

Personal Memoirs of the Vienna Town Council

MR: My husband's the Mayor. That was another interesting thing. 'What is this? We've got an elected official and his wife is an agitator.' But one night, when Charlie supported one side and I stood up as a citizen and supported the other side—turned out that I was right, but we never went back to that. They couldn't figure it out. I said, 'Look...' Oh, I know, when Charlie got elected Mayor, this was really funny—no, it was when he got elected to the Council for the first time. It was tradition, on Town Council meeting nights, that the wives would get together and play bridge. So, the morning after Charlie—and he really won big that year for Council, back in '62. A little bigger than you were supposed to, someone said afterwards. 'You almost got more votes than the Mayor did. Don't you know that's not right?' He said, 'No, I didn't, really.'

Anyway, she was a lovely lady. She called me up and she said, 'Oh, Maud, now you can join our—you must join our bridge group.' And I said, 'Uh, when does the bridge group meet?' She said, 'On Council meeting nights, of course!' I said, 'That's on Council meeting...!' She said, 'Boy, you can't go to Council meetings anymore. Your husband is now on the Council.' So that's when I said, 'Well, I really don't play bridge.' Which, you know, I played some in college days and that was it. Charlie didn't play bridge. 'Oh don't worry, we can teach you. No problem.' So, when Charlie came home that evening, he kept looking at me. He said, 'What went wrong today? You don't look happy.' I said, 'Oh, I got the word from the Mayor's wife. I can't go to Council meetings anymore.' He said, 'What are you talking about? You're not disenfranchised.' My husband was a wonderful guy. He was like my father. I always say: a woman is so blessed if she's got a father who believes that women can do stuff. And then a husband. That makes all the difference in the world.

So, I kept on going to Council meetings. I never asked, it was truth, I never asked Charlie if I was going to vote on something. I might make comments on it, but I said, 'I sit there with the rest of the audience, I don't know how he's going to vote.' 'Well, we believe you, but...' But the night that we diverged, Council members came up to me after the meeting. They said, 'Now we believe you.'

But the attitude! People can't believe this now. He was a great member of the Lion's Club and he was, well, I'll call him Jerry. That was not his name. Jerry was Jerry. You know, you just took him warts and all, the way people took me. It was I think a zoning thing. I guess I gathered many signatures on a petition. Anyway, I stood up before the Town Council and spoke my piece. When the meeting was over, this guy was there. He came back where I was sitting. He said, 'Maud, if I was your husband, I'd take you home tonight and beat you!' I just thought it was hilarious! I just burst out laughing. He was very serious. So, on the way home, I burst. Charlie said, 'What's so funny?' I told him what this guy had said. He said, 'You've got to be kidding!' And I said, 'No.' He could not imagine a woman getting up and speaking in public like that and when her husband is sitting right over there. It was really funny.