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an exclusive interview

MEET THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER, SUSAN

by Isabelle Shelton



"I'm still the same old Susan," says the seventeen-year-old young woman in jeans, who has brought a new image to the "stuffy" White House. "I don't expect to change"

One day last month a silver blue car drew up in front of a red brick split-level house in Alexandria, Virginia, not far from the nation's capital. The two young men in the front seat had short-cropped hair and each wore an identical irregularly shaped pin in his left lapel.

The passenger in the back seat was a tall, lissome, blue-jeaned teen-ager with long blond hair and blue eyes behind blue-tinted contact lenses. She was lugging a stack of schoolbooks under her arm.

She was Susan Ford, seventeen-year-old daughter of the President of the United States, and she was returning from the White House to her old neighborhood to baby-sit with Peter and Louise Abbruzzese's children.

Her driver and his seat-mate were, of course, Secret Service agents, part of a team detailed to guard her twenty-four hours a day.

Susan had sat with the Abbruzzese children—Anne, six, and Matthew, two—countless times before. This time she also was looking forward to getting acquainted with their week-old baby sister, Katherine Elizabeth, who was

snoozing peacefully in an old-fashioned white wicker bassinet belonging to the Fords. Gerald Ford and all four of his children had slept there.

Until Susan's family moved to the White House in mid-August, they had lived in the house of reddish brick and white siding just across Crown View Drive from the Abbruzzeses. It was the only home Susan had ever known. These days she misses it.

She frequently goes back to the old neighborhood to visit friends, and "sometimes I stop by the house and go in and look around," she says a bit wistfully. "It brings back a lot of memories."

But there was no time for nostalgia the day she went back to baby-sit. Her two young charges had been sitting on the front steps waiting for their friend Susan, and as soon as her car pulled up they came racing down the walk, emitting squeals of joy. Soon they were enveloping her with hugs and kisses.

"Matthew is so cute; I love him so—and Anne too," Susan says. "I love children, maybe because I never had a baby sister. I want to have six of my own some day. I know I'll spoil them."

Mrs. Abbruzzese pays Susan \$1 an hour and feels she's getting a bargain because, she says, "Susan is a super baby-sitter. I could have stopped on

the way home from the hospital and turned the baby over to her, I have such faith in Susan."

The Abbruzzeses are the only family Susan sits for nowadays, because she is pretty busy as a high school senior this year.

But continuing to baby-sit is one way the President's daughter intends to assert her claim that she's not any different now, just because her father is President and she lives in the White House. "I'm the same old Susan and I don't expect to change."

Wearing blue jeans in the White House is another way she intends to show she's her own self. "When Daddy first became Vice President, Mother and Nancy Howe [Mrs. Ford's personal secretary] said the blue jeans would have to go for all us kids. But we talked them out of it. We told them, 'That's not fair; we're just kids.'"

Susan and her brother Steve, eighteen, surprised reporters by appearing in blue jeans for photographs the day the family moved to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

"What else would you wear on moving day?" Susan asks. "Anything else would be silly and artificial."

The President's daughter is not unaware (*continued on next page*)

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