



LEE TROUTNER

FOREVER AFTER

Surviving secrecy and scandal, their love withstood the test of time.
Now Marvin and Jeanne Mandel face the test of a lifetime.

BY KAREN HOSLER, PAGE 8

FOREVER

NUMBER

As their storied romance faces its most difficult chapter, Marvin and Jeanne Mandel hold tight to their memories — and each other.

By KAREN HOSLER
SUN STAFF

Windows line the back of Jeanne Mandel's sprawling brick home on a hill outside Annapolis, affording soothing views of Mill Creek below. But Jeanne trains her gaze on her husband as he moves around the sunroom, waiting for him to look back with those dark, soulful eyes that can see into her heart.

Even after all these years, Marvin Mandel can hardly keep his eyes off his wife — her shoulder-length blond hair, her glowing skin, her smile. Their deep emotional bond — forged in secret and tested in the glare of public scrutiny — is palpable. He caresses her cheek, playfully touches the tip of her nose and gives her a kiss. "How you doin', babe?"

She can't answer him, except with her eyes.

It has been nearly four decades since their eyes first met: He was an older man with power and position; she was a younger woman with beauty and ambition. Both were already married. The attraction was instant, overwhelming — and impossible to indulge without hurting almost everyone they cared about.

For more than 10 years, they romanced in secret. When he finally declared her the woman he loved, he was the governor of Maryland, living with his wife in Annapolis. Barbara Mandel refused to leave the governor's mansion, holding it hostage for nearly six months. It was high drama.

Men chortled at this improbable Romeo, so utterly swept away that he risked everything — including his political future — for a beauty 17 years younger. Women cackled at this scarlet woman, her bold bid to lay claim to someone else's man, to become his second First Lady. Buzz about Marvin's prospects as a national political figure was replaced with snickers at his role in a national soap opera.

Theirs was a story of epic proportions. He would become one of Maryland's most accomplished leaders, yet he would go to jail for taking favors from friends who got rich along the way. And she would be blamed for his downfall. Hadn't the public scandal over their relationship simply pointed the way for those who were out to get him?

When his power was gone — when he went from putting his signature on state laws to sorting laundry in a federal prison — gossips expected the love of his life to pack her bags, too, and leave him.

But the busybodies were wrong about almost everything. The romance was real and deep. She stuck by him through the worst humiliations, giving him a reason to go on. And now he is doing the same for her, coping as best he can with a twist of fate that leaves him, at 80, with the care of his incapacitated, 63-year-old wife.

Five years of assault by the neurological killer ALS, better known as Lou Gehrig's disease, have robbed Jeanne's ability to control all but some facial muscles. She can't talk; she can't eat or breathe on her own. Her alert mind is held captive inside a once sleek and vigorously active body. She can communicate only through the intellect, spirit and emotion that shine through her eyes.

Together at last: After their wedding in 1974, Marvin and Jeanne Mandel are greeted by family and friends, including Paul and John Michael Dorsey and Gary Mandel, at right, Helen Dorsey, left, and Mandel's press secretary Frank DeFilippo, far left.

LEE TROUTNER

On the cover: The Mandels share their joy at the governor's second inauguration in 1975.



Marvin cares for her with doting tenderness. He reads her the morning headlines. He shops for fresh vegetables to make juice she can ingest through a tube. He sits with her and watches television, usually resisting entreaties for a night out with friends. He takes her on car rides to bucolic spots on the Eastern Shore. He forges into Nordstrom with Jeanne in her oxygen-equipped wheelchair to buy her stylish new shoes.

Marvin is able to summon the necessary energy because he has aged well. A few extra pounds show at his waist, and deep circles underscore those expressive eyes. But he's instantly recognizable — even without the trademark pipe he gave up 11 years ago. He's still practicing law and talking politics. The Mandel aura — part charisma, part power — remains. Friends worry about the strain of his caregiver duties, but he is holding fast to Jeanne.

The two risked everything to be together, and some say they have had to pay for their impudence. Those close to Marvin's first wife note the irony that Barbara is healthy and thriving. But the former governor has no regrets. Life has been wonderful — *is* wonderful, he says — because he and Jeanne have what matters most: each other.

Memories of their life together comfort him. He sees a timeless love story, one he is willing to share as a tribute to his wife. He hopes it will be something he can read to her and prompt that small expression he recognizes as her smile, the sign that he's still pleasing her.

He lives for that smile. He gets a goofy look on his face when he's asked to remember when he saw it for the first time.

The old stone walls of the 200-year-old Maryland Inn resonated with the rowdy boisterousness of a familiar ritual. It was January 1963, and a new General Assembly had convened, launching a social season in Annapolis that represented a reunion of veterans, an orientation in life away from home for newcomers.

Marvin, a 42-year-old Baltimore delegate beginning his third term, was having a drink in the cavernous basement bar and restaurant of the old hotel. With him were two of his closest friends, Thomas Hunter Lowe and James P. Mause. Marvin and Lowe chaired the two most powerful committees in the House in those days: Ways and Means and Judiciary. Mause was the chief clerk of the House.

Suddenly, in walked Jeanne Dorsey, 25 and a striking 5-foot-7 blond, already something of a sensation on the Annapolis scene. Her husband, Walter, had served one term as a state senator from St. Mary's County. Though he was no longer in office, Jeanne and her older sister, Ginny, had driven up from Leonardtown for the evening to take part in the fun.

Mause invited the women to join their table and performed the introductions that left both Marvin and Jeanne dumbstruck. "Something happened right away to both of us, really," Marvin recalls. He can still conjure up an image of the skirt and sweater Jeanne wore. "We fell in love immediately."

A straight-arrow, one-drink-a-night guy, Marvin often warned younger colleagues about the dangers of going astray in Annapolis. Most lawmakers stayed overnight during the week in those days rather than commute over country roads. But there were only a couple of hotels, and not much to do in the evening except drink. Lobbyists frequently financed the entertainment, sometimes supplying women as well as wine and song. Marvin often encouraged his wife to leave their two children in Baltimore with a baby sitter and stay with him in Annapolis, making it easier to avoid temptation.

So on the night he met Jeanne, Marvin's first instinct was to bolt.

"I got a strange feeling, so I just thought, 'I'm leaving.'" He walked down Main Street to the Little Tavern restaurant and picked up a bag of greasy burgers — three for a quarter. He was headed back to his room in the Maryland Inn when

someone shouted his name. It was Lowe — tall, handsome and fun-loving — driving Jeanne's station wagon up Main Street with Jeanne, Ginny and Mause in the car.

"We're driving them home," Lowe called out. "How about coming with us?"

Marvin considered the trip — at least two hours one way, mostly along dark, winding roads. "Are you coming back?" he asked. Assured that they were, Marvin summoned an adventurous spirit that was utterly out of character at that point. He got in the back seat with Jeanne.

The two spent much of the ride talking. She would later describe the attraction this way: "He was so kind, so considerate, the most unpretentious man. You could see it in his eyes. Marvin has the most expressive eyes of any man I've ever met."

When the party arrived at Jeanne's split-level home in Leonardtown about 1 a.m., she cooked eggs and bacon for everyone. Her husband wasn't home, and her two young sons were asleep. Her 4-year-old daughter, Helen, woke up and watched the party from a perch on the stairs.

Some time later, back in Annapolis, House Majority Leader Dale Hess was awakened by a call from the Maryland State Police. Some delegates had requested a ride to the capital from Leonardtown. Would the House leader authorize their transportation?

Hess, who roomed with Marvin at the Maryland Inn, was surprised to hear his straight-laced friend was in the group. He assumed it was just one of those liquor-fueled lapses common in the licentious atmosphere of Annapolis when the legislature was in session.

For any of his other colleagues, it might have been. For Marvin, this was no mere dalliance.

Within hours of arriving back in the capital, he called Jeanne on the pretext of letting her know her guests had made it home safely. But his real intent was to signal that he found something with her he didn't want to let go.

A siren and flashing lights. Damn! Another delay. Marvin was already late for dinner with Jeanne when a Prince George's County policeman pulled him over for speeding on Route 301.

"Aren't you Speaker of the House?" the cop asked when he saw Marvin's driver's license.

He was.

It was 1968, and Marvin was beginning his sixth year on the speaker's rostrum. He had gotten the job about a month after meeting Jeanne and was now the most powerful figure in the General Assembly.

Hess, his buddy and roommate during the session, knew Marvin would often sneak off to meet a woman and made a game of trying to catch him at it. Marvin had once persuaded Mause to sleep in Marvin's bed to throw him off his trail. But that gambit had only escalated the pranks. On this night, Hess had kept the House in session well after its scheduled adjournment just to foil Marvin's romantic plans.

The cop let Marvin go with a warning to drive safely. The incident itself was a warning: Sooner or later, Marvin's romance with Jeanne would be exposed.

For years they kept their secret by meeting at her house or at her sister's or at Democratic Party functions. They kept up the facade even through the birth of her fourth child, Paul, who arrived 20 months after their affair began. Paul's last name is Dorsey like Jeanne's three older children, but he is widely believed to be Marvin's son mostly because of the strong physical resemblance. (Marvin and Jeanne have chosen to let people believe what they will. The topic is rarely discussed even within the family.)

The strain of the secrecy and lies took a toll. Jeanne hoped to protect her children, but her marriage to Walter, which had been stormy for years, crumbled. The couple separated, reconciled, then separated again. Marvin, whose two children with Barbara were nearly grown, was trying to protect his political career. He sought and won a fifth term in the House in 1966. But not long after his speeding stop, Marvin decided he would leave the legislature in 1970 and reorganize his life to be with Jeanne. He helped Jeanne get a speedy Mexican divorce in 1969.

Spiro Agnew inadvertently spoiled their plans, getting himself elected as Richard Nixon's vice president. With no lieutenant governor in those days, Agnew's departure in January 1969 left the governor's mansion vacant. The General Assembly made the choice; Marvin was the obvious replacement.

He loved the job and was good at it. In November 1970, he won election in his own right. But in this heady new role, Marvin felt he couldn't acknowledge Jeanne. Neither could he give her up. His aides winked at each other on the days Marvin brought an overnight bag to the office and then disappeared in the afternoon.

One night in early December 1970, Hess was again awakened by a call from the state police. The governor had been in an accident; a car was being dispatched to pick Hess up in Fallston and take him to Marvin's bedside, where his closest confidants were being assembled.

Earlier that evening, a drunken driver had crossed the path of the state police car carrying Marvin back to Annapolis along Route 301 after an evening with Jeanne. The drunken driver was killed in the collision. Marvin, with four broken ribs and a blow to the head, blacked out and awoke in a daze. But he knew he had a secret to protect.

Hess found Marvin battered, but talkative. "Barbara was there and he said, 'Dale, you told me I shouldn't go to that political meeting in Prince George's County, and you were right.'"

Marvin's trusty legislative lieutenant understood: The governor "was setting up his alibi."

Soon, though, political leaders in Prince George's County who thought they should have known about such a meeting openly questioned the story. The controversy ignited a frenzy of gossip. But the close call didn't chasten the lovers.

Marvin kept making the trek to Leonardtown, and Jeanne met him at conferences elsewhere in the country. Sometimes they narrowly avoided running into someone they knew from Maryland. By now, Marvin's aides and police bodyguards would run interference, especially his press secretary, Frank DeFilippo, who today refers to him jocularly as the "beard."

So open was the secret among insiders that shortly before Christmas in 1971, Marvin took advantage of a business trip to San Francisco to do some holiday shopping. With DeFilippo and bodyguards in tow, the governor led his entourage into FAO Schwarz and loaded their arms with toys. Then he took the red-eye back to Baltimore, and headed down to St. Mary's County to deliver the gifts to 6-year-old Paul.

The front lawn of the Mandels' house on Mill Creek is completely torn up. Medical waste related to Jeanne's illness ruined the septic system, and on this Monday morning in June workmen are everywhere. Marvin and Paul confer about the project before Paul leaves for the Annapolis law office they share.

The two are partners at home now, too. Paul moved back into the house after his mother went on a ventilator in May 1998. He helps out with the chores and errands of this complicated life and shares the emotional burden with Marvin. "I just do whatever needs to be done," Paul says casually as though his contributions are minimal and come at no cost to himself.

Now 35, with dark curly hair, a handsome face and muscular build, Paul got married last summer. His wife, Sandy, was so sympathetic to his concern for his family that she was willing to begin their life together in the room where he lived as a teen-ager. Sandy treats Jeanne with respect and affection, mindful as Paul and Marvin are that Jeanne needs the people around her to remember that intellectually she is unchanged.

"I don't know what I would do without Paul and Sandy," Marvin says with a slow shake of his head.

Paul was just turning 9 when Marvin and Jeanne married on Aug. 13, 1974, a chubby little boy captured in photographs enthusiastically throwing rice on the couple with his brother, John Michael. They were children in the midst of an emotional maelstrom.

When Marvin announced on July 3, 1973, that he



JED KIRSCHBAUM : SUN STAFF

"I know when I was having my problems a lot of people were thinking Jeanne would leave me. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one could have been as strong and as loving as she was."

Marvin Mandel

was divorcing his wife to marry another woman, thus putting his political career in peril, the gesture was called romantic and courageous. He was compared to Edward VIII, who gave up his throne for another Maryland divorcee. But in Marvin's case the "firecracker" declaration, as DeFilippo calls it, was the desperate act of a man caught between two unhappy women.

There was no solemn radio address like Edward's. Just a simple press release, passed out by DeFilippo to State House reporters on the evening before a holiday. "I am in love with another woman, Mrs. Jeanne Dorsey, and I intend to marry her," Marvin said in the statement.

Marvin had told Barbara about the affair a year earlier. His wife of 32 years was prepared to forgive him, she says, but she wanted him to end it.

Jeanne's patience also had run out. She was the First Lady of the governor's heart, but could never come out from the shadows.

In September 1972, when the governor was attending a conference in Hilton Head, S.C., Jeanne had sobbed so mournfully over the phone that Marvin handed the receiver to DeFilippo to try to calm her down. That day, Marvin had given his press secretary a handwritten note affirming his intention to marry Jeanne and told him to put it in his wallet. It had taken 10 more months, and soul-searching conversations with friends and political advisers, before Marvin told DeFilippo to craft the note into a press release.

For all the deliberation and calculation, Marvin's declaration was nonetheless an act of passion. One friend began to grasp the magnitude of Marvin's commitment to Jeanne months later when he visited the governor in his basement apartment in Annapolis. There was something so tacky, so pitiful about the sight of the police bodyguard standing watch at the top of the stairwell down to Marvin's door. Yet Marvin, still waiting for Barbara to vacate the mansion, seemed to have no sense of what he'd lost. He was giddy about the new life ahead, as Lt. Gov. Blair Lee put it, "like a schoolboy in love."

On Aug. 14, 1974, the day after their marriage in a small, private ceremony, Marvin and Jeanne went wildly public, campaigning for his re-election on a whistle-stop tour of the state.

"This past year was the longest of my life," Jeanne told the *Washington Post's* Sally Quinn, one of many reporters aboard their campaign camper. "I think for both of us, it's been hard," Jeanne added, fussing over her new husband. "But this morning, we woke up and we both just looked at each other and burst out laughing. I said, 'It's really happened.' I guess that was the first time it finally hit me. The thing that's important is that we're both so happy. I'm 37 and he's 54 and it sounds so corny, but if everybody could be as happy as we are, it would be a great world."

Marvin and Jeanne had finally reached the top of the Ferris wheel. Their time there was brief, but sweet.

She secretly took instructions to convert to Judaism, surprising him with the news just before the ceremony. He was deeply touched; Jeanne had been raised as a devout Catholic by a family with bloodlines extending back to the founding of Maryland. Marvin had never imagined she would one day play hostess at Passover Seders and share the traditions of his faith.

After Marvin's landslide re-election, Jeanne embraced the official role of First Lady with gusto. For his second inauguration, in January 1975, she dressed him in a gray-vested morning suit for an event more formal than Washington musters for presidents. The occasion produced his favorite picture, with Jeanne looking especially glamorous and Paul thrusting his cherubic face between the pair as he embraces them in a hug.

The couple took a post-election honeymoon to England, Italy and Israel. They spent a week in Florida, and a couple of months later slipped off to Jamaica. In Annapolis, it became commonplace to

see the governor and his new wife out to lunch or dinner at a French restaurant on Main Street or at one of their waterfront haunts. Jeanne redecorated the mansion and stood at its door on Halloween rewarding trick-or-treaters with goodie bags she packed herself.

Even while Marvin's world was rose-colored, there were signs of unhappiness to come. A team of aggressive young federal prosecutors had already toppled Vice President Agnew and were eyeing Marvin. He had received gifts and favors from friends and political supporters, including Hess, who profited from actions Marvin took as governor. One friend, Irv Kovens, lent Marvin \$155,000 in bonds to pay Barbara as part of their divorce settlement. That looked suspicious enough for prosecutors to put together a case.

Marvin's second term sputtered through two trials and was cut short after his conviction on mail fraud and racketeering charges. A dozen years later, the conviction would be overturned on a technicality, but by then most of the damage was done. A U.S. Senate seat that could have been his in 1976 went elsewhere. Marvin's health faltered even faster than his career, forcing him to turn over his duties to the lieutenant governor even before his suspension from office as a result of the conviction. He spent nearly 19 months in prison, working in the laundry and doing free legal work for fellow inmates.

Longtime friends like William Donald Schaefer marveled at Marvin's ability to maintain his dignity. He might not have been able to if the mean-spirited busybodies had been right about his fancy new wife.

"I know when I was having my problems a lot of people were thinking Jeanne would leave me," Marvin says. "Nothing could be further from the truth. No one could have been as strong and as loving as she was."

Jeanne's fierce protectiveness was legendary. Once, she called Bruce Bereano at 3 in the morning, shrieking. Marvin had been thrown into a cell at the minimum-security prison because he'd returned from a furlough at home and tested positive for alcohol, which was forbidden. (Later, the test result was revealed to be a false positive caused by the flavoring in his pipe tobacco.) Jeanne demanded that Bereano do something. Both friend and lawyer to the Mandels, Bereano told her he would start making phone calls at daybreak and that she shouldn't talk to anyone else. Too late — she'd already spent an hour on the phone with a newspaper editor in Atlanta.

"She was a woman on a mission," Bereano recalls.

These past five years, Marvin has been on a mission of his own. It was Jeanne's oldest son, Phillip, who first noticed his mother slurring her words. But suddenly, other little clues Marvin had dismissed took on new urgency, and he sprung into action. He took Jeanne to the Mayo Clinic, to the National Institutes of Health, to Johns Hopkins Hospital. He consulted all the top experts he could find before the diagnosis was confirmed. ALS — amyotrophic lateral sclerosis — would gradually rob Jeanne of all power to move while her mind would remain sharp

enough to mourn the loss. Last to go, if the disease followed its usual course, would be her eye muscles.

There is no cure for ALS, but Marvin has tried everything to ameliorate its effects. Experimental drugs that might slow it down. A machine that talked for Jeanne as long as she could type her thoughts. The wheelchair to keep her upright and mobile. Twenty-four-hour nursing care to keep her at home. While Paul scanned the Internet, Marvin phoned doctors as far away as France.

His search for help echoes one of hers: Jeanne called so many people in Washington trying to get Marvin released early from his four-year prison sentence that Bereano feared she would upset his delicate clemency negotiations with the Reagan White House. She fussed and fluttered over Marvin all those years — now he's clucking over her.

Jeanne knew almost from the beginning that she would end up on a ventilator. Her doctor at Johns Hopkins, Daniel Drachman, explained how the disease would progress. Marvin says he would never have let Jeanne refuse the ventilator. Even so, she had a choice. Her daughter Helen, now 42, put the question to her in May 1997. She wanted to be sure of her mother's wishes.

"I would have bet a million dollars she would have said, 'No,'" says Helen, who moved from upstate New York to Virginia three years ago, to be closer to her mother and her father, who is still in St. Mary's County and battling cancer.

But Jeanne Mandel is anything but a quitter. With Marvin's tender care and her own determination, she has survived longer than doctors expected. Just a couple of years ago, when she developed an infection that seemed headed to septic poisoning, doctors advised Marvin he might have to disconnect the machines, let her go.

He refused. "You don't know my wife," he told them. "She's got a terribly strong will to live."

The Mandels' saga seemed to come full circle last summer when Paul was married. The ceremony took place at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Annapolis, just a short walk from the Maryland Inn, where another courtship had begun 38 years before.

Jeanne was escorted down the aisle in her wheelchair by Marvin and her three sons. During the ceremony, tears streamed down her cheeks. At the reception afterward, she was "aglow," Marvin says. "She was enjoying herself, and she was the hit of the wedding."

Helen thought her mother might have been hanging on these past few years just to see Paul get married. She worried Jeanne might give up after that glorious late spring day.

But the next morning, Marvin woke and saw that smile.

Her smile conveys everything to him, everything he needs to know, about love and permanence.

The words Jeanne spoke to a reporter nearly 27 years ago — when the divorce scandal seemed like the worst they'd have to endure — expressed the same message, that same conviction:

"You do realize after a period of time that nothing can stand in your way. Anything that could happen has happened. This marriage can stand anything because it has stood it all. It is forever."



JED KIRSCHBAUM : SUN STAFF

In sickness and in health: "We still are as we always were," says former Gov. Marvin Mandel, shown at his home outside Annapolis with his wife, Jeanne, who suffers from ALS. "We still have a good life together."