

*File 7/18/66*

# CLOSE-UP / Frances Knight, 'Ogress' of the Passport Office

I know I'm considered a burr under the saddle," says Frances Knight, director of the U.S. Passport Office, with a distinct note of pride. Indeed, she understates her thorny reputation among her State Department superiors, whom she has often ticked off as gutless "creeps"—and who in turn call her "the ogress"—and among liberals who fairly sputter at the mention of her name. What especially riles the latter are her efforts to deny passports to Communists and anyone else who has the habit of sounding off against the U.S. Though her power has been curtailed by recent Supreme Court rulings and new State Department regulations, her critics say she can still throw up bureaucratic obstacles on passports for people she feels do not measure up to her New England-instilled standards of patriotism. She shrugs off such complaints—"I'd issue a passport to a baboon if I found out that that is the policy."

Now nearly 61, the carrot-topped, tart-tongued Miss Knight has survived 11 years in her \$24,500-a-year job despite efforts by her superiors in the last three administrations to get rid of her. One reason she is difficult to dislodge is that she happens to be extraordinarily efficient. She cut production costs on individual passports from \$3.47 to \$2.86—though people who get them still have to pay \$10. Another reason is her powerful support on Capitol Hill. "It would take a cannon to blast her out of her job," says an admiring Senator Karl Mundt. As Frances Knight coyly puts it, "Congress is a girl's best friend."

# 'To hold a high-level job a woman has to

In conversations with LIFE Correspondent Susanna McBee, Miss Knight gave the following views on life in the federal bureaucracy and the uses and misuses of U.S. passports.

► If you're a woman in government, the higher you go the rougher it gets. You have to be a lot better than a man in order to hold a high-level job. You have to be much more alert. You have to think ahead. A man can get away with a lot of things. One man can criticize another without everyone flaring up.

► More promotions in government are gained by discussions and deals consummated at cocktail parties than by merit. This is true everywhere. But it's more true in Washington.

► People in Washington see too many sides to a question. Outside Washington people have two answers: yes and no. There are no two-sided issues here; everything is octagonal. People in the rest of the country may not know all the facets of a problem, but they come up with an answer just the same, and it's probably a better answer than we get here.

► Every one of my division chiefs is a man. I've found that as a woman I have to have the facility of a juggler in dealing with them: I have to keep them happy while I'm hawking them out. I don't easily praise people. After all, they get paid for doing a good job. I understand my staff and they understand me.

► Even with all the fuss over me, a lot of people have asked for a job in my office. They figure, here's a gal who told the bosses off.

► It is more exasperating to a man to have a disagreement with a woman than with another man. A man might back down with an

other man. But because of his pride he won't back down with a woman. He has to be a pretty big person to admit he's wrong to a woman.

► I've seen a growing limidity among government officials to step out and say what they think. I get sick and tired of government people who always preface everything they say with: "This is off the record. Don't quote me." The government, especially the State Department, has so many ways of intimidating a person. But not me. I can get to a lot of people.

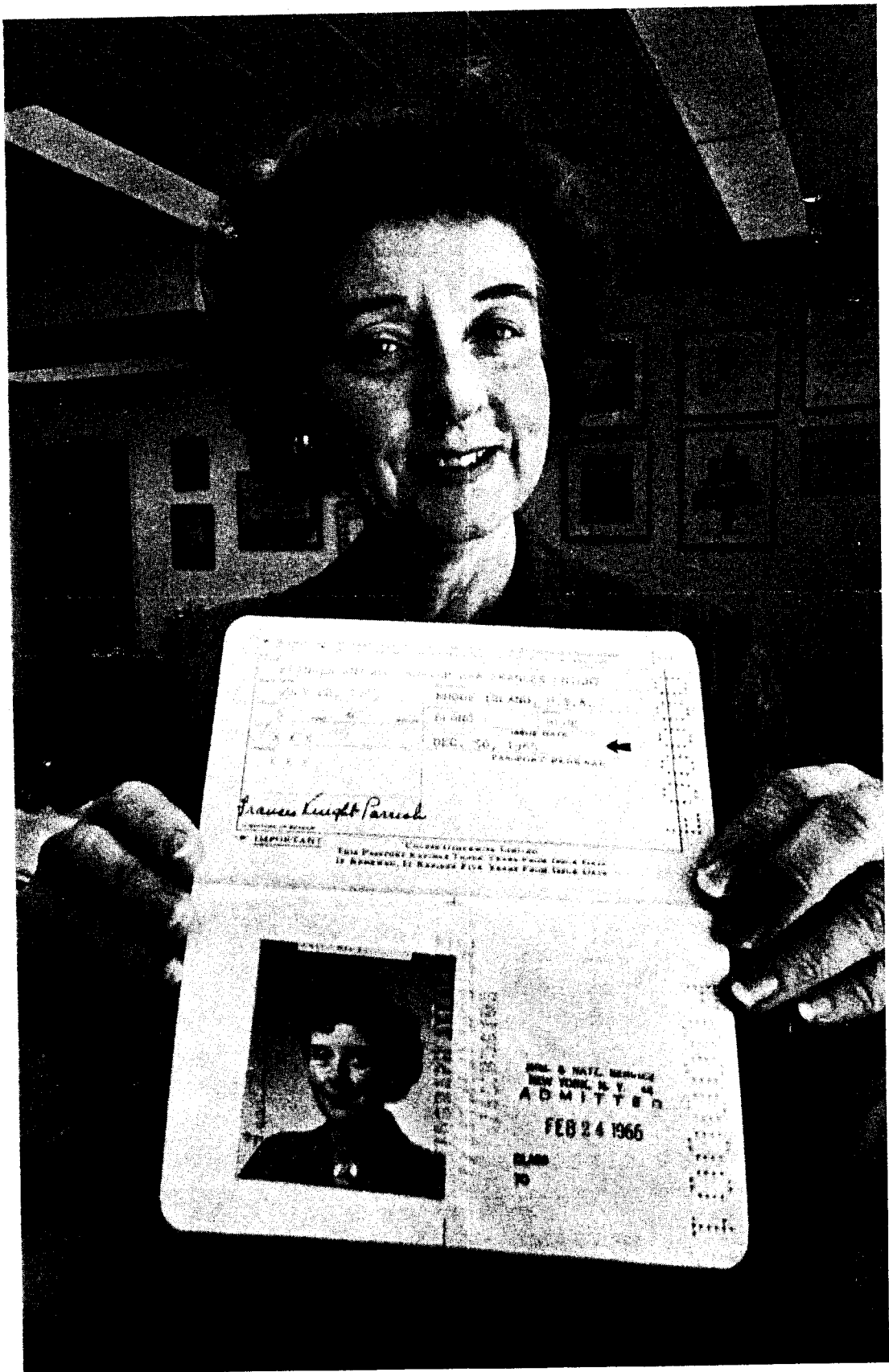
► I admit State Department people outside the Passport Office often try to avoid me. Whenever they see me in the hall, they dart into the men's room. If people had been nicer to me around here, I'd probably have got bored and quit. But this way it's such a challenge to come to work every day.

► I feel patriotism is on the decline. When I was a child in Rhode Island, everyone had a flag flying in the yard on the Fourth of July and all the neighbors would gather for hot dogs. It was a real celebration with a sense of pride and patriotism. Now people shy away from saying "Thank God I was born in this country, and it's a great country."

► It is not consistent to wage war in Vietnam and then let the people who are embarrassing the U.S. government travel around inciting hatred. Under our present regulations these people can go abroad and actively consort with Communists. There is nothing I can do but issue them a passport if I'm ordered to. It's a sorry situation when U.S. Communist sympathizers—or even non-Communists who are against U.S. policies—can go overseas and attack this country. They would be doing this country a disservice even if we weren't at war.

Passport Director Frances Knight displays her own passport. Though entitled to a diplomatic passport, she does all her traveling with this standard one, for which she pays the regular fee.

*"Some people think a passport is a right. I think it's a privilege, in that the government is vouching for the holder. He has a sacred trust to be worthy of carrying such an endorsement."*



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS  
 OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS  
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20520  
 FRANCES KNIGHT PARRISH  
 BORN DEC. 20, 1905  
 IN NEW YORK, N. Y.  
 EXPIRES DEC. 20, 1965  
 PASSPORT NO. 123456789

*Frances Knight Parrish*

**IMPORTANT**  
 This Passport Machine Ticket Shows From How & When  
 It Expires, It Expires Five Years From Issue Date



ADM. & NATL. SERVICE  
 NEW YORK, N. Y. 44  
**ADMITTED**  
**FEB 24 1966**

# be better than a man'

- ▶ I think the liberal passport policy is hurting this country. It's difficult to put your finger on just where it hurts—whether it's our security or our prestige. But the net effect is to harm us. The freedom we now allow is like giving people the right to yell fire in a theater.
- ▶ I've seen a marked improvement in the attitudes and general behavior of our tourists overseas. They're more sophisticated about their clothes—women have learned to wear flats. Tourists are less ostentatious. They're much more polite. I think the reason is that other Americans just got fed up with the boors. Now you hear criticism overseas about travelers from other countries, not America. For instance, you hear that the French are notoriously bad tippers.
- ▶ In traveling I find the three-week trip is perfect. After three weeks I get tired of living out of a suitcase. I always take along an electric converter so I can iron and make coffee in the morning. My husband and I are sightseers. We walk and walk and walk. We avoid the tourist places. We stay at small, out-of-the-way hotels and eat in restaurants that the local people patronize.
- ▶ People lie about their age on passports sometimes for very pathetic reasons. One woman lopped off 15 years on her application because she had a much younger husband. We couldn't let her get by with it. I'm sympathetic but I'm adamantly opposed to doctoring an official paper. Age is a very important factor in a person's identification.
- ▶ With the superjet, which will go faster and carry more people, we'll soon need a new kind of international travel document that is faster and easier to issue. Of course, the international situation would have to improve and nations would have to agree to do away with visas. But there's no reason why, in due course, people couldn't have a travel card like a charge plate.



Miss Knight and husband, Publisher Wayne Parrish (right), at party for Sen. Warren Magnuson.

*"In a gossip town like Washington there is very little you say that doesn't get around fast. Not much goes on here that sooner or later I don't hear about."*

In atrium of her house Frances Knight provides a comfortable lap for her 10-year-old cat, Rocky.

*"We found him when he was a few days old. We named him after my husband's magazine, Missiles and Rockets. We had Rocky fixed, and Wayne named him Rockette."*

