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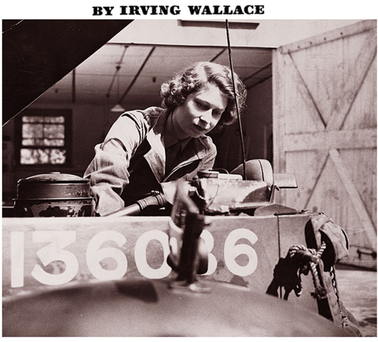
PRINCESS ELIZABETH
The War Years

BY IRVING WALLACE



During the war, Elizabeth wanted to join one of the women's services. Her father took it up with the Minister of Labor, and it was decided that Elizabeth must not enlist in anything, that her training for the throne was of first importance. But Elizabeth felt that she would be a slacker and carry about an inferiority complex for life. So, for a year, relentlessly, she persisted. Just before her nineteenth birthday, her father gave in. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service, as an auto mechanic and driver, and though she slept at the castle, she toiled amid oil, valves and engines from ten to five every day. One of her major joys was to get dirt under her nails and grease stains on her hands, and display these signs of labor to her friends.

At graduation, a new crisis was provoked. Every ATS student, for her final exam, was required to drive a truck from the camp to busy London. The king and queen went into a hurried conference with Mr. Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, about this. It was agreed that Elizabeth must not take this exam, since she might be involved in an accident.

Qualifies as Truck Driver

When the trio came out to announce their decision, they found a grinning Elizabeth guiding a lumbering camouflaged truck into the palace gates. She had made the complete journey, from Camberley to London, through the thickest traffic and twice around Piccadilly Circus, on her own, because she wanted to attend a party at the palace—and hear the royal decision on her final exam.

Occasionally, more daringly, Elizbeth's individuality crops up in official functions. In her first radio broadcast, on B.B.C.'s Children's Hour, she was to address British youngsters who had been evacuated to the United States and Canada.

In a voice very much like her mother's, pretending to read from a script she had already memorized, Elizabeth went through her paces while her sister Margaret stood at a distance behind her, and the king and queen watched from an adjacent room. As she finished her last words, Elizabeth suddenly stopped, said extemporaneously, "My sister is by my side, and we are both going to say good night to you—come on, Margaret!" Margaret appeared, murmured good night, and then Elizabeth returned to the microphone and added, "Good night, and good luck to you all!" Since royalty never extemporizes on official occasions, this interjection shook her parents, but created a happy sensation throughout the Empire.

On another occasion, in Belfast, Elizabeth was required to deliver a dry speech written for her by the palace ghosts. In it she was to discuss the king's R.A.F. background, and when she reached the passage in which she was to refer to him as "His Majesty the King" she boldly skipped it, referred to him instead as "my father," and the audience, until then bored stiff, sat up and tore the house apart.

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