

# I WENT TO LONDON TO VISIT THE QUEEN!

BY MARTHA MITCHELL  
with Winzola McLendon

*Everyone hears about people going to meet Queen Elizabeth of England, but nobody ever comes back home and says what happened. In this JOURNAL report, the talkative Mrs. Mitchell tells it like it was!*

When I was a little girl in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, I dreamed of going to London to meet the Queen. I used to line up my dolls to play a fantasy game I called "Queen." My favorite doll of the moment was "Her Majesty" and all my other dolls curtsied to her. That nursery rhyme: "Pussy cat, pussy cat/Where have you been?/I've been to London/To visit the queen!" was a favorite of mine. To actually meet the Queen of England—or any queen, for that matter—seemed an impossible dream, but it was fun to pretend.

But now my dream has come true. I did meet the Queen. My husband John [Attorney General John N. Mitchell] and I were introduced to Queen Elizabeth II at one of Her Majesty's garden parties at Buckingham Palace.

I first learned that I was going to the garden party when my husband's office called to tell me about the various things we would be doing while in London for last summer's American Bar Association meeting. John and I had been invited to lunch at 10 Downing Street (the British Prime Minister's residence), dinner at historic Lancaster House, a reception by the Lord Chancellor at Westminster Palace, two parties at Winfield House—the beautiful American Embassy residence—and a garden party to meet the Queen.

Meet the Queen! My first thought was: "What will I wear?" The second: "What will I say?" As it turned out, I needn't have wasted time worrying about what to say. No one speaks to the Queen until spoken to, and then one discusses only those subjects introduced by Her Majesty. I didn't know this, however, until after I had already decided what I would talk to Her Majesty about. Since John and I were sailing to England on the *Queen Elizabeth II*, the ocean liner named after the Queen, I thought I could mention that fact, adding that the Captain of the QEII, Commodore William Eldon Warwick, was also the skipper of the *Queen Mary* when my daugh-



Photograph by Julian Cottrell

*Ready to meet the Queen, Mrs. Mitchell poses in London's Hyde Park.*

ter Marty and I were passengers on it. Marty came down with mumps during the crossing and Captain Warwick put us both in quarantine.

I decided I could also tell Her Majesty about the time I met her husband, Prince Philip, in New York. That happened several years ago when he was guest of honor at the Pilgrims' Dinner. After the dinner, Governor Nelson Rockefeller and his wife Happy, Britain's Ambassador to the U.S. John Freeman and his wife Katharine, and I went up to the Prince's hotel suite. He was absolutely charming and fascinating. We were with him for more than an hour, talking mostly about a TV show he had taped earlier that day. Incidentally, there was no protocol that night about discussing only subjects Prince Philip introduced.

In London members of the Royal Family move around without obvious security precautions, but that night in New York, the Prince's hotel was heavily

(continued)

guarded. In fact, the hotel looked the way a hotel looks when the President of the United States is around.

Another thing I remembered about the evening is that I had bought a new dress just for the dinner. When I got there I was seated right next to a woman with the very same dress!

Luckily, this didn't happen at the Buckingham Palace party. My dress was chosen specifically for the Queen's party, but I did wear it first to Tricia Nixon's wedding in the White House Rose Garden. That's because at the last minute I decided that another outfit I'd had designed was too dark for a garden wedding ceremony.

The dress I wore to meet the Queen has a pale apricot Ban-Lon jersey bodice and a white silk organza skirt, with what the designer calls a "cuff" on the bottom (I call it a flounce). Around the top of the cuff and running from the waist to the cuff are bands of French ribbon in apricot, yellow and green. The dress was designed by Ellen Davidson, who is with Jo Ellen Couture—and not the designer named by a newspaper in a story at the time of Tricia's wedding. Neither is the purse I carried "plastic," as the same newspaper claimed. It is a silk purse with a gold chain. I had it dyed yellow to match the French ribbon.

My wide-brimmed apricot organdy hat was copied from one I had in my closet. I wore white silk shoes—high-heeled, sling back, naturally. I always wear shoes the same color as the bottom of my dress, for continuity of line. My only jewelry was a flower-shaped

pin of topaz and brilliants and matching earrings. And I carried an umbrella of yellow organza. Later a friend told me that she saw only three umbrellas that day at Buckingham Palace—mine, the Duchess of Gloucester's, and the Queen's.

Apparently Queen Elizabeth puts her umbrella to a very special use. As she walked along the garden paths, stopping occasionally for a prearranged chat with a guest, it was noted that when she gently swings her umbrella behind her back an aide immediately moves her on to the next guest. The swinging umbrella seemed to be the Queen's "rescue me" signal.

#### Doing my homework

When I go anywhere—to a White House state dinner, an Embassy luncheon or Buckingham Palace—I do my homework. I find out in advance what can be expected to happen and what part, if any, I am expected to play. So I started early to research "Meeting the Queen." It's a neglected subject. Complete information can't be found.

A friend volunteered to go to the library to see how other women had faced up to it. She spent hours checking biographies of women known to have been presented to the Queen. All she found was one woman's account of her Court presentation in 1911, in which she said she made her own train, "three yards of cream net sprinkled generously with pink rose petals, each attached by a diamond dewdrop." She also found Eleanor Roosevelt's report on being a house-guest at Buckingham Palace. Both situations were different from mine.



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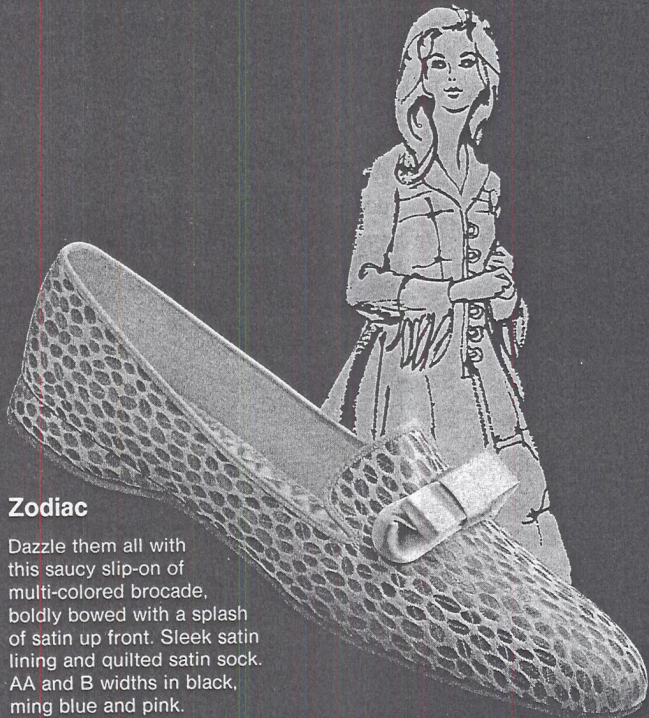
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The State Department was only a little more helpful. They advised: "The rules for meeting the Queen are fairly basic and simple. There is a reception line, as there is at most occasions, only this one is in reverse: the guests line up and the Queen moves along. The Queen always starts the conversation, and the first time you answer her you call her 'Your Majesty.' After that you address her as 'Ma'am.' Remember the London weather is noted for its fickleness, so have a wardrobe that's fairly versatile." (I had planned a "back-up" dress and almost had to wear it, not because of the weather but because the hotel did such a horrible job of pressing my apricot and white dress. My stand-by was made by Washington couturier Philip Robertson from orange and yel-

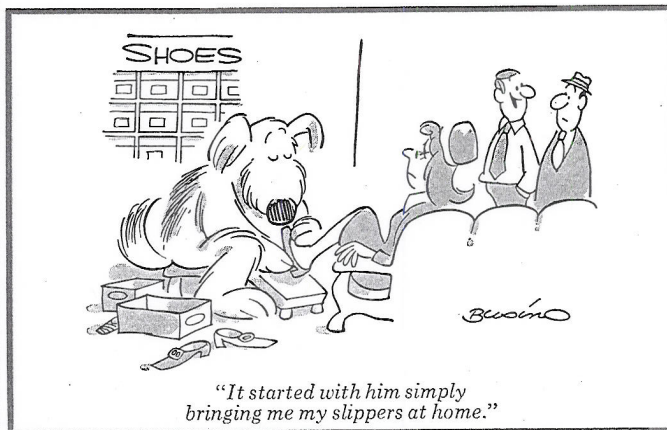
low and hot pink, noncrushable, non-wrinkle material sent to me by a friend in Japan.)

I wondered if I was expected to curtsy to the Queen.

The American Embassy in London, I was informed, would tell me what to do about curtsying. But I'd already made up my mind. A curtsy is optional for Americans; each woman has to decide for herself whether she will or won't. Mrs. Warren Burger, who with her husband, the Chief Justice, was presented to the Queen at the same time John and I were, chose to curtsy. I did not, because I feel that an American citizen should not bow to foreign monarchs.

I left the State Department briefing with a lot of questions still unanswered.

(continued on page 88)



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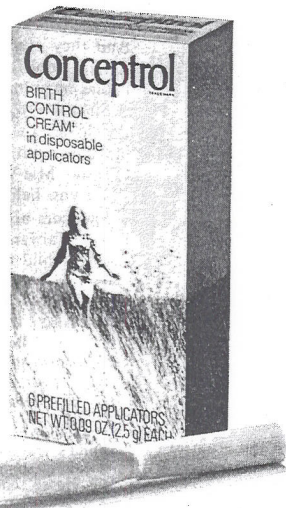
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## I WENT TO LONDON continued from page 84

These questions had to wait until we arrived in London. Two days before the party, some were answered by the Chief of Protocol at the American Embassy, the only person I talked to before the garden party who'd actually been to one himself.

"The Palace prefers that you have both gloves on when meeting the Queen," I was told by the Chief of Protocol, who got his information straight from the Palace protocol office. "However, if you have taken off your gloves to eat or drink, do not try to put them back on." The bad thing, according to the Palace, is to be fumbling with your gloves while being introduced to the Queen.

Various members of the Royal Household accompany the Queen to the garden party. Since it wasn't known exactly who would be at our party, we were told how to address all members of the royal family. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother is addressed as "Your Majesty"; Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Princess Anne and Princess Margaret are "Your Royal Highness"; Lord Snowdon should be called "Sir." As it turned out, Prince Philip, the Queen's nephew Prince William of Gloucester, his wife the Duchess of Gloucester, the Queen's cousin Princess Alexandra (call them all "Your Royal Highness") and her husband Lord Ogilvy (call him "Sir") attended our party. The Queen Mother, Princess Margaret, Lord Snowdon and other members of the Royal Household were at other garden parties given the same day in honor of visiting lawyers attending the ABA meetings.

The Queen's garden parties were started by Queen Victoria when she found she had many relatives and friends she couldn't manage to meet on a one-to-one basis. Today, the parties are no longer merely gatherings of bluebloods. Among the 3,000 to 4,000 guests one finds representatives of foreign governments (each ambassador submits lists of people he'd like invited), as well as distinguished members of the Commonwealth from all walks of life. The Queen sometimes stays at the party for only 45 minutes; at other times she's there for the two hours the party usually lasts. In any case, no one leaves until the Queen does.

Our invitation to the garden party was hand-delivered to our London hotel suite. It was the epitome of efficiency and know-how. The one envelope contained eight separate items—a treasure trove of information. The eight enclosures were:

1. The invitation itself, which I was surprised to see did not come from the Queen, although it bore her gold crest. It was sent by the Lord Chamberlain "at the command of The Queen"; and it wasn't to a garden party, but to an "Afternoon Party in the Garden of Buckingham Palace." In the lower left-hand corner it was noted: "Morning Dress or Uniform or Lounge Suit." The invitation appeared to give the men a choice of attire, but we were told that officials from other governments, such as my husband, were "expected" to be in morning dress—striped trousers, morning coat, and gray top hat. One man complained that he didn't see why he had to have the "d-- top hat" since he couldn't wear it. No man keeps his head covered in the presence of the Queen, so the hats are in hand more often than on head. Later John said, "I was there with my hat and my heart in hand; the hat for the Queen, my heart for my poor wife who had to stand so long her feet were hurting."

2. & 3. Two yellow "personal" cards—one for John and one for me. These cards are surrendered at the entrance and bear the warning that they "cannot be replaced."

### Most coveted cards

4. & 5. Red cards, again one for John and one for me. These, the most coveted cards, go to only 35 to 50 of the thousands who attend each party. The red cards get you into the Royal Tea Tent Enclosure (better known as the Royal Tent), where the Queen comes for her own tea and cakes, and where she talks at greater lengths to her guests. More than 500 Americans were at Buckingham Palace the day we were there, but the only ones I saw in the Royal Tent were Chief Justice and Mrs. Burger, Justice and Mrs. Byron White, and former Justice and Mrs. Tom Clark.

6. A sticker with a large yellow X for the car windshield. On the back was such important information as: "Grande Entrance Approach and Setting Down—approach by Constitution Hill, Marlborough Gate or Bucking-

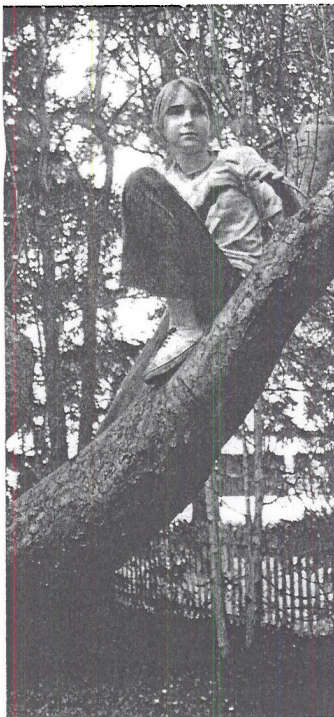
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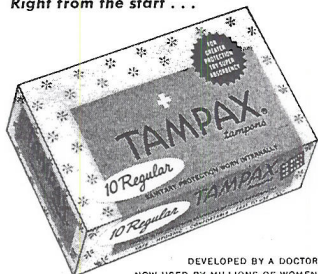
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**THE EARRING** *continued*

up £25, much to the disappointment of the pawnbroker. The young man who pawned it, the broker said, was about seventeen or eighteen and was dressed like a messenger.

The earring was a bit bent, but otherwise intact. The odd thing was that when we got it home and compared it with Peter's earring they were not an exact match. There were slight differences in the turning of the silver. Whether it was, in fact, the earring that Pietro the Second carried off to war, or whether it was another one made by the same bright Neapolitan silversmith to sell the same story over again, we never knew. The pearl was a good one and the silver was old. Lucille wore them both at her wedding.

Not that she came to that easily. Having let myself in for the dreary job of go-between, I carried on, but before the end I began to feel like a mediator in a labor dispute.

Of course Bob Loveridge combined the handsome apologies he made to Peter with a burning determination to smoke out the real thief. From time to time he could be seen staring broodingly at poor Violet's bent back when she came into the room. Nora Mayhew seemed the least unlikely suspect, since it was she who made the most fuss and insisted on a superficial search. We knew she had been in antiques, and Bob dug up the fact that she had once been heavily fined in Italy for attempting to smuggle an Old Master out of the country without a permit. Humphrey French's association with her was cleared up when we found that Mrs. Mayhew had been at school in Switzerland with French's mother, and that they frequently still skied together. This sinister revelation did not help us at all. Nor did the discovery that Humphrey French was heavily in debt as his family background made him able to afford old-fashioned habits.

Eventually we gave it up, but the problem still rankled. One of Bob's favorite questions was why the person who sent it to the pawnbroker had not asked much more than £25 for it, since, if it was someone in the room, or even Violet the maid, they must all have heard Nora Mayhew's estimate of the earring's value. It didn't appear to occur to him that perhaps the thief urgently wanted some fairly small sum of money for a limited period and might have pawned the jewel, intending later to redeem it and return it. I've often wondered how Robert would take such a suggestion.

Anyway, my friend in Paris got the rent for the studio on time. **END**

**COMMUNICATION**  
By Elaine V. Emans

*The dog leans into the hand  
That cups its head,  
The cat, caressed, returns  
A golden thread  
Of purring. The pony, petted,  
Is gentler for it.*

*The child whose hair is patted  
Learns to adore it,  
While you and I, on occasion,  
In passing by  
Each other, by finger-touch  
Speak and reply.*

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**I WENT TO LONDON**  
*continued from page 88*

ham Gate and thence as directed by the Police to The Mall to enter by the South Centre Gate and set down in the Forecourt of Buckingham Palace. Parking—Draw off by the North Centre Gate; then, as directed by the Police, owner-driven cars to Constitution Hill and The Mall, chauffeur-driven cars to Horse Guards Parade." This was followed by "Taking Up" (or going home) instructions.

7. A small card informing the invitee: "No acknowledgement of this invitation is required unless the recipient is unable to attend, when the small personal card should be returned to the Lord Chamberlain's office, St. James' Palace, London S.W.1. The Lord Chamberlain wishes it to be known that it will not be possible to arrange for the transfer of invitations either from one Garden Party to another or between individuals of a family."

8. A map, showing boulevards leading to the Palace, the Palace Garden and three entrances. On the back of the map was more information: All entrances "will be open from 3:15 P.M." (the party was from 4 to 6 P.M.). Constitution Hill or Grosvenor Place gates were "the most convenient for those arriving or leaving by public transportation: Victoria Underground and British Rail stations are within a short walking distance of the Grosvenor Place Gate, and Hyde Park Corner Underground Station is very near the Constitution Hill Gate." (I couldn't help wonder what an American who received an invitation to the White House would think if given instructions how to arrive by D.C. Transit.) "There are numerous bus routes. . . . Please see over for map." And, "CAMERAS ARE NOT PERMITTED." (The capital letters are theirs, not mine.) Only a limited number of news photographers are allowed at the Queen's garden party and they're stationed on the Palace roof, forcing them to get all their shots with long-range lenses. That's why I don't have a picture of myself meeting the Queen.

**Throgs outside gate**

Having been warned that we must be in the garden before four o'clock, "when the Queen arrives," we left our hotel at 3:30 P.M. and proceeded to the Grande Entrance, as our yellow X car sticker said we should. Hundreds of people thronged outside the gate waiting to see who was going to the party.

After we were "set down" in the Forecourt, we walked through the Inner Court into the Palace and down a long corridor to the terrace. Ahead of us and to the sides was the magnificent Buckingham Palace garden, with its trees, flowers, ponds and green turf so thick your high heels don't sink into it. Hundreds of people were milling around, but the garden is so large it didn't look crowded.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip came out a few minutes after four. They looked impressive and very royal as they stood at the top of the terrace steps while the band played "God Save the Queen." The Queen was wearing a white chiffon dress, printed with a brown geometrical design and belted with brown grosgrain, a white straw hat with a brown *(continued)*

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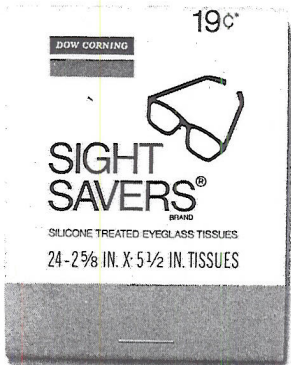
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(illustration 2/3 actual size)

I WENT TO LONDON *continued*

band, and low-heeled white mesh shoes. She carried a white alligator bag and white umbrella, had on white gloves that reached half-way to the elbow, and wore a large diamond and pearl pin with another diamond hanging from it, and pearl and diamond earrings.

The garden party is a fascinating performance. It seems so casual, but it isn't; everything has been meticulously arranged. For instance, junior ushers (all friends of the Royal Family, I was told) unobtrusively form passageways into the crowd for the Queen and members of the Royal Household to walk through. A few guests who've been selected in advance stand at designated spots and the Queen stops to chat with them for a minute or two. She has been thoroughly briefed about everyone she's to meet. For instance, when she stopped to talk to Leon Jaworski, the new President of the American Bar Association, and his wife, Janet, she discussed quarter horses. Mr. Jaworski, a Houston lawyer and friend of Lyndon B. Johnson, raises quarter horses on his ranch.

### Gold-crowned entranceway

While the Queen was strolling down the passageways, John and I mingled with the other guests. I introduced myself to several, the way I would at a party in America—all the while making our way to the Royal Tent.

To the right, looking at the garden from the terrace, were three tents—a small one for the band (a second band was stationed on the other side of the garden), a long one called the Diplomatic Tent, and another, with a little gold-crowned entranceway, which was the Royal Tea Tent Enclosure. Actually, the Diplomatic and Royal Tents aren't tents at all; they are permanent white trellises covered with green and white canvas. Without the proper tickets guests can come only within 20 or 30 feet of these tents. They have to take their tea and cakes from tables set up in a tremendously long tent on the opposite side of the garden.

I don't know the difference between being in the Royal Tent and the Diplomatic Tent, but a diplomat told me, "I've never been in the Royal Tent, but I understand the only difference is that you will get strawberries and we won't." We *did* get strawberries, and I suspect a few other extras.

The Royal Tent was perfectly beautiful. It was open all around the sides and had two tiny Queen Anne mahogany chairs at each of the small, damask-covered tables.

On the tea table were large gold urns with gorgeous arrangements of multicolored flowers, and silver bowls and trays filled with strawberries and cream, cookies and cakes and tiny tea sandwiches.

The popular drink wasn't tea, but iced coffee, all whipped up with cream and other things. It was perfectly delicious. There was orange squash, too, which the British love.

Queen Elizabeth had been out in the garden for more than an hour when she came into the tent and headed for one end of the tea table with a lady-in-waiting. The two stood there alone while the Queen drank two cups of tea and ate something. I thought, "She looks just the way I feel after standing in a receiving line and

## F

### For the woman who wants more children.

Later.



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\*TRADEMARK

shaking hundreds of hands. She wants to be alone a few minutes and relax."

The Lord Chamberlain, whom John has known for a long time—his name is Lord Cobbold and he was with the Bank of England—came over to Justice and Mrs. Burger and us and said, "The Queen wishes to speak to you as soon as she has finished her tea."

In a way, meeting the Queen was like meeting anyone else. She said, "How do you do," and I answered, "How do you do." I was amazed at how small and dainty she is. Her photographs certainly don't give a true picture of her. (I was amused a few days later when several British women told me the same thing about my pictures, when I met them at a luncheon given by Mrs. Walter Annenberg, our Ambassador's wife, at the U.S. Embassy in London.) The Queen reminded me of a pretty china doll. I was surprised to see that her brown hair, curling out from under her hat, had a slight reddish cast. I'd been told that her eyes were blue; I would describe them as more blue/green/gray. The color is different from any I've seen, but beautiful.

As soon as she started talking to us, we could tell how absolutely complete her briefing had been. She mentioned to Justice Burger and John how interested she'd been in a picture of the two of them with a group of bewigged British judges that had run in the papers the day before. She also talked about the American Bar Association meetings and knew not only how many members had been invited to the garden party (500), but also how many were in London (6,000.) She asked questions about the judicial system in the United States and said she had appointed more judges than any other British monarch in history.

### Talked for nine minutes

Prince Philip, wearing a lounge suit, walked over. He was glad to see us again and joined the conversation. Besides the ABA, lawyers and judges, the only thing we discussed was the weather, which was warm and clear. The Queen mentioned that it was St. Swithen's Day (which is a little like our Groundhog Day—fair weather on St. Swithen's means fair weather for 40 days to come), and how pleased she was that the weather was good.

We talked to the Queen for nine minutes, which was a record for a day when her conversations had been running one to four minutes, and she was in command of every subject discussed.

Later John teasingly said it was too bad I didn't get to tell the Queen how I'd been sitting on pins and needles for fear that she'd cancel my invitation after seeing what the press had written about my meeting her. (I'd told the press that since the Queen had to speak first I'd probably have to be gagged.)

But even if I didn't get to tell her any of the things I thought I would, meeting the Queen was marvelous; I wish every American could have shared the experience. We left feeling that the Queen was just what the Embassy Protocol Chief had said she'd be: "very warm and very cozy."

John put it another way when he said, "She was absolutely charming and simply magnificent. One could really tell that she is well qualified and suited to be the monarch of the British Empire."

END