

## RENÉE

Do blondes have more fun?  
Yes, looking in the mirror!<sup>992</sup>

A year after Olov's return from Paris, Olov and Ronny were naturalized and became US citizens. On the same date, 7 September 1948, Ronny changed her name to Renée – Renée S. Janse. All thoughts and aspirations of returning to Europe were gone, and their efforts were now focused on their new life in the United States. In 1949 they bought a piece of land and built a summer cottage at Cove Point, close to the sea in Maryland, a couple of hours by car from their home in Washington, DC.<sup>993</sup>

Ever since she became Mrs Janse in 1930, Ronny had been celebrated in her role as wife of a successful cosmopolitan archaeologist. In their archive are a series of clippings with articles featuring their adventures, where she is described in glowing terms as an extraordinary woman whose exciting life “sounds like a Cook's Grand Tour”:

Mrs. Olov T. Janse, wife of the distinguished Swedish archaeologist now at Harvard, is one of the most fascinating and cosmopolitan women whom it has been our privilege to interview [...] Mobile and sensitive features, a charming laugh, and eyes that crinkle at the corners when she smiles make her a most responsive person with whom to converse.<sup>994</sup>

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992. Typed note in Janse's archive. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

993. Letter from O. Janse to T. Nerman, 21 December 1949. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Ture Nerman 3.1.46. The letter includes photographs from the cottage.

994. Gordon 1941.

# Society: Janses' D. C. Mode of Life Contrast to Noted Archeologists Live In Gracious Serenity Here

BY RUTH SHUMAKER

**I**N the attractive, air-conditioned apartment of Dr. and Mrs. Olov Jansé, you won't see a single pot shard or spade.

And this is very strange because pot shards are bits of pottery (preferably ancient) that are precious to the archeologist, and spades are his favorite tool. Dr. Jansé, after all, is an archeologist, and Mrs. Jansé is that almost-as-important person, an archeologist's wife and consequently his *Giri Friday*.

The Jansés live quietly and graciously at the Washington house, and the casual observer would never guess that a good part of their lives has been spent digging for antiquities, searching for evidence of long-gone civilizations and reconstructing the lives of people that have vanished from the earth.

Indochina, when that peninsula was one country and untroubled by war, was the main scene of the Jansés' archeological doings for six years.

Their expeditions, numbering from 20 to 60 people at various times, were sponsored jointly by the Paris national museum, the Indochinese government and Harvard university.

In Indochina, a relatively undeveloped territory archeologically speaking, they found many priceless objects of art and history. The most important is a small bronze figure. Beautifully fashioned, it is now in the National museum at Hanoi.

Dr. Jansé has written up their findings in two jumbo-sized tomes published by the Harvard university press. A third volume will be out in about a month, and a fourth is in the making.

He also is engaged in writing up some of their experiences during those years in the tropics. He has tales to tell of an encounter with a 10-foot cobra under the dining room table of their house, of hearing drums passing the word about some Chinese bandits who were captured as a result of the warning, and watching Igorot tribesmen ceremonially killing buffalo in the Philippine wilds.

## Is Now Serving In Federal Post

DR. JANSE is now connected with the State department's foreign service institute, and his wife does research at the Library of Congress. But it takes very little urging to get them to talk about their years of digging.

Of course, it was Dr. Jansé who started it all. Born in Sweden, he did his earliest researches in that country, but found the field too limited. Later, at the University of Paris where he was teaching and arranging exhibitions, Dr. Jansé enlarged his field to western Europe.

Then the Far East called to him. In 1933 he and Mrs. Jansé packed their belongings and went off to Indochina, a relatively virgin territory for the archeologist.

Ignoring such well-excavated and much-discussed places as the temple city of Angkor-Vat,

the Jansés headed for the country's east coast. They spent their summers in the mountains and their winters on the plains.

To people who picture the archeologist as living in a tent close to his "diggings," Mrs. Jansé says, "Impossible in a country that's mostly rice fields."

She and her husband made their headquarters in the village nearest the location where they were working, at the home of some Indochinese—they never had any trouble finding a place to stay, because the people, according to the Jansés, are among the most hospitable in the world.

## Work Day Starts At Break of Day

**D**O you like getting up in the morning? Leap out of bed with a smile? The Jansés' working day started at 5 a.m. every day and lasted until 5 p.m. The doctor, of course, directed the digging. To his wife, a former art student, fell the job of cleaning off the grime of centuries and reassembling the fragments of pottery and metal.

Some of the things they found were surprisingly modern. 2,000 years ago, the Indochinese ancestors of today's Viet Nameses, Cambodians and Laotians had air-conditioned houses, built with double roofs, and pressure cookers—earthen pots specially constructed to steam the food.

Pretty, dark-haired Mrs. Jansé, whose first name is Renee, is rather glad to have the modern type of air-conditioning and quick showers after years of roughing it.



DR. AND MRS. OLOV JANSE . . . with art objects.

One of Dr. Jansé's best-remembered experiences is the time when he was engaged in arranging an exhibit at the national museum in Stockholm and the present King Gustav was the top name on the list of invited guests.

The king, then Crown Prince Carl Gustav and a well-known archeologist with amateur status, was invited to the museum for tea and a look at the opening of the exhibit. He said he'd come "for as little tea and as much archeology as possible," and stayed from 4 until 8 p.m., a long tea by any standards.

Dr. Jansé first visited the United States in 1935 for a museum convention. He and Mrs. Jansé have called Washington home since 1943 and are now American citizens. They've been on every continent except South America and Australia in the course of their archeological travels but think they'll stay put for a little while, the next summer Dr. Jansé will do some lectures at the University of Oslo. The Jansés will see Sweden and Paris again on that trip, but will probably try to get back in time to spend some time at their current favorite diggings, a summer cottage at Cove Point Beach, Md.

Arduous

Exploits

Abroad

## Still Apparent.

"The Chinese characteristics are still apparent; the people are receptive to culture. The French have provided good roads; there are factories, excellent sanitary conditions, hospitals and schools everywhere."

"My first impression of America is that you take the best of art and music and keep it here, because you appreciate both so much. In the museum here I got the same feeling that one does in the Paris museum—a feeling of interest in the fine intellectual things of the life."

Roadways of the future will doubtless take Dr. and Mrs. Jansé to far corners of the earth but after adding Buffalo to the signposts of their world Mrs. Jansé predicts "we'll probably return to French Indo-China to excavate for a number of United States museums."

Fig. 70. Newspaper article in The Washington Times-Herald, 23 August 1953.

In all articles,<sup>995</sup> focus is on her attractive looks, her clothing, and her charming appearance. She is moreover often described as intelligent and educated in art history. Another recurring theme is her complete readiness to assist her husband in his work, however arduous the circumstances, while at the same time keeping her integrity as a lady (for example by riding side-saddle and longing for a proper stove). One article seems to have been particularly important for them, and several copies are kept in their archive (fig. 70).

The article, published in *The Washington Times-Herald* in August 1953, features their new life in the United States, five years after they became US citizens. It is described as calm and serene, and a great contrast to their adventurous exploits abroad. They are presented as Dr Janse, the distinguished archaeologist, and Mrs Janse: “that almost-as-important person, an archaeologist’s wife and consequently his Girl Friday”.<sup>996</sup> In the photograph she is seen standing, smiling, behind her seated husband who is pointing seriously at a detail of a figurine. In contrast to newspaper articles featuring him and his scientific work, the ones where she also takes place are all written by women, and are more focused on the practical aspects of their work. Their roles are very clear, in text and imagery: he was the person of official importance, and she was his perfect, beautiful, and ready supporter. As we have seen in the chapter on the Indochina expeditions, her contribution was of crucial importance to his archaeological research, and these articles (written by female reporters, for magazines or newspapers’ society sections) are testimony to that. The importance of the female segments of their cosmopolitan communities was clearly much greater than the limited historical visibility they have been granted.

In the years they spent at Harvard after the return from Indochina, Olov and Ronny became close friends with Arthur and Augusta Hartt (fig. 71), and they acted like family for Ronny during the time Olov was at UNESCO in Paris.

Augusta Batchelder Hartt (1872–1961) was a joining force of the female community at Harvard University. She was already a noted leader of the Massachusetts Girl Scouts,<sup>997</sup> when she founded the Women’s Travel Club

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995. E.g. Kamm 1940; Gordon 1941; Shumaker 1953.

996. Shumaker 1953.

997. Massachusetts Girl Scouts Records, 1915–1967. MC 263, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Fig. 71. Olov Janse, Mrs Keller, Augusta Hartt, Arthur Hartt, and Ronny Janse, at the New Hampshire home of Carl T. Keller, book collector and trustee of the Harvard-Yenching Institute.



at Harvard in January 1935.<sup>998</sup> The club was set up as a women's alternative to the men-only Harvard Travellers Club, and was a venue for well-travelled women to meet, share experiences and give advice to other travellers. The club met once a month in a building on Fairfield Street in Boston, where they listened to talks given by the members or invited guests. Among the invited guests in the early years were Margaret Mead and Karen Blixen, and the talks had titles such as: *Travels in Southern Arabia*, or *Over the Old Jade Road from Yunnanfu to Mandalay*.<sup>999</sup> Ronny Janse became a member of the Women's Travel Club shortly after she and Olov had arrived in Harvard after the completion of their last Indochina expedition. In her archive is a blue ring file where her and the other 106 members' travels are listed.<sup>1000</sup> Interestingly, all married women have been listed with their husband's name only: Mrs Alfred Kidder, Mrs Bradford Washburn ... and Mrs Olov R.T. Janse. Included in the file are five typed manuscripts of short talks that appear to have been prepared by Ronny, and may have been presented to the club: *Imagination; The Ancient Temple; Human Struggle; About Reading;*

and *The South Sea Fishing*.<sup>1001</sup> They all draw on her experiences of the world, and some more clearly of her travels. But they also have a distinct political edge, as in these excerpts:

998. Women's Travel Club Records, 1933–2014. MC 795, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

999. [https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/8/resources/6661/collection\\_organization](https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/8/resources/6661/collection_organization), accessed 19 August 2018.

1000. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

1001. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

Certainly we cannot indulge in sheer fancy-dreaming, but we ought to be constantly aware of an ideal born from our imagination. Our democratic ideals are the results of an active imagination and level-headed inspiration of the great men who made our history. [...] The recent war was fought primarily for ideals we all cherish. The hard struggle under way devoted to the realization of one of such principles – the Equality of Nations as well as men. (–Imagination)

For the sake of those millions of innocent lives sacrificed throughout the world in the bitter fight for the high ideal of peace and justice that we have to take up this battle-cry and fight with means of industrial genius and on the fields of scientific achievement, as to insure the continuity of their efforts. We cannot let them die in vain! We cannot and should not relax our vigilance just now when one phase of this obstinate struggle – on the battle-field – is won. Let us unanimously stand by our President in his surhuman [sic] effort to insure the hard won peace to the tormented world of today. (–Human Struggle)

Although the female segments of the academic and cosmopolitan society Ronny was part of are not documented and historically researched to the same extent as the male, it does not mean that these women were uninformed or uninterested in world politics, or that their opinions were not heard. Women like Augusta Hartt were highly respected, and together with their husbands they created mixed-gender informal gatherings like the one we see in figure 71. In the case of Olov and Ronny, or Renée Janse, it is clear that she was deeply involved in his work and that they influenced each other's positions. We see it for instance in his aversion to communism, his work for UNESCO's principles (as clearly mirrored in the talk on Imagination above), and later in his tendency towards Cold War McCarthyism.

Olov and Ronny did not have children. There are no clear indications whether it was a deliberate choice, or if they wanted but were unable to. The circumstances that prevented them from returning to Sweden as planned after their Indochina expeditions, and the war that led them in exile might also have been decisive factors. Relatives of their family and friends that we have interviewed have also offered differing explanations. One said that they were so fond of children that it caused them much

sorrow not to have children of their own. Another said that Ronny did not want to have children, because she was afraid to lose her figure. Apart from those family stories, we know for a fact that Renée towards the end of her life was an active supporter of family planning, with several clippings in her archive, and a donation to the organization Planned Parenthood is listed in her testament.<sup>1002</sup> We also know that Ronny, and later Renée, enjoyed working and wanted a career of her own.

Only a couple of years into her married life, Ronny wrote to Barbro Nerman from Paris that she had not lost her desire to serve and earn.<sup>1003</sup> In fact, she retained the desire to work for most of her life. While Olov worked with the Indochina expeditions, she had an important role to fill as his assistant. And when that work came to an end with their Harvard assignments, they were both recruited by the OSS and later transferred to the US Department of State. But when they started to see the end of that assignment and Olov left to work for UNESCO in Paris, Ronny at last got a position on her own, at the Library of Congress.

The Library of Congress is located on the National Mall in Washington, DC. It serves as the research branch of the US Congress and is as such the oldest federal cultural institution of the United States. Ronny Janse's first position at the Library of Congress, beginning in 1946, was at the Descriptive Cataloging Division where she functioned as Cataloguer. In 1950 she was promoted to the position of Research Librarian and Research Bibliographer, focusing on the Soviet Union and civil engineering. A bibliography of *Soviet Transportation and Communications* that she compiled and edited was published by the Library of Congress in 1952.<sup>1004</sup> In 1953 she was again promoted, to Technical Research Analyst in the field of structural engineering, and in 1965 to Research Analyst and Foreign Language Specialist. In the latter position, which she held until her retirement, she could make use of her broad language skills translating and writing reports in French, Russian, and the Scandinavian languages.<sup>1005</sup>

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1002. NAA: Janse 2001-29. A copy of the testament is in Per Janse's archive.

1003. Letter from R. Janse to B. Nerman, 18 February 1933. Riksarkivet. Kartong 2. Korrespondens, Brev II 1923-1934. In the Swedish original: "Utom mina conjugala förpliktelser, hör jag på kurs i Louvre och Sorbonne om fransk konst- och litteraturhistoria. Det intresserade mig alltid väldigt och nu är jag mycket belåten. [...] Fortfarande har jag inte förlorat min lust att arbeta och förtjäna [...]"

1004. Janse, R.S. 1952.

1005. Information retrieved from an Application for Posted Vacancy Form. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

One supervisor's report on her work says that she "performs in a professional and competent manner. [...] She is cooperative and willingly accepts assignments over and above her immediate tasks [...]." Another says: "she has performed her duties as a foreign language analyst with interest and devotion [...] although she has a tendency to get too deeply involved in marginal details which tend to effect [sic] the quantity of her production".<sup>1006</sup> She was clearly a devoted employee, and when she neared the expected age of retirement she made several attempts to keep her job. In her archive is an "Appeal for Retention of Present Grade", that she wrote on 2 March 1970. In the same plastic folder there are several newspaper clippings with headlines about bias against over-40 employees marked in red pencil, and a clipping of a typed note:

SENIORITY is Competence plus Experience.  
YOUTH is a state of mind!<sup>1007</sup>

When she eventually retired in December 1971, after serving twenty-five years at the Library of Congress, the Chief of the Federal Research Division wrote in a letter that they would miss her "succinct observations, refreshing candor and [her] congeniality".<sup>1008</sup> She was a woman devoted to her task – sharp, frank, and likeable, and who did not like to be retired.

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But let us go back ten years in time, to the early 1960s when Renée was 60 years old and was working as Technical Research Analyst at the Library of Congress. In her archive are a series of poems dated to the autumn 1963 and spring 1964 that give voice to sorrow and despair:

Time stop!  
Why hurry so  
Can't you give back one day  
Of joy I lost on the way?<sup>1009</sup>

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1006. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

1007. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

1008. Letter from William R. Dodge to R. Janse, 14 December 1971. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

1009. NAA: Janse 2001-29.



had no knowledge of where the Sokolsky family had disappeared. One paragraph of his letter seems to capture some of her predicament:

It is natural that sentiments of kinship are, if not gone, then at least alleviated. Yet when a letter like yours – which can be compared to a ray of sunshine in the darkness that surrounds me – arrives, one is stirred, upset, and one would like to know where the other debris of the same trunk are, and one feels a little less lonely in this big and at the same time small world.<sup>1013</sup>

Although Jean Friedmann and Ronny Janse were of different generations, had survived wars and revolutions, and had landed on both feet with secure homes and careers in America, they shared a sense of incompleteness and loss – as scattered debris of something that was once whole. Five years earlier, in the middle of the war, Ronny wrote a letter to her friend Marie-Rose Loo in Paris.<sup>1014</sup> Marie-Rose had complained that she suffered from insomnia, and Ronny responded: “I know myself how it is to have an eye open during the nights. It’s horrible!”<sup>1015</sup> and recommended Marie-Rose to try Seconal Sodium, which she wrote she had good experience of.<sup>1016</sup> She writes:

I understand your grief of being deprived of news of your loved ones. I hope that we will all soon escape from this cruel isolation that torments us all. Luckily, the young can endure all sorts of difficulties better than we can. Although I experienced the horrors of revolution and starvation, I came out of it without bitterness and

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1013. Ibid. In the French original: “Il est naturel que les sentiments de parenté sont si non pas disparus, bien atténués. Pourtant, quand une lettre comme la vôtre, – laquelle le peux comparer à un rayon de soleil dans les ténèbres qui m’entourent, – arrive, on est remué, bouleversé et on voudrait savoir où se trouvent les autres débris du même tronc, et on se sent un peu moins solitaire dans ce grand et en même temps petit monde.”

1014. Letter from R. Janse to M.-R. Loo, 12 April 1942. NAA: Janse 2001-29. See also the chapters “Between France and Sweden” and “Ronny” for details of Marie-Rose and her husband C.T. Loo.

1015. Letter from R. Janse to M.-R. Loo, 12 April 1942. NAA: Janse 2001-29. In the French original: “Je sais moi-même ce que c’est de ne pas fermer l’œil pendant des nuits. C’est atroce!”

1016. Seconal Sodium, or Secobarbital Sodium, is a drug used in treatment for epilepsy, insomnia, and for anaesthesia. It has been linked to the deaths of Judy Garland and Dinah Washington, among others.

without resentment, thanks to an essence of optimism inherent  
in the soul of the young.<sup>1017</sup>

Hence her darkness appears to have been a complex combination of sorrow over the situation in the world, grief over her scattered and destroyed family, and anxiety about the youth that was gone and the optimism that had disappeared with it. The dates attached to her poems suggest that she reached a low point sometime in the autumn of 1963, and the pieces written in the spring of 1964 are of quite a different character. Sometime around New Year 1964, it seems as if she made a decision to give her life a new, positive turn. In her new life happiness and joy was all about attitude, about discipline, smartness, and – above all – stamina:

STAMINA ABOVE ALL:

Plowing through the upheaval  
of wars, revolutions, life destruction – –  
and finally reaching the shores  
of some happiness – –  
required a great deal  
of persistence, ingenuity – – and  
STAMINA above all!<sup>1018</sup>

At about the same time Renée went through a radical physical transformation – from warm, sharp-eyed brunette, to a doll-like blonde with perfectly curled hair, exact makeup, tight posture, and eyes at the horizon.

The archive abounds with photographs of Renée after her transformation. Often in spectacular hairstyles and outfits, or posing in swimsuits. There are hundreds of swimsuit photographs. With this abundance, the archive gives the impression of being a monument over the transformation from Ronny, the adventurous and cosmopolitan yet troubled Girl

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<sup>1017</sup>. Letter from R. Janse to M.-R. Loo, 12 April 1942. NAA: Janse 2001-29. In the French original: “Je comprend votre chagrin d’être privée de nouvelles des vôtres. J’espère que nous sortirons tous dans un avenir prochain de cet isolement cruel qui nous tourmente tous. Heureusement que la jeunesse peut supporter mieux que nous toutes les difficultés. Bien que j’avais traversé des horreurs de la révolution et de la famine, j’en suis sortie sans amertumes sans racune, grâce à un fond d’optimisme inhérent à l’âme de la jeunesse.”

<sup>1018</sup>. See this and other poems in NAA: Janse 2001-29.

Friday, to Renée, the exemplary civil servant at the Library of Congress, with perfect hair and a new, happy, identity.<sup>1019</sup>

But the archive also reveals cracks in the apparent perfection. There are letters to doctors asking about a brain scan to investigate inexplicable depression,<sup>1020</sup> and requesting a medicine called *Vincamine* that claims to reduce the ageing of the brain cells.<sup>1021</sup> Most striking, perhaps, are the manipulated photographs of Renée, never Ronny, where the eyes have been cut out, or the face contour or hair colour has been changed with ballpoint pens and sharp objects (fig. 73). Manifested in such brute nakedness, Renée's perfection project is uncomfortable and intrusive. It insists on our attention and reflection.

In an article from 1998, the feminist philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky writes about the control of women's bodies in the United States in the 1980s. She describes diets and hair removal as a way of disciplining the female body towards an unachievable prepubescent ideal form. Women learn, says Bartky, not to express emotions with the face in order to avoid wrinkles. A woman's body should first and foremost be regarded as a decorated surface, the stomach pulled in and the shoulders pushed back to allow her bust to be presented as attractively as possible. The gaze should be directed down or away, because only a loose woman looks directly at what and who she wants. The disciplinary project of femininity, says Bartky, demands such radical and extensive bodily transformations that practically every woman who tries is doomed to fail.<sup>1022</sup>

But Renée Janse manages in an almost caricatural way to achieve



Fig. 72. Renée Janse c. 1965.

1019. A more thorough discussion [in Swedish] of Renée's voice through the archive is found in Källén & Hegardt 2015.

1020. Letter from R. Janse to Dr. Walsh, 29 May 1963. "[...] recommend a good neurologist who could in some way help my husband to overcome the trying days when he suddenly feels hopelessly sick and under a nervous depression". NAA: Janse 2001-29.

1021. NAA: Janse 2001-29.

1022. Bartky 1998:28-32.



*Fig. 73. Manipulated photo of Renée, in her archive.*

the disciplined body ideal that Bartky describes. The transformation from Ronny, the brunette who laughed and looked straight into the camera, is remarkable. In her poems written 1963–64 we can follow quite literally the process from which she comes out determined to create a new, happy life through self-discipline. It seems as if she reinvented her youthful, happier self in the shape of a perfect American woman. Bartky further discusses the disciplined woman's body as

an alternative heterosexual identity for middle-aged women who do not ascribe to the normative mother identity – and maybe that could also be a discussion relevant to understand the transformation of Renée Janse.<sup>1023</sup>

Bartky argues that disciplining of the female body by default leads to women's powerlessness and subordination. But at the same time she sees a paradox in the discipline project. Regardless of its effect, she says, the discipline can give the individual a sense of control and security.<sup>1024</sup> Renée Janse seems to be caught within this paradox. She creates her new, blonde, tight persona to encapsulate emotions she cannot otherwise control. It gives her a sense of control and security that is illustrated by countless swimsuit pictures in her archive. But something is itching, and we see her scratches manifested in manipulated portrait photographs.

An image kept among her personal documents epitomizes some of Renée's struggle. We find her in the right-hand corner of the photograph, perfectly dressed and made up, alone, glass in hand, watching with a tight smile the easy entrance of a young woman. The young woman is Princess Christina of Sweden, who spent a year as a student at Harvard University 1963–64. Renée is here sixty years old, and is at the end of a period of dark thoughts and existential reflection. Her poetry speaks of loss, decay,

<sup>1023</sup>. Bartky 1998:39, 42.

<sup>1024</sup>. Bartky 1998:39.

and how she struggles to find meaning and joy in life. But it indicates a turning point around the time this picture was taken. She then decided to leave her former troubled self behind, and create a new identity with a new body. Ronny, the young brunette who looked calmly and confidently into the lens of Olov's camera on their travels and fieldworks, is now replaced by Renée, a doll-like platinum blonde posing in exact angles at high society events. The photograph can to some extent speak for itself, but Renée's tight smile and perfectly made blonde hair are given an extra human dimension by the small newspaper clipping attached to it with medical surgery tape:

The art of life is to know how to enjoy a little and to endure much.

*Fig. 74. Society event with Princess Christina of Sweden, in Washington, DC, 1963 or 1964. Photographer unknown.*

