still can get away to her own place. She loves us, adores Chris and spends much of her time with him when I'm working during the day. But still she doesn't have to be with us all the time. And, she never interferes in our affairs.

Another friend of ours said not long ago after a visit to our home that we have a "relaxed warmth and affection" that made it the "happiest household" she had visited in many a year. Again, I was very flattered. I think it's rather fine that Jeff and I can have our own little family and also have Mother and Ramona so close and around us so much—with all of us liking and loving all the rest of us! We wish Jeff's parents were closer, but they're still in Wisconsin.

Routine at Old Bird is quite simple during the week, wheth-

er or not Ramona and Mother dine with us. I usually cook dinner. I do all the shopping once a week; I've learned how to order so I don't have to fuss with this more frequently. We have a deep freezer and a huge refrigerator, which assure our always having enough supplies—even for unexpected guests.

We always seem to have a crowd of company on Sundays—but then everyone helps and I've learned how to organize a party without paid help. We used to have a Filipino boy come in to serve for a party but now I find I can do just as well without him. Sometimes we have "co-operative dinners." Last Thanksgiving we had 15 guests! I cooked the turkey, vegetables and gravy. One of our guests brought the pies and another girl brought salad and all the trimmings. It was loads of fun and no one had too much to do.

During the week Jeff and I always have dinner at 7:30. That gives us time for him to get home from 20th Century-Fox and me to get home from Universal-International (our home is about half-way between) and get dinner started, then at 7 we feed Chris.

We don't have a full-time maid. I have a woman who comes in to clean two days a week. Somehow the work seems to fall into place. Jeff, bless his heart, says I'm a good organizer. I'm not sure about that but it does seem that things work out satisfactorily—and with plenty of time to spend with him and Chris.

Naturally Jeff and I share another mutual enthusiasm—acting. We both love it. We've both worked very hard because we want to be *competent*. We had similar training. Neither of us ever had to "starve for our art," although I think we would have. Both Jeff's parents and mine encouraged us in our early ambitions.

Jeff started his acting with the Children's Theatre in Milwaukee and during his high school days also acted on the Children's Theatre of the Air there. During vacations he worked with a company of New York summer stock actors who came to Milwaukee and this first taste of the professional atmosphere made him decide on an acting career, although he thought radio was his metier.

After his high school graduation in 1945 Jeff went into the Navy for a year, then entered Northwestern University. There he majored in speech and radio, appeared in university stage productions, played in summer stock and also worked in radio in Chicago during vacations. After receiving his A.B. degree he came to UCLA to work for his Master's degree in radio and speech. At UCLA he was in more plays, one of which won him attention from two studios and as a result he signed a contract with Fox. The only job he ever had other than in radio or theatre was as a "hasher" during his freshman year.

The first ten years of my life were spent traveling from one mining town to another, for my father was a corporation attorney for a large mining company. Then we settled down in Santa Barbara and at 10 I made my stage debut at the Lobero Theatre in a children's fantasy. From that moment I knew acting was for me! I became a participant in all little theatre groups in that area. I went to the University of California at Santa Barbara, graduated with an A.B. degree, appeared in many campus plays and won a scholarship to the Pasadena Playhouse Theatre Arts College which I attended for a year—meanwhile doing many more plays. There I was seen by a talent scout, tested and was signed by Paramount.

Jeff came to Paramount to make his picture test in May, 1950, and we met by literally (*Continued on page 70*)

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Continued from page 55

colliding outside the drama coach's office. I was asked to rehearse with him, but I wasn't in his test film. I thought from the moment I first saw him that he was "awfully cute."

Things happened fast for Jeff after that. Paramount was delighted with his test and an official had his contract ready for him to sign, but a studio upheaval came along, the official was out and Jeff was left dangling—but only for a few days. Darryl Zanuck, head man at Fox, heard the test was sensational and put Jeff under long-term contract without another test!

I was living at the Studio Club at the time and fortunately for me Jeff knew several girls from Northwestern who also were living there—one was Peggy Dow. He came over to see them, we met again, started dating and by the end of November knew we wanted to be married. I had to leave for Sedona, Arizona, to make *Devil's Canyon*, then Jeff was told he was going to the Virgin Islands for *The Frogmen*. So we decided to meet in Boulder City, Nevada, on December 1. We were married at St. Christopher's Church there, had a two-day honeymoon and then had to separate to go to our respective locations.

We had to face a much longer separation when Jeff went to England for *Sailor of the King*. Jeff loves to travel and I knew this role would mean so much to him, so I was delighted he had the opportunity. But I must confess that I wasn't very happy when it seemed he would have to leave before Chris was born. His studio wasn't without a heart, however, and let him stay home an extra week. Chris was born on August 29, 1952. Jeff brought us home from the hospital on September 4 and the very next day he took off for London! I didn't see him again until nearly four months later.

One thing we learned during that separation: frequent, long letters with lots of pictures help lighten the sense of loneli-

ness. And being cheerful and chatty in them means much more than repeated wailings about how much you miss your husband. Of course you miss him. But don't make him feel worse (he misses you, too) by being forlorn!

Jeff said he really was pleased by the many pictures I sent him of Chris. I took some, friends took others and we kept sending a steady stream to him.

Separations are never easy for two people who love each other, but they need not be fatal to marriage. So many young couples have learned this when they have been separated by the men going into military service.

I don't believe our careers will ever cause conflict in our marriage. For one thing, Jeff's career progressed faster than mine—and I'm so glad! I think he will always be one step ahead of me in importance. I'm happy for this, too. (I really believe that the husband should be the head of the house!) I believe we both have always been considered on our own merits—and hope this will always continue.

Since I've been signed by Universal-International I've been much busier than I was before and I love it. If we have any free time between pictures at this studio it can be filled with all kinds of instruction. In the year since I've been here I've been working constantly, either before cameras or in classes, and I feel that as a result my acting has improved about 100 percent.

Jeff and I are keenly interested in each other's work. He was delighted when I went into *Magnificent Obsession* with Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson and I'm so pleased with his role in *Princess of the Nile* because it's off-beat for him and will present a "new" Jeff to his fans. We know this mutual interest will continue.

One stumbling block in the matrimonial road for a young couple both working can be finances. This is no problem for us. We never speak of "your money" or "my money." We pool our resources—it's always "ours." Recently we hired a business manager because we discovered neither of us was too smart about finances. Now we know where we stand because we are on a strict budget. We know we are saving more money, paying for the house—and we knew just how much we could invest in a house when we bought one.

We have lots of fun, lots of laughs. We work hard to build for our future. We adore Chris and hope for more children. We don't have great emotional upheavals. Oh, yes—and we're still very much in love.

That's why we say, without any qualms, our marriage will last!