

Judy the Invincible

Judy LaMarsh was born in Chatham, Ontario, in 1924 and grew up in Niagara Falls. Her family was very respectable, and so, in her early years, was she.

"I didn't date very much in high school. . . . I always had a date for a dance or something but they weren't the football heroes or anything else. I'm sure I was about the third or fourth person they'd asked. And that distressed me when I was in high school. My mother said, 'You're the kind of person who'll be more popular when you're older.'"

After high school came a major disappointment: "I always wanted to be a lawyer. I don't think my father ever accepted that I was going to be a lawyer until I left college and went to Osgoode. When I graduated from high school my dad said,



Mme. Madeleine Parent, a convent-bred girl from middle-class Quebec, became the determined union organizer of French-Canadian industrial workers and the chosen enemy of Premier Maurice Duplessis, who had her indicted for seditious conspiracy and who persuaded many citizens that she was a Russian communist who had been landed from a submarine. She was not, of course. She and her husband, Kent Rowley, were founders of the all-Canadian Textile and Chemical Union.



'No I can't do that. I don't have the money and your brother is coming along.' He came first. It was the biggest shock of my life to be told I couldn't go to university."

After a year at teachers' college, she joined the army. "The army was good to me. I was a girl from a parochial family living with one class of people all my life—I sure got to learn all sorts of things."

The army sent her to the University of Toronto. After graduation she attended Osgoode Hall law school. Her social life repeated the pattern of high school days; she graduated as president of her class. "I wasn't experimental about sex. God, I think I was a virgin until I was about twenty-seven! And that's after I was in the army."

She practiced law with her father for some seven years and became an active member of the Liberal Party. Her father died in 1957, and her mother in 1960; and that year she ran for the House of Commons and won by five thousand votes. She went to Ottawa in a cloud of achievement and was soon put in her place.

"No one on the Liberal side gave less of a damn whether I was there or not. I sat there for a month and I started to talk. They were a little surprised. In this men's club they thought women were there on sufferance, that it was a freak election that I got there and I ought to be modestly pleased with that and not try to contribute."

She contributed anyway. When the Liberals came to power in 1963, she was appointed minister of health and welfare—where she steered the Canada Pension Plan into law—and in 1965, secretary of state. The press soon cut her up to fit