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always faithfully,
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do heroic actions."*

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BRITAIN'S PRINCE WILLIAM TURNS 21
Photographed by Mario Testino

SMILING THROUGH

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor in the early years of their marriage, when their favorite pets were cairn terriers—later replaced permanently by pugs.



The Oddest Couple

With January's revelation that Wallis Simpson, who cost Edward VIII the throne, may already have cheated on him before his abdication, a hornet's nest of rumors about the couple's sexuality took on new significance. From all the evidence, it appears that the Duchess of Windsor lost the gamble of a lifetime

BY JAMES FOX

There are two film clips of the abdication which are still haunting to watch for the drama of that world-gripping crisis. The first is of the Duke of Windsor, recently demoted from King Edward VIII, with Wallis on the day of their wedding. Their entourage consists of a few loyal courtiers but no members of his family. The couple stands almost motionless for some minutes so that one of the guests, seemingly inept with a camera, can take a snap. They look vulnerable, pathetic, and cheerful. The Duke now possesses what he lost his crown for, a picture of his marriage to "the woman I love," the square-jawed, unprepossessing, twice-divorced Wallis Simp-

son. It's a Shakespearean moment of royal exile, aptly taking place on French soil. It powerfully communicates what the ex-King hasn't yet taken in, and will never get used to: the fact that he has been stripped of everything—rank, titles, uniforms, friends, the huge prestige of being ruler of an empire, and his family. The King, his brother, will, to his amazement, soon threaten to cut off his allowance if he returns to England without an invitation.

The second clip is a newsreel of his brother and successor, George VI, standing outdoors at a microphone on a grimy wet day in England, addressing the nation and wrestling with his stammer in agonizing silences. As with any stammerer, those around him wait paralyzed as he teeters on

the brink of what must seem to him like humiliation and failure. Even now the image is almost unbearable to watch.

The shy, insecure George VI was a lucky replacement for his frivolous, Nazi-admiring brother, and Elizabeth, his Queen, would become a transcendently popular figure, a symbol of wartime resistance, who would drift toward her hundredth year as the Queen Mother billowing in lilac and mint green with her winning brand of "gracious insincerity." But she always hated and resented Wallis, the cause of it all, for, as she wrote to Kenneth Rose (biographer of, among others, King George V) only two years ago, "the tremendous burden that was to descend on my husband's shoulders." She blamed her for his premature



LADY IN WAITING

Wallis Simpson aboard the *Nahlin* in 1936. Press coverage of her Mediterranean cruise with King Edward made their involvement public.

“I think she thought she would be Queen.
I think she did love him in her own way.”

death, through stress, in 1952. She was incensed at the idea of the Windsors' trying to negotiate conditions at the time of his abdication. From the start, according to Rose, she considered Wallis “the lowest of the low, a thoroughly immoral woman.” It was in deference to the Queen Mother that the government papers concerning the abdication were not made public until after her death last year. Their release in January added some spicy footnotes to the vendetta the royals waged against the Windsors, whom they actively wanted to punish. The papers show conclusively that the Queen Mother, along with her mother-in-law, Queen Mary, was the prime mover in making sure that the Windsors never returned to England and that Wallis was never given the title Her Royal Highness, for which the Windsors bitterly maneuvered. Wallis may well have regretted the day in 1935 at Fort Belvedere, the King's country retreat, when the Queen Mother, still the Duchess of York, walked in while Wallis was doing her “amusing” imitation of “the Dowdy Duchess,” as she called her. The Queen Mother, a good mimic herself, returned the favor over the years, armed with even better comic material.

The sensational revelation in these documents would have confirmed for the Queen Mother everything she thought about Wallis. The Special Branch of the police discovered in July 1935 that

she had a “secret lover” while her affair with the Prince of Wales was accelerating, when “as a topic she has become a mania,” as Cecil Beaton recorded, and when she was still living in an apartment in Bryanston Court with her second husband, Ernest Simpson. The leaking of this to a few courtiers—let alone showing it to the Prince of Wales—might have changed the course of history. At least it would have raised the level of scandal, which may explain why it was kept secret.

Two documents marked “Secret” are signed by Albert Canning, who became head of the Special Branch the following year. The first, dated June 25, says, “The identity of Mrs. Simpson's secret lover has not yet been ascertained.” The second, dated July 3, begins, “The identity of Mrs. Simpson's secret lover has now been definitely ascertained. He is Guy Marcus Trundle, now living at 18 Bruton Street.” Trundle, it continues, “is described as a very charming adventurer, very good looking, well bred and an excellent dancer. He is said to boast that every woman falls for him. He meets Mrs. Simpson quite openly at informal social gatherings as a personal friend, but secret meetings are made by appointment when intimate relations take place.” Trundle, it says, “receives money from Mrs. Simpson as well as expensive presents. He has admitted this. . . . Trundle is a motor engineer and salesman and is said to be em-

ployed by the Ford Motor Company.”

Who was Guy Trundle? He was 36, and his father was a clergyman. His mother came from a landowning family in South Wales, so Trundle was a member of the upper middle class. He was a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps in World War I. He was married, in 1932, to Melosine Cary-Barnard, known as Melon, the daughter of a retired general in the Tank Corps.

Trundle would have been 104 years old this year. I could find only one of his friends, Val Bailey, a retired navy captain aged 83 and living in Dorset. He knew Guy Trundle from 1939, when Trundle began an affair with Bailey's mother, until he died 19 years later, in 1958, still faithful to her. Despite the difference in ages, Bailey said, “he was a very, very great friend. I saw a lot of him and knew a great deal about him.”

Captain Bailey said he couldn't recognize Trundle from the police report, particularly the bragging about his attractiveness to women. He was amazed by that, he said. He told me he had been called by a radio station: “And I said, ‘Come on, you've got the wrong chap. It's quite the wrong character. He wasn't like that shit Hewitt [Princess Diana's tell-all boyfriend, James Hewitt].’ And the chap said, ‘You said it, sir. We're live on air.’”

Bailey saw much of his friend during World War II, when Trundle was re-drafted into the air force and Bailey was in the Fleet Air Arm. “We met up fairly frequently in Cairo and Alexandria, and we used to chew the night away in various nightclubs and also in London later on, and never did the question of the Duchess of Windsor come up. I just cannot believe that, if he was having it off with the dear pre-Duchess, I wouldn't have got an inkling over 19 years, and I never did.” After the war they spent weekends together, he said, with people who knew the Windsors well. If Trundle had met her “as a personal friend,” Bailey feels, it would have come out.

“One thing, for God's sake, correct,” Val Bailey implored me. “It was said, in rather offensive terms, that he was a motorcar salesman. He wasn't a motorcar salesman. His father was a canon at York or something, a highly respectable chap, and Guy was married to a highly respectable lady—she played fast and loose, but she was respectable. Guy came out of the Flying Corps and, like millions of others, hadn't got any money and hadn't got a job. But Guy was a good mechan-

ic, and he got a job in a garage somewhere, no doubt from a friend of his. One day he was actually underneath a motorcar on one of those wheely things, and—he told me this—he pushed it out and this chap he knew said, ‘Good God, man! What are you doing there?’ And he said, ‘This is my job.’ And he said, ‘You can’t do that. Come with me.’” The story ends with Guy being made an executive at G.E.C. (the General Electric Company), “looking after street lighting.”

Bailey was at pains to point out that Trundle’s upbringing and class (“parents and nannies”) disqualified him from being

on someone like Trundle? If the basic information came from wiretaps, it would fall into place: a voice was overheard talking to Mrs. Simpson and had been identified. It is now known, although it appears in no biography of the Windsors, that Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin asked M.I.5 to tap Mrs. Simpson’s phone. It was a highly controversial issue within M.I.5 at the time—revived when Princess Diana’s mobile telephone was mysteriously intercepted in the 1990s—and was only reluctantly agreed to. Yet the Trundle information was coming to the Special Branch, which didn’t share information with M.I.5.

terial exists. It’s not the role of the Special Branch to delve into the lives of private individuals who haven’t committed a crime or are not a danger to the state.” But since it was an explosive piece of information and would have to be handled with great sensitivity, it’s unlikely that it was simply made up. “I think it has to be taken very seriously,” says West. “I think it must be true. I can’t imagine the head of the Special Branch putting his name to something like this that contains any doubt or misinformation.” As for Wallis, it is a commonplace that she wasn’t sexually satisfied by the Prince of Wales. She did require excitement—and sex, as with the albeit homosexual Jimmy Donahue later on. She had had affairs with straight men such as the diplomat Felipe Espil while she was married to her first, violently alcoholic husband, Win Spencer. As for alibi and opportunity, Wallis was known to slip out often to play poker until the early hours.

Why were the documents not acted on? If it was up to Baldwin to act, he could never have revealed such spying by the police, or used it to manipulate the King. One columnist’s theory was that the Trundle file might have separated the Prince of Wales from Mrs. Simpson and robbed the courtiers who saw him as a disastrous future king of a means to get rid of him. Kenneth Rose disagrees: “Too Machiavellian. I don’t think

things happen like that. And he was the King, or the future King. You don’t plot against the King.”

the cad and gigolo portrayed in the report. As for taking money, said Bailey, “I think he would have had the same view as me. We were still of the school where under no conditions did women pay any bills, ludicrous though it may have been.”

Bailey’s wife interrupted: “Men very often have different ideas about these things. Guy was enormously attractive, good-looking, stood out a mile in any company. He may well have been the best-looking boyfriend—if he was—the Duchess ever had, and he was quiet and gentle, unpushy. As far as women were concerned, he was absolutely the bee’s knees. My husband never sees it. But there you are.”

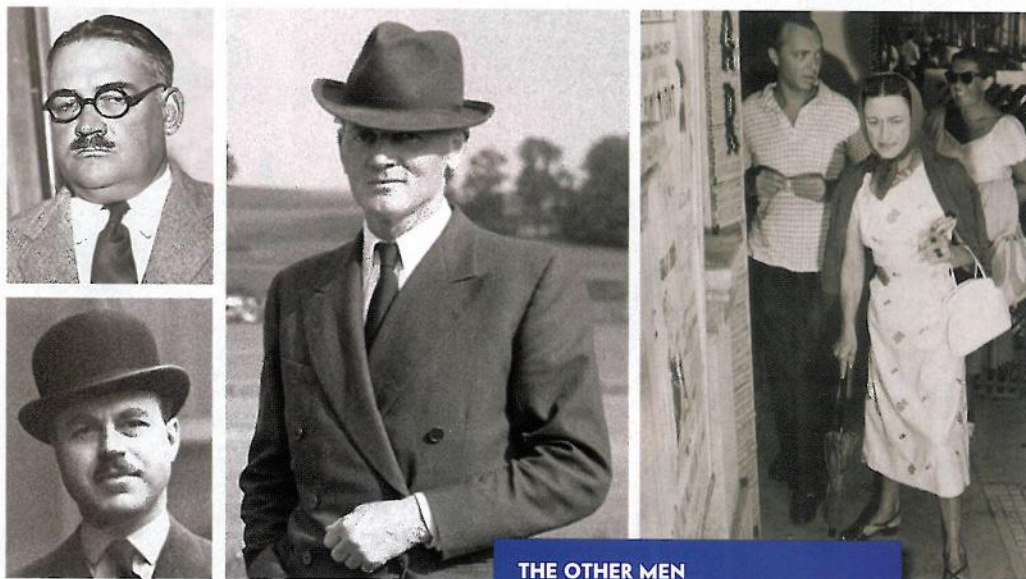
Given Bailey’s evidence, the documents seem to be a fanciful invention, based on hearsay. To whom did Trundle “admit” that he had received money from Mrs. Simpson? Secret surveillance files are notoriously full of invented material. But to pick gratuitously

What is odd is the lack of heading or reference; it was an informal note from Canning to the police commissioner, not intended for circulation. Much of the Special Branch’s role was to protect the royal family, with whom it was on close terms, and it is possible that the request came from within the royal family itself, bypassing the government. If not, it would have had to come from the Home Secretary, a minister in Baldwin’s cabinet. The author Nigel West, a leading historian of the British security services, says, “This is quite a step for the Special Branch to take, and it’s pretty shocking that this ma-

The Trundle story will barely make it onto the list of indelible myths about the Duchess of Windsor. Philip Ziegler summarized them in 1990 in his masterly official biography of the Duke: “She was illegitimate; she was both a lesbian and a nymphomaniac; she was a spy for the Nazis and probably the KGB; she was [German diplomat Joachim von] Ribbentrop’s mistress and had a child by Count Ciano (later Mussolini’s son-in-law). She learned her sexual techniques in the brothels of Hong Kong.” (This referred to “the China dossier” on Wallis, reportedly commissioned by Stanley Baldwin for George V, but which clearly never existed.) Ziegler wisely apologized in advance: “It seems ungenerous to the reader to resort to established truth.”

Two topics—Wallis’s “Chinese trick” and

“The identity of Mrs. Simpson’s secret lover has now been definitely ascertained,” the document began.



THE OTHER MEN

Counterclockwise from top left: the Duchess's first husband, Earl Winfield Spencer, a navy pilot in World War I; her second husband, British-American businessman Ernest Simpson; her recently revealed lover, Guy Trundle, in 1951; the Duchess with her socialite homosexual lover, Woolworth heir Jimmy Donahue, in the 1950s.

her gender—are invariably the first items brought up when her name is mentioned. “Tell me,” said one semi-royal grandee, “is it true that her dressmaker had to make special modifications to hide her willy?” Baldwin said in 1936 that he wouldn’t mind Mrs. Simpson “if she were what I call a respectable whore.” But already her reputation was far worse. Lady Cynthia Colville, having consulted an eminent psychologist, imparted to Queen Mary, “She has him too tight in her grasp, and is like a vampire.” And we know what “grasp” means. Thus did the Chinese trick reach the ears of Queen Mary. No wonder Chips Channon, the party giver and diarist, wrote that she hated Wallis “to the point of hysteria,” so much that her skin paled and she lost weight.

As for Wallis’s gender, the new documents show, the rumors go back at least to her childhood in Baltimore. From there an anonymous letter, among the nasties reaching the Special Branch, said that she was “well known” as a hermaphrodite by other children because, while playing “mothers and fathers,”

they saw her “deformed sexual organs.” Another mentioned her reproductive deformities, which left her “nearly male and nearly female,” and still another pointed out that her sexual organs were “knotted like a bunch of grapes.” Was it just Wallis’s looks that set off these prurient hate letters? She was, she told Cecil Beaton, “very much like a man in many ways.” James Pope-Hennessy, biographer of Queen Mary, wondered, after spending time with the Duchess, whether she was a woman at all. Sheila, Countess of Rochambeau, who met Wallis when she, the countess, was a child, and remained friendly with her throughout her life, says, “Don’t forget, she looked very masculine. In profile she was not a bosomed feminine thing. There’s definitely not a butch but a masculine side to the whole body.” Even her lawyer, Maître Suzanne Blum, and her butler, Georges Sanègre, both of whom knew her for 40 years, confided to the historian Michael Bloch, biographer of the Duke and Duchess, that, as he put it, “there was some doubt where she stood in the genetic order of things, and also that relations between them didn’t include intercourse.” Blum even claimed that she died a virgin. And Bloch produced the nearest thing there was to hard evidence; it came from Dr. John Randall, an expert on gender, who had been sent X-rays of Wallis which showed a case of androgen-insensitivity syndrome. “She is in fact a man,” he told Bloch. Symptoms of this syndrome include the development

FASHION PLATE

Deprived of the title Her Royal Highness by her husband’s family, the Duchess set about being the world’s best-dressed woman.



“There was some doubt where the Duchess stood in the genetic order of things.”

of masculine musculature, enlargement of the clitoris, and an irreversible deepening of the voice. Wallis’s voice, according to the art historian John Richardson, was contralto, “like old rusty gates opening.” “That’s ridiculous,” says her longtime doctor Jean Thin. “She was a woman.” Well, yes. None of this precludes the Chinese grasp. It depends on the case.

Why does it matter? Because the entire story, its mystery, centers on the sexuality of Wallis and David. What did he see in her? With her governessy hardness and staccato voice, she was the antithesis of the alluring siren. That would have been tragic, but acceptable. As Diana Mosley, the Duchess’s biographer and friend, put it, “Nobody can ever quite get over the oddness of it, really.” Some profound love was there, and a lasting one—he was mesmerized by her for 40 years. She provoked above all, Ziegler writes, “a profound sexual excitement” in the Prince. “The myth is of a predatory U.S. adventuress in pursuit of the golden-haired prince,” says Kenneth Rose. “The opposite is precisely the truth. He was very much the predator.”

It is now taken for granted by biogra-

phers that the couple couldn’t, or didn’t, have conventional intercourse. His former doctor told me, “He did not fulfill all the desires of a woman. I think he was a little boy, if you ask me.” Certainly the Duke was both under-endowed and overexcitable. One of his early loves, Freda Dudley Ward, said, “He made himself the slave of whomever he loved and became totally dependent on her. It was his nature; he was a masochist. He liked being humbled, degraded. He *begged* for it!” Even in the early days of their affair, their entourage noticed how Wallis treated him with contempt. “When the weekend guests at Fort Belvedere had departed, she would taunt and berate him until he was reduced to tears,” wrote Ziegler. Freda Dudley Ward said Wallis knew how to release him from his inhibitions. The clue may lie in a letter he wrote her in 1920, in which he spoke of the “idiotic self-consciousness and shyness” he had originally felt around her. “Perhaps it was only natural at first & then you know how I was brought up & the poor miserable weak little baby I was when we met over 2 years ago.”

His mother, Queen Mary, the last royal to believe in the divine right of kings, never intervened in the callous bullying that

George V meted out to his son. "Of course, none of them came up to George V for horrors," says Diana Mosley. "There's a ghastly photograph in my book where they're being drilled by their father and they're all in floods. Oh, I mean, too awful."

"Being treated as a little boy, given orders, and punished when naughty," Michael Bloch gathered from his sources, were to the Duke's taste. Nicky Haslam, the interior decorator and columnist, who knew the Windsors in the 1960s, believes it was infantilism. "I mean nappies," he says. "They were all sexually screwed up by Queen Mary. Potty Gloucester [the Duke's brother] liked wearing Queen Mary's clothes, though he wasn't gay. The Duke was certainly gay. I know that for a fact.

The war, the Duke said, "was all Eden's fault. Together of course with Roosevelt and the Jews."

Someone told me who slept with him when he was Prince David. He was not the sort of person who would have known about calling him Prince David."

John Richardson was invited by the Windsors to a small supper at the Waldorf in New York on a Sunday night in the 1960s. There were calls from the royals about arrangements, one of them early that morning, when Richardson had a friend staying with him. "This guy picks up the telephone," said Richardson, "and he yells at me in the shower, 'Some faggot says he's the Duke of Windsor.' So I rush to the telephone and say, 'Yes, sir,' and the Duke says, 'Richardson, I think you should fire your man.'"

Wallis, as the recently released papers show, caused real political fear in the government despite her incomprehension of what was happening. Shouting in a bad telephone connection for all to hear as she escaped to France, she begged him not to abdicate, or if he must, she added, "can't you remain Emperor of India even if you aren't King of England?"

There was near panic in October 1937, the files show, before the couple made their fatally ill-judged trip to Germany and had tea with Hitler. That trip, according to Kenneth Rose, had much less to do with the Duke's Nazi sympathies, though there was ample evidence of them, or his desire to study housing conditions, than with having Wallis received with the deference paid to a queen in Europe. Back in the South of France, Wallis didn't mention the furor to her friend the socialite Elsie Mendl, in a letter Nicky Haslam showed me, except to say that the trip had "impoverished" them. She wrote, "I swam this a.m. and tonight go

to Cap d'Ail to play [the card game] Oklahoma with Winston Churchill who is stopping with [the press lord] Max Beaverbrook. We are great rivals and play every other night. . . . Not being able to move capital out of England, America becomes beyond us. Such a messy world isn't it darling?"

A note from Sir Horace Wilson, Baldwin's close adviser, soon after the abdication might have been written from the Elizabethan court of the 16th century about Mary, Queen of Scots. "It is clear to me," he said, "that it is [the Duchess's] intention not only to come back here but (aided by what she expects to be a generous provision from public funds) to set up a 'court' of her own—and there can be little doubt to do her best to make things un-

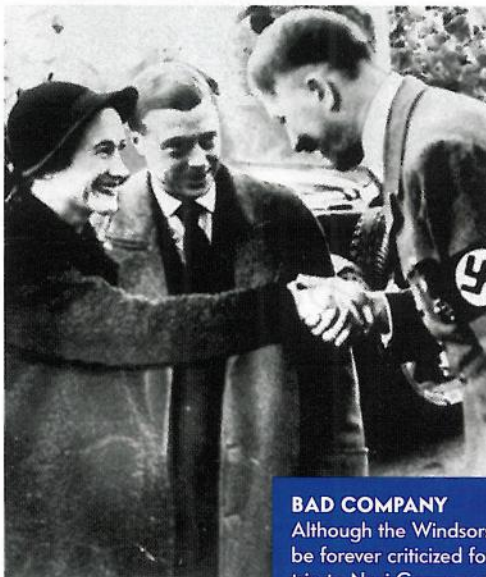
ly. . . . I think she thought that they were going to be given a job in England and didn't realize that feeling was so strong that he couldn't stay in England. I think she had her first enormous shock when they were sent to the Bahamas. But I think that she really thought it was going to be much more glamorous than it was. I don't think she thought it was going to be in exile forever. I think she did love him in her own way. She certainly very much loved what he represented."

She had certainly not gauged her own unpopularity, even though she came up against what the biographer Penelope Mortimer wrote of as "the appalling manners of the British upper classes" when a courtier's wife, for example, refused to shake her hand at Fort Belvedere, dropping her handbag at the crucial moment. "As far as I know," Mortimer wrote in her biography of the Queen Mother, "there is not one incident to demonstrate that she was ever guilty of the incivility she received from others." They disliked her partly because she was American and therefore vulgar, or common. "Her commonness and her Becky Sharpness irritate," wrote Diana Cooper, the renowned beauty and wife of the diplomat Duff Cooper. Harold Nicolson, the author, wrote to his wife, Vita Sackville-West, "Rich vulgarity like that of Mrs. Simpson is worse than poor vulgarity. In fact, when the latter descends to hop-picker level, it is not vulgarity at all." He wasn't being snobbish, he said, but fastidious.

The airbrushing out of the Windsors, so soon after the amicable and weepy family scenes of his departure, was swift and implacable. Blameless courtiers who had served the Duke were fired. Anyone in society

who had taken them up was blacklisted. "The Ladies Colefax and Cunard / Took it very, very hard," went an anonymous rhyme. The new papers show that the King wrote to Neville Chamberlain, then prime minister, in December 1938, "I think you know that neither the Queen nor Queen Mary have any desire to meet the Duchess of Windsor and therefore any visit made for the purpose of introducing her to members of the Royal Family obviously becomes impossible. I have heard from all sides that there is a strong feeling amongst all classes that my brother should not return here even for a short visit with the Duchess of Windsor."

When the Duke heard that his brother



BAD COMPANY

Although the Windsors would be forever criticized for their 1937 trip to Nazi Germany, where they accepted an invitation from Hitler himself, the Duke doubtless hoped that there his duchess would be received as a queen.

comfortable for the new occupant of the Throne. It must not be assumed that she has abandoned hope of becoming Queen of England. It is known that she has limitless ambition, including a desire to interfere in politics."

According to the Countess of Rochambeau, whose father, Alastair Mackintosh, was one of the Duke's oldest friends, this may not have been too wide of the mark. "I think she thought she would be Queen of England. I don't think she thought the country would be so passionate about the whole thing. I don't think they thought it would go so far. I've heard this all my life. I'd known Fruity Metcalfe [the Duke's equerry] from my childhood. I think she was extremely ambitious. I think [her] aunt Bessie [Merryman] pushed her tremendous-

would cut the Duke's allowance of £21,000 (\$103,000) if he did so, he complained bitterly that it was "unfair and intolerable." He wrote that he had "never intended to renounce my native land—or my right to return to it—for all time." The King wrote back, "The continuation of this voluntary allowance must depend on your not returning to this country without my approval."

"The finality with which David . . . disappeared out of thoughts and even memories was shocking," wrote Lady Iris Mountbatten, great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria. "I think this was the emotion that shocked me most in those around me, they *did* not, *would* not, *could* not bring themselves to begin to understand or think with compassion. It brought home to me a sense that I had always had that my family was not motivated by love or human emotions."

The longest royal sulk in history was the Duke's over the refusal of his family to grant Wallis the title Her Royal Highness. It lasted all his life. There was no legal or constitutional basis for refusing her the title; it should have come automatically with marriage to the Duke. By bringing it up, the Duke lost his hand. Had he assumed the title was hers and said nothing, it would have been almost impossible for the King to remove it. The royal lawyers simply judged that they could fudge it after King George VI had said to Baldwin, "I and my family and Queen Mary all feel that it would be a great mistake to acknowledge Mrs. Simpson as a suitable person to become Royal. The Monarchy has been degraded quite enough already." Wallis thought the "extra chic" of the title would be "the only thing to bring me back in the eyes of the world."

Nicky Haslam becomes incensed on this matter. He raises his voice in the restaurant where we are dining and almost bangs the table. "He is H.R.H. Prince Edward, Duke of Windsor. She is H.R.H. Princess Edward. Full stop! Duchess of Windsor."

As late as 1949, Queen Mary wrote to the King, after yet another request, "I cannot tell you how grieved I am at your brother being so tiresome about the HRH. Giving her this title would be fatal, and after all these years I fear lest people think that we condoned this dreadful marriage which has been such a blow to us all in every way." When Queen Mary died in 1953, the Duke wrote to Wallis from England, "My sadness was mixed with incredulity that any mother could have been so hard and cruel towards her eldest son for so many years and yet so demanding at the end without relenting a scrap. I'm afraid the fluids in

JET SET

Exiled forever from England in 1936, the Windsors spent the rest of their lives as social globe-trotters. Here they are on vacation in Portofino, Italy, in 1951.



"I did a bloody good job for my country, and all I got was a kick in the ass."

her veins have always been as icy cold as they now are in death." He also wrote about the remaining royals: "What a smug stinking lot my relations are and you've never seen such a seedy worn-out bunch of old hags most of them have become."

For compensation, the Duchess would outshine the world in the perfection of her clothes, her houses, her food, and the glamour and cachet she gave the Duke. Status was the eternally touchy subject. It lay behind her drive to be the perennially best-dressed woman in the world and to dominate café society, even if that came to include a dodgy collection of providers and hangers-on in Palm Beach, Biarritz, and Monte Carlo. It worked, certainly, as revenge. "I was grieved that Leopold of the Belgians and his wife saw quite a lot of her in the South of France lately," wrote Queen Mary to George VI in 1949, "but she is so pushing and she leaves no stone unturned to remain a thorn in our sides and advertise herself whenever she can. . . . With 2 husbands living still I can't think how D can be so tactless."

In private their exile was dominated by fretting and complaining, about money and allowances as much as status, despite the £800,000 (\$4 million) that he took with him from the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall. The sulk was still going on in 1958, when James Pope-Hennessy visited the Windsors at their house in Le Moulin-des-Tuileries, outside Paris, while writing his biography of Queen Mary. Pope-Hennessy, whose portrait of the cou-

ple has much affection and compassion, nevertheless described Wallis as "one of the very oddest women I have ever seen. . . . I should say she was on the whole a stupid woman, with a small petty brain, immense goodwill (*une femme de bonne volonté*) and a stern power of concentration." He described "the great giglamp smile, the wide, wide open eyes, which are so very large and pale and veined, the painted lips and the cannibal teeth," adding, "There is one further facial contortion, reserved for speaking of the Queen Mother, which is very unpleasant to behold and seemed to me akin to frenzy."

A brittle lack of humor is illustrated by another episode on that same visit. One of the classic souvenirs of the Windsor epic was a calypso sung by Harry Belafonte, recorded the previous year, 1957: "It was love; love alone / Caused King Edward to leave his throne." Wallis put it on the gramophone. The "Dook" started "jiggling vaguely" to it. "I'm going to call our lawyers Monday about it," said Wallis. "I think it's libelous." Pope-Hennessy wrote, "I don't quite see where the libel would reside, Duchess," I volunteered. 'Shouldn't you ignore it? You can't *now* say it *wasn't* love, so to speak.' 'You're right there but I think it just so undignified. *And so offensive to the Monarchy,*' with dark emphasis . . . 'I'm going to call our lawyers all the same.'"

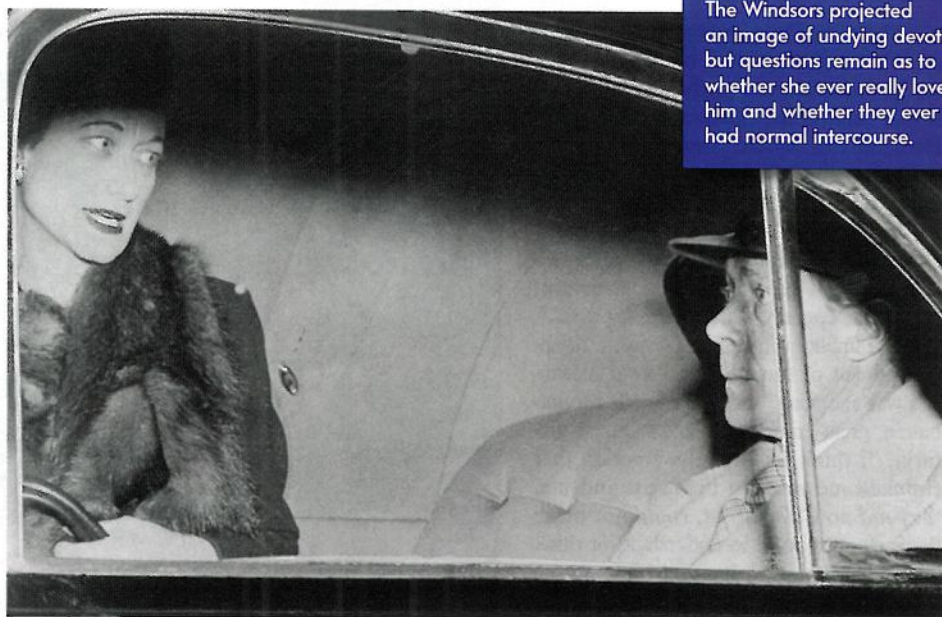
Their world took on aspects of *Alice in Wonderland*. Even the Duchess's hairstyle—the double loaf perched on her head—began to resemble that of the Ugly Duchess in the Tenniel illustrations. The

Duke would circle the table playing bagpipes after dinner, and sometimes fly into the Windsors rage, as he once did when the actor Alec Guinness took him whiskey in a large glass, having been unable to find the small one requested. Guinness wrote in his diary, "He went scarlet and exploded . . . 'I said a *small* glass!' he screamed at me. 'A small glass, a small glass, a small glass! You fool! I told you a *small* glass. You fool!'" Guinness was won over by the end of the evening by the Duke's apology and his charming smile. He would shout at his French gardeners in German. He would conduct music at the drop of a hat. At a party given by Estée Lauder in New York in the 1960s, a guest remembers, the Duke conducted the Tyrolean band in his favorite song, "Ich Weiss auf der Weiden ein Kleines Hotel," returned to his table after a few drinks, and addressed the wives of the Seventh Avenue clothing manufacturers in German. When one said, "Duke, I don't understand a word you're saying," he told them, "*Das ist meine Muttersprache*" (That is my mother tongue).

They had spectacularly few interests. When pressed, a friend of Wallis's came up with her "gossip . . . and marvelous housekeeping." Wallis herself said her talent was "getting people to talk." John Richardson says of her, "She was a society rattle, straight out of Thackeray, in a way. She must have been like one of those Regency ladies around George IV, prattling away in this hideous voice. Funny. A marvelous *maitresse de maison*. The food was superb, and she got it right—it wasn't too overdone. The place always looked very attractive—wonderful flowers and modern American touches. You could be sure that cocktails were superb. But the conversation was idiotic."

Nicky Haslam says, "The first time I met her was in the Colony [the New York social club]. She had a bounce in her walk. She was lively but tiny. She sat down and said, 'Hi, I'm Wallis,' no bullshit at all, and this made you love her, and people did love her. She was so nice to me, such fun, so encouraging and the great word 'sassy' and fun to be with."

The word "vacuous," applied to the Duchess then, has since lost its currency in celebrity culture. She possessed glamour and style of a kind that Diana Vreeland thought revolutionized taste and invented fashion in that period. "Diana



TELLING MOMENT

The Windsors projected an image of undying devotion, but questions remain as to whether she ever really loved him and whether they ever had normal intercourse.

"The Duke was certainly gay. Someone told me who slept with him when he was Prince David."

adored the Duchess," says Haslam. "It was more than just taste. She found her fascinating—real and natural and refreshing. She was certainly not a beauty, but she managed to make it look amazing." The Countess of Rochambeau recalls, "I worked for American *Vogue* for 23 years for Diana Vreeland, so I've gone through all that, and really the Duchess wasn't wrong on much. She was always *tirée à quatre épingles* [pulled together with four pins], always so tidy and so right and so wonderful. Every detail was perfect."

For this she spent a fortune on clothes, and by preference tried not to pay for them—something now commonplace among celebrities. Balenciaga eventually demanded cash on the spot and dispatched Ungaro, who was then his assistant, to collect a check for each box and do the fittings. For this insult, the Duchess wouldn't speak to Ungaro. She merely pointed to the seams in silence.

Diana Mosley believes that only people who hadn't met the Duke and Duchess were horrible about them. The Countess of Rochambeau's memories of the Duchess date back to the Bahamas, where the Duke was governor during the war. The countess's father, Ali Macintosh, had followed the Duke from Paris. "At that time, when the eyes of the whole world were upon her, when she was the glamorous liked or disliked person, she didn't need to bother to do what she did," says the Countess of Rochambeau. "Our mother was left in France. The Duchess bothered to give my sister and me parties

on our birthdays for four years. When they used to go on picnics on Sundays to the beaches, she would say to my father, 'Bring the girls along.' She could not have been kinder to us. I feel all of those things have disappeared, and people can only think of bloody things to say about her."

The countess remembers Wallis coming to her wedding at Le Pavillon Colombe, Edith Wharton's old house, which her mother had bought in 1937. "She was wearing one of her blue dresses," she said, "Wallis blue in *crêpe de Chine*. She had a large hat." At the dinner, the Duke was put on the left of Liliane de Rothschild. "The Duke spilled his cup of coffee on Liliane's dress, and he was very apologetic, and then, sort of nervously thinking how to fill in this ghastly gap, he turned to her and said, 'Tell me, my dear Madame de Rothschild, which one of the Rothschild men is having an affair presently with Pamela Churchill?' Liliane turned to the Duke and said, 'This is worse than the coffee! It's my husband.' It was absolutely ghastly. He got up and said, 'Wallis, Wallis!' 'What is it, David?' Halfway across the room, he said, 'I've done it again, I've done it again.'"

To like the Duke, or be charmed by him, it was clearly necessary, on many occasions, either to be sympathetic with the views he expressed or not to mind them. They were predominantly a mix of petit bourgeois, right-wing prejudices—racism, anti-Semitism, Communist paranoia. Frank Giles, then the London *Times* correspondent in Paris, later foreign editor of *The Sunday Times*, was taken aside after dinner by the Duke: "'There'd have been no

war if Eden hadn't mishandled Mussolini," the Duke said. "It was all his fault." He added as an afterthought, "Together of course with Roosevelt and the Jews."

The Duke wanted to be charming to women," says Nicky Haslam. "I thought he was so uncharming I wanted to flee. I fell into the Jimmy Donahue camp. He just ignored one quite rudely. He was nearly always drunk. His arm would go up like this as the Horst Wessel song was sung. And she'd say, 'Oh, David.'"

He would become maudlin and bored. "I did a bloody good job for my country," he told Kenneth Rose in his American accent one night, "and all I got was a kick in the ass." Haslam says, "She carried on with great grace until it became too much, and then came the heels-up with Jimmy Donahue." It is the Duchess's excited friendship—certainly a sexual affair—with Donahue, the homosexual son of a Woolworth heir, in the early 1950s that gives the Trundle story some plausibility. It was clear that Wallis didn't love the Duke before the abdication, and that she was trapped into exile with him, which makes the acceptance of her fate and her survival—and her loving support of the Duke—even more remarkable. Not being sexually satisfied by him then or in the early 1950s, she no doubt needed some excitement. The energy she summoned to force a band she liked to follow her from one nightclub to another is some index of her *folie* at the time. And it was calming to the Duke, who was terrified of spending capital, that Donahue paid the bills.

"Some said they had oral sex, but I can't believe Jimmy was into that," says Nicky Haslam. "He enjoyed her company. There was no way Jimmy could have done it with a woman. He was *so* gay. He lived in a house called Broadhollow—known as Boyhollow because no broad had ever been in it. He was sweet and adorable, so funny, drunk, and naughty."

"Oh, they did have sex," says John Richardson. "Also, I think he was such a drunk, and he got *everyone* drunk, and I think they rolled into bed and what happened I don't know." But Donahue told what happened in ungracious tales of his sexual ordeals with the Duchess after their bust-up. "I asked Jimmy Donahue when he was drunk and ready to say anything, 'What was it like going to bed with the Duchess of Windsor?'" says

Richardson. "And he said, 'It was like going to bed with a very old sailor.'" This quote, used by Prince Edward in a documentary on his great-uncle, caused much merriment when the film was shown at a benefit in New York. Richardson was, he says, "pursued out of the place by the secretary of the Duchess, Madame Schutz, hitting at me with her handbag."

It was discovered only later that Alzheimer's disease had begun to affect the Duchess a year or so before the Duke died. That, or hostess mania, may have caused two distinguished London specialists, Dr. Henry Shaw and Dr. Robin Beare, to be "shocked by the Duchess's behavior" when they flew to Paris to ex-

"Visitors were banned," her doctor said.
"It would have been unethical to display her."



RETURN VISITS

The mourning Duchess, shown with Queen Elizabeth, attended her husband's funeral at Windsor Castle on June 5, 1972. Fourteen years later, her body was flown to England for interment beside the Duke's.

amine the Duke's throat in 1972 as he was dying of cancer. Before they were allowed to see their patient, the Duchess insisted that they eat their way through a huge and lavish lunch.

The Duke's funeral and his burial at Frogmore House in Windsor Park caused no noticeable reconciliation between the British royals and the Duchess, who later told how none of them had even bothered to drive with her back to the airport. There was a glimmer, however. The pitifully strained Duchess was seen in brief—and historic—conversation with the Queen Mother. One of the Duchess's friends re-

lated that she had asked her eagerly, "What did you talk about?" "Oh," said Wallis, "it's always the same. Servants. We were just talking about the servant situation and how ghastly it is."

Loneliness and boredom, sudden fits of irascibility, and further loss of memory plagued the Duchess in her early widowhood. After an intestinal hemorrhage in 1975 and a long hospitalization, she never again left her house in the Bois de Boulogne. She lived for another 11 years, for the last 6 of which she was unable to speak. At the end she lay unconscious in her room upstairs, fed through a catheter. In 1973 she had given control of her affairs to her lawyer, the formidable, confrontational Maître Suzanne Blum. After

Blum's death, the novelist Caroline Blackwood wrote a book of venomous comedy and invention called *The Last of the Duchess*, in which she described the lawyer as a "necrophiliac" who kept the Duchess alive on a "black tube" because she was obsessively in love with her. She "sequestered" her in sepulchral isolation at the villa, banning all visitors. Blackwood's many grave charges included the removal of the little silver cups of iced vodka which the Duchess depended on, often instead of food.

Diana Mosley invited me to a perfect 1930s lunch in her apartment on Rue de l'Université—hot cheese pastry, roast chicken, chocolate mousse. Lady Mosley, at 93, was working on a new chapter to update her biography of the Duchess. "The rather sinister thing," Lady Mosley said of the Duchess's last years, "is that everybody's dead except Dr. Thin. I had great fears for the Duchess, because they kept her alive artificially. Maître Blum was all for it. She spoke of *'la vie de la Duchesse.'* But it wasn't life as we see it. Maître Blum wasn't frightening, but she was incredibly litigious, and also jealous, because she idolized the Duchess. The ostensible reason why she was not allowed to have visitors was that it excited her and she couldn't sleep, and it was hard on the nurses, and that angered me. What if she preferred to be excited and sleep less and see her friends rather than seeing people she'd never seen before?"

Part of the problem, as Lady Mosley sees



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it, is that Maître Blum, in her need to glorify the Duchess, gave out wildly contradictory information. Caroline Blackwood once contacted her to ask if Lord Snowdon could take the Duchess's picture for an article she was writing for *The Sunday Times*. No, said Maître Blum, she was too ill for that. Instead, Maître Blum posed for Snowdon. When Blackwood asked later about the Duchess's health, Blum told her, "The Duchess is magnificent. *Elle parle, elle parle*. She never stops speaking! She is beautiful like you cannot imagine. She is covered with flowers!" Forced to submit her copy to Maître Blum, Blackwood later found that a line about how the Duchess lived "in a prison-like house in the Bois de Boulogne" had been scratched out and replaced with "The Duchess of Windsor now lives in a house that resembles Buckingham Palace." "She invented a new Duchess," said Lady Mosley. "She even gave her back her virginity."

When Maître Blum relented and let Lady Mosley visit the Duchess, she found her unable to speak. "Georges, the butler, stood in the doorway saying, 'Parlez, milady, parlez,' and I started again, 'I've just been in London.' And absolutely no reaction. I remember her on a chair and looking out of the window, completely sightless eyes and this mouth open like a Greek mask. Exactly like the mask of tragedy. I wrote that. Maître Blum disapproved. 'You shouldn't have said that,' she said. She wanted her to go on being brilliant," Lady Mosley said, laughing.

In fact, the Duchess had badly needed Maître Blum's protection, principally in the early 1970s, to "see off" Lord Mountbatten, as Diana Mosley put it. Dr. Jean Thin, a jovial, friendly man of 78, lives in retirement in a modest apartment in the Paris suburb of Neuilly. He told me that the Duke had worried about Wallis's exposure to "vultures" after he died. "Later the main vulture, the most dangerous," he said, "was [the Duke's cousin] Lord Louis Mountbatten. Oh, Louis Mountbatten really wanted their money." On several visits, as the Duchess herself described, he would hover over her waiting for a signature "giving everything to David's family and, of course, some to himself," she told the Countess of Romanones. "She feared him very much," said Dr. Thin. "He was extremely tall, broad, and speaking with a loud voice, looking at you, and it was terrible. He was always behaving as if he was on the deck of his ship commanding."

Finally Dr. Thin was "commissioned" by Maître Blum to keep Mountbatten out. Dr. Thin informed him that the Duchess's anxiety after their conversations required heavy sedation to keep her blood pressure down, and therefore he mustn't see her.

"We had a meeting in Neuilly in a friend's house, and he told me what he wanted, and it was very simple: he wanted *everything*," said Dr. Thin, much amused. "He said it would be wonderful if the estate could be dedicated to welfare, and suggested setting up a foundation, and he used the sentence three or four times 'to keep the Duke's memory evergreen.'" Maître Blum had actually already settled the will in favor of the Institut Pasteur, which received over \$45 million from the sale of the Windsor jewels, and had made other tax-break deals with the French authorities.

Many of the Duchess's problems, said Dr. Thin, stemmed from her "terror of putting on weight" and from nervous tension, all of which led to ulcers, Crohn's disease, and a lingering lung infection. With these came unstable blood pressure. "I had to get the poor girl to check it almost every other hour, because in the latter part of her life she went into a mad anger." She developed a very aggressive case of rheumatism, which eventually prevented her from swallowing. By means of a catheter she could be properly fed with artificial nutrition, and "that can keep someone going forever," said Dr. Thin.

I asked him how he could judge whether, as Lady Mosley said, the Duchess wouldn't prefer a little high blood pressure to not seeing her old friends. "Hard to tell," he said. "Each time we relented, we paid for it. Visitors had been banned because it was a terrible sight. It would have been unethical to display her. And knowing her as we knew her, she would have hated being exposed to her friends in such a low condition." Some, however, such as the Countess of Romanones, were let through. "She wasn't sequestered," said Dr. Thin, "but I didn't want all these very nice old ladies, some of whom you've just named, to spread the word around the place, 'It's terrible. This doctor ought to let her die. Do they have some motive they are ashamed of?' Madame Blum was more blamed than myself. I could have let her go by not feeding her. It sounds exactly like a crime. I kept on saying, 'We are feeding her, that's all. We have a duty to feed those who are hungry. Is that exaggerated?' You can't say, 'Look here, I think you must be bored in the afternoon. I'm going to stop feeding you.'" I asked him if his Catholic background had played a part in this. "Well, yes, of course," said Dr. Thin, "but I don't want to sound like a Jansenist. It was very simple, a question of general ethics."

The Duchess eventually died on April 24, 1986, from heart failure at the age of 89, and her body was flown to Frogmore to be buried beside the Duke. □