

Hazards for the Political Husband

John Heckler, husband of a Republican Congresswoman from Massachusetts, knows all about the hazards of marriage to a politician. Although he thoroughly enjoys his role as a political spouse, he has had to curb his outspokenness. Because his wife Margaret, 43, is constantly seen in the company of advisers and colleagues—most of them male—he has had to endure innuendoes about the state of his marriage. Then there are the parties. "If we had a party where we invited all members of Congress," says Heckler, an investment executive, "they would all talk shop and I would end up with 10 or 12 wives who really weren't interested in talking about finance. If we invited a group of my clients, they would all gravitate toward Margaret to find out what she thinks Congress will do; again I would end up with the wives."

In families where the politician is the wife, the husband's role is usually closer to that of the husband in any two-career family than to that of the stereotypical political wife. But generalizations about political husbands are risky—there are so few of them. Of 535 members of Congress, only 16 are women; all are in the House, and only ten are married. There are no women Governors, although Connecticut Congresswoman Ella Grasso, 55, hopes to change that in November.

Political husbands are inevitably

subjected to ribbing. If there is a major psychological hazard in being one, it stems from the assumption that the role must be demeaning. "I'm not neglected; I'm not in the background. I do my own thing," insists Manhattan Stockbroker and onetime Novelist Martin Abzug, whose wife of 30 years, Bella, 54, is one of the most outspoken women in Congress. Conrad Chisholm, husband of New York Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, 49, echoes Abzug. "I am a man whose ego is intact," he says. Like most political husbands, he is quick to say how proud he is of his wife. "Not everyone is that bright, including some of the men who ridicule me."

The fact that most men do have their own careers undoubtedly reduces the strains that are so evident in political marriages in which the husband is the officeholder and the wife has little or no mooring for her ego. Even so, being a congressional husband can involve considerable sacrifice. Like other lawyers in his position, Hicks Griffiths, whose wife Martha is retiring this year after 20 years as a Democratic Congresswoman from Michigan, will not handle cases involving federal agencies. When Patricia Schroeder, 34, was elected to

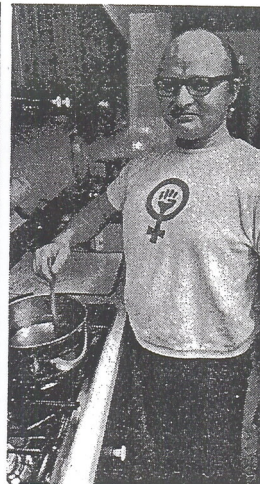
Congress from Colorado in 1972, her husband James had to settle for a 50% reduction in his income to join a Washington law firm as a limited partner. Says Tony Catania, whose wife Susan is a state representative in Illinois: "I always thought I would marry the barefoot pregnant wife—I am an Italian, after all. But that's not how it turned out." Catania quickly adds: "I have no real complaints."

In some cases, political husbands have enjoyed unforeseen boons from their wives' careers. When Patsy Mink, 46, was elected to Congress from Hawaii in 1964, her husband John quit his job as a hydrologist with the Honolulu Board of Water Supply, won a fellowship to Johns Hopkins University and later joined a Washington-based scientific consulting firm that regularly sends him to the Pacific basin.

The logistics are difficult for most Congresswomen's families. Asked how his family copes with two homes, three children and four dogs, John Heckler says: "Her name is Rachel." The airlines are almost as crucial as a good housekeeper. "We should own 50% of Northwest Airlines," says Hicks Griffiths, whose wife commutes to Michigan for long weekends. First-Term Congresswoman Yvonne Burke, 41, spends so much time commuting to Los Angeles, where her husband William is a health-care consultant, that daughter Autumn had logged 30,000 miles by the time she was four months old.



THE HECKLERS
THE ABZUGS



TONY CATANIA
THE GRASSOS



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