

So accustomed to active life

— MRS. E. L. ALLEN

by
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MRS. MABEL ALLEN is no stranger to the role of a Minister's wife. In 1953-55, her husband, the Hon. E. L. Allen was Minister of Education, as he is in the present Cabinet.

This time, however, the significant difference for Mrs. Allen is that her husband's victory coincided with a very bad bout of illness, causing her to be absent from the many functions held recently.

"Most of all," she says, "I regretted not being at the opening of the House. This is an event to which I've always looked forward."

Despite doctor's orders, Mrs. Allen made it her first official function during last fortnight, when she went to Spanish Town for the opening of a new library building.

"I've been so accustomed to an active life," says Mrs. Allen, "that I am trying to get better as fast as I can, so as not to miss anything."

She vibrates with the restless energy of the seasoned school teacher. For 32 years now, she has been in that profession and is senior assistant at Leicesterfield School in Clarendon, her adopted parish. She was born at Lawrence Tavern, St. An-



drew, but has lived so long in Clarendon that she's better associated with that parish FOR MANY YEARS, the Allens lived at Leicesterfield, but two years ago, made the move to Frankfield, which means

Mrs. Allen commutes six miles either way to school each day.

Her dedication to a teacher's life is complete. Having no children of her own, she says she has made her pupils her family and recalls with pride, the many young men and women for whose education she and her husband assumed responsibility, even after they left the classroom.

"We get countless mail from our youngsters in many parts of the island and abroad, where they are engaged in many different professions," she says.

Mrs. Allen is a Shortwood graduate and remembers the days when young teachers dedicated themselves whole-heartedly to the schoolroom and the welfare of their pupils. She says

one of the minor educational tragedies of today is that not as many young people are coming forward to fill the ranks in the teaching profession.

"Many do not remain in it for long, even if they start out teaching. I think it is a pity that so many of our young teachers use their professional training and experience as just a stepping stone to other fields."

Mrs. Allen tries to share her time as much as she can between her responsibilities to the schoolroom and the demands of a politician's wife.

"THE COUNTRY VOTER calling on his M.H.R. has very early rising habits," she joked.

"From six o'clock every morning of the week, we deal with visitors from all over the parish. Over the years, I have become accustomed to answering questions and giving all sorts of advice, from Monday to Sunday. Even while I and my husband were ill recently (Mr. Allen had a broken leg) we had to hold court from our sick beds, for you can't turn away people who walked miles to see you."

Mrs. Allen was, until recently, a busy figure in the Jamaica Federation of Women. She was Parish Administrator for Clarendon and is proud that she was one of those in on the JFW from its inception.

"I've had my part in mass marriages and all the other projects for which the organization is so well known," she said.

She regretted the final abandoning of the mass marriage idea, because of participants feeling it was a social let-down not to have their own wedding receptions.

"Still, many of our marriages in

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Clarendon have lasted very well. I often visit some of the couples and have many of their children in the school where I teach."

Her activities also include work in the local Methodist church as well as the countless "god-mother" activities of the politician's wife.

With the time left over from all this, Mrs. Allen indulges in gardening, her great hobby. When I visited her home in Frankfield this week, she was bemoaning the fact that some of her many plants were not receiving the personal attention she likes to give them. The yard was a profusion of potted violets, anthuriums, succulents, philodendron and what have you, as well as roses, zinnias and begonias. Roses are her favourite.

COMMON INTEREST

MR. AND MRS. ALLEN share a common interest — a large poultry project, teeming with Red and White Vantresses. This involves the keeping of records on production in eggs and broiler weight.

"Then, since I'm baring my soul," she laughed, "I might as well add that I love to cook. I have plenty of scope for impromptu meal-preparation, too, as the number for lunch or any other meal depends on

how many drop by at the moment. I solve this by keeping something always on the stove."

"That's the advice I would give new politician's wives ... always keep something on the stove," she says.

She describes contribution to the political life as "a little platform speaking and plenty home cooking."

For the kind of clothes a busy life demands, she likes linens for daytime and lace for evening, and would buy blue every single time she goes shopping, if she didn't remind herself that her cupboard abounds with blue dresses. So, she compromises with embroidered linens and the occasional gay red.

One of Mrs. Allen's regrets at this time is that she may very soon be faced with the decision of retirement from her beloved teaching.

She consoles herself:

"It's been a life well-spent." She feels that a full life is just about the best reward anyone can have. For this reason, she would like to see more young women coming forward to take the place of the ones retiring, in every sphere of public life — and most of all, in teaching ... of course.

B/W
Allen, Mabel Mrs.

WOMEN