

THE

Wedding

OF THE

Century

Fifty years ago this month, Philadelphia's Grace Kelly married Monaco's Prince Rainier. To the public and an obsessed press, it was a real-life fairy tale. But to Grace herself, it wasn't quite the storybook romance it seemed to be

By Michael Callahan



G

race Kelly

was used to it—the enormous attention she was receiving on this cold January day in 1956. After all, she was a veteran of the blaze of publicity that came with each movie she made, including the hullabaloo premiere of *To Catch a Thief* at the Trans-Lux Theater on Chestnut Street the previous August, which had attracted not only her dapper co-star, Cary Grant, but also a who's who of Philadelphia society: names like Biddle, Clothier, Scott. The previous March, she had posed with her just-won Oscar for *The Country Girl*, and as photographers yelled for her to kiss her fellow winner, *On the Waterfront*'s Marlon Brando, she had kittenishly replied, "I think he should kiss me." (He did.) And several months ago, she had hopscooted through the paparazzi at the Cannes Film Festival on the French Riviera, the trip that had started all of this madness in the first place.

Her intended, Rainier Louis Henri Maxence Bertrand Grimaldi, prince of Monaco, had never experienced anything like this, however. Standing in the tasteful living room of the Kelly family home—a brick Georgian in East Falls—the prince looked bewildered and more than a little stiff in the presence of the rumple-suited reporters angling notebooks and flashbulbs. The prince and the movie star had made an official announcement of their engagement during lunch at the Philadelphia Country Club earlier in the day, but by then it was old news: The prince's cabinet had beaten them to the punch, releasing word in Monaco—and thus to the world—hours earlier. Which had left the betrothed to now deal with the gossip-hungry Philadelphia press.

"Hey, Prince, give her a kiss!" yelled one scribe. Rainier, dutifully horrified, didn't move. "Was it love at first sight, Prince?" "Show us your engagement ring, Grace!" "Will you give up your career?"

And on it went, for two hours, with Grace showing the statuesque poise that had made her Alfred Hitchcock's muse and an international screen star. She dutifully showed off her ring—made

of rubies and diamonds, illustrating the colors of Monaco—while looking breathtaking in a brocaded beige silk dress that was later renamed by its maker, Branelli, as the "To Catch a Prince" dress.

"I've been in love before," Grace dreamily told the throng of reporters. "But never in love like this."

Four months later—on April 19, 1956—Grace Kelly, 26, movie star, fashion icon, and Philadelphia favorite daughter, and Rainier of Monaco, 32, sovereign of a postage-stamp principality and a man dubbed "the world's most eligible bachelor," would be married in one of the most-watched, most lavish and most dissected weddings ever recorded. It was an event that featured French elegance and centuries of tradition (including stone-faced footmen, and sentries with bayonets); a guest list ranging from Aristotle Onassis and Ava Gardner to David Niven and the former King Farouk of Egypt; and an unparalleled fashion display by the famous and fabulous of Philadelphia, Hollywood and titled Europe. (As a *Boston Sunday Globe* writer wryly commented, "Never have so many women brought so much luggage to such a small country for so few days.") Most important, it boasted the stars of the whirlwind storybook romance of the century.

At its heart, the story of Grace and Rainier was one of two unlikely people who met and fell in love. But for four frenzied months in 1956, it was also a story that foreshadowed a new, aggressive media age. And it was a story about one dazzling, shining moment in the history of Philadelphia, a town where dreams, no matter how farfetched, are always welcomed.



A NICE RING Grace shows off her new bauble to her mother while Rainier and her father look on.

Grace Kelly had met Rainier (it's pronounced "Ren-yay"; Philadelphians regularly mispronounced it as "Ray-neer," to the prince's constant annoyance) in May 1955, when she was in France for the Cannes festival. *Paris Match* magazine had arranged a photo shoot at the palace in Monaco, for which the prince turned up late but suitably apologetic. He took the American actress on a tour of his private zoo. (Later, their impressive haul of wedding presents would include two lion cubs from

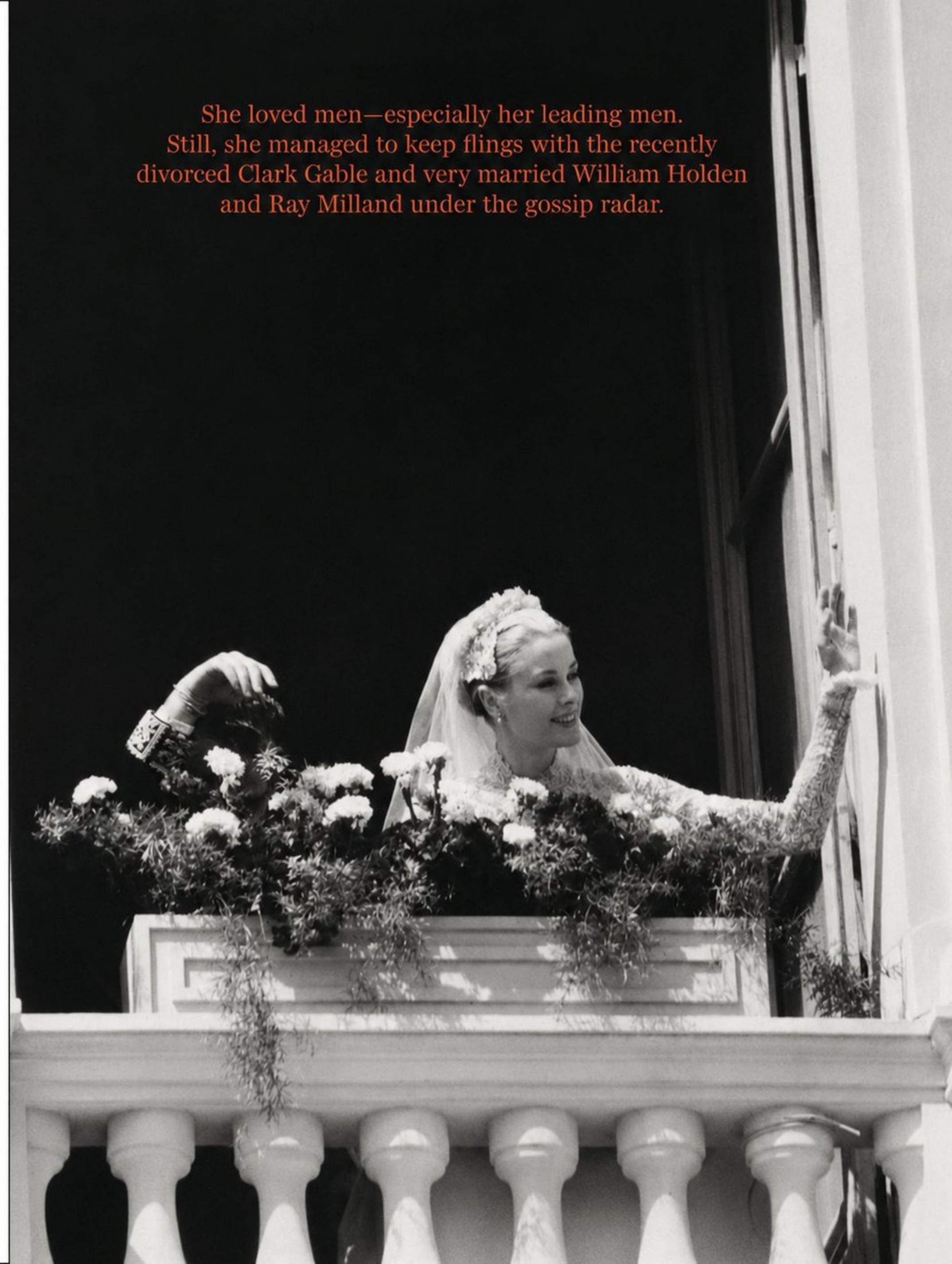
the sultan of Morocco.) After Grace returned to Hollywood, the two kept up a secret correspondence that eventually led to a Christmas reunion in Philadelphia and their betrothal a week later.

To say the news stunned Grace's friends and family would be an understatement. "She called me to tell me she was getting married," recalls Chestnut Hill socialite Maree Rambo, a childhood friend of Grace's and one of her bridesmaids. "And I said, 'To whom?' I was flabbergasted. I didn't know what to say. So I just said, 'Congratulations!'"

"She said, 'I want you to meet my prince,'" adds Rita Gam, who had been Grace's roommate in Hollywood. "And I really thought she meant he was a prince of a guy. And then when he showed up, he *was* a prince! That was really wild."

But it was Grace's family whose opinion mattered most, in particular someone whose stamp of approval Grace—for all of her

She loved men—especially her leading men. Still, she managed to keep flings with the recently divorced Clark Gable and very married William Holden and Ray Milland under the gossip radar.



PREVIOUS PAGE: KPA/ZUMA PRESS ENGAGEMENT; BETTMAN/CORBIS; GRACE WAVING: VITTORANO PASTELLI/CORBIS

Grace couldn't break free from the need to win her father's approval. Which may explain how she ended up engaged to a prince she'd spent only days with.

success—could never seem to obtain: her father. John B. Kelly had risen to prominence in Philadelphia through a combination of blazing ambition, hard work, cunning and machismo that allowed him to build his company, Kelly for Brickwork, into one of the largest building concerns in the nation. He loved athletics—he had competed in the Olympics—and, in an often-told tale, as a champion sculler had been denied the chance to row at England's Henley Regatta because it was thought true gentlemen did not work with their hands. The slight stayed with Kelly—even after his son, John B. Jr., known to everyone as “Kell,” won Henley in 1947 and 1949 to avenge the snub.

John B. Sr.'s Horatio Alger story resonated with Philadelphia's blue-collar, and his money and glamorous homes, on Henry Avenue in East Falls and in Ocean City, New Jersey, earned him their admiration. “The family was known because of their money,” says Jane Lally, a bookkeeper at St. Bridget's Roman Catholic church in East Falls, where the Kellys were prominent members. “They were sort of celebrities here.”

Willowy Grace honed her exotically ladylike sex appeal, which would cause Hitchcock and countless others to fall in love with her, by flirting with her brother's friends on the Ocean City beach patrol. Her formidable father, however, who judged success by brashness and athletic competitiveness, found his third child and middle daughter odd. For her entire life, Grace's relationship with him would be “difficult,” friend Rita Gam says. “He was a very egocentric chap. And to have that kind of a father is hard for a little girl. She admired him, but she was really rather in awe of him. And afraid of him, to a degree.”

Lizanne Le Vine, Grace's younger sister and only surviving sibling, says she has no doubt that her father loved and was proud of Grace. But was he as proud of her cinematic achievements as he was of his son's athletic ones? She shakes her head slightly. “Well,” she says quietly, “he understood Kell better than he understood acting.”

Frail and sensitive, Grace had been seduced by the theater since girlhood, and had studied at the knee of her uncle, George Kelly, a Pulitzer prize-winning playwright. She attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York, and slowly built a career through Broadway and live television plays. At the age of 22 she got her big break, cast as Gary Cooper's steely Quaker wife in *High Noon*, which led to a role opposite Clark Gable in *Mogambo* in 1953. Grace's rocket to fame dazzled her hometown of Philadelphia, where screenings of her films and news items about her love life generated relentless gasping, gabbing and gossip. Grace became one of the city's proudest exports, a classier version of scrapple.

Still, John B. Kelly didn't seem to understand what his daughter had achieved. Once, he told a reporter he considered Grace's outgoing older sister, Pegg, “the daughter with the most on the ball.” After Grace scored a stunning upset to win the Best Actress Oscar for 1954, her father exclaimed to the media: “I simply can't believe Grace won. Of the four children, she's the last one I'd expected to support me in my old age.”

Such comments cut deep in a sensitive girl. Still, Grace couldn't break free from the need to win her father's approval. Which may explain how she ended up engaged to a prince she'd spent only days with.

Privately, the young Grace Kelly was quite unlike the shimmering goddesses—Lisa Fremont in *Rear Window*, Frances Stevens in *Thief*—who cemented her status as an icon. “She was shy,” her friend Maree Rambo says. “That's where that ‘icy’ thing came from. She wasn't a cold person. She liked games and jokes and silly things. Loved to laugh, and loved things like going to a little restaurant for a hamburger and a cold beer.”

She also loved men. Particularly her leading men. Blessed to live in a media age before *The Insider* and *US Weekly*, for the most part she managed to keep her dalliances with her co-stars—including flings with the recently divorced Gable and the very married William Holden and Ray Milland—under the gossip radar. From her perch in East Falls, Ma Kelly dispatched young Lizanne to Hollywood to make sure Grace behaved; Hitchcock came to call

her “Auntie Liz.” But it was a case of the fox guarding the henhouse, as Grace's younger sister found herself swept up in the glamour of nightclubs, parties, and the matinee idols she got to meet. “I loved them all,” she says. “[Grace] dated most of them. I don't think Mother knew. It was in a few papers, but I don't think Mother knew how serious she was with anybody.”

Until Oleg Cassini. Perhaps no better parable exists to explain how Grace Kelly ended up on the path she did than that of her ill-fated romance with the famous, twice-married Parisian fashion designer. Cassini had served up a full-court press for Grace's affection, and their romance quickly blossomed into talk of marriage. In an effort to win her family's support for the union, Grace brought Cassini to Ocean City in September 1954, while she was serving as a judge at the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City. The rest is Kelly family history. “I had said I thought a lot of the guys she went out with were oddballs,” Kell said in 1975. “And he thought I meant him. So did a lot of the townspeople [in Ocean City]. They didn't want any Hollywood oddballs down here.”

The Kellys froze Cassini out, giving *(continued on page 142)*



PAPARAZZI Photographers formed a human barricade trying to get shots of Grace and Rainier in the days before the wedding.




WEDDING ALBUM Clockwise from above: Grace and Rainier driving away from the ceremony; the bridal party on the day of the wedding; the newly married couple cutting the wedding cake; the royal family right before Grace and Rainier's 10th anniversary in 1966.



PAPARAZZI: MESSING BEFFRE; MRS. CAME, CAPTIONS, AND FAMILY: BETTHAN/CORBIS; BRIDAL PARTY, PALAIS DE MONACO; CIBRIK/GETTY IMAGES; HULTON ARCHIVES; ATLANTA PRESS

The Susan G. Komen
Breast Cancer Foundation

PHILADELPHIA **RACE FOR THE CURE**

Presented by 

NATIONAL SERIES SPONSORS:



NATIONAL SERIES HONORARY CHAIR, FRANCE LARREU SMITH

LOCAL SPONSORS:



**KOMEN PHILADELPHIA
RACE FOR THE CURE®**

• • •

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 14, 2006

8:15 am

Art Museum,

Eakins Oval, Philadelphia

• • •

5K Run • 5K Walk • 1-Mile Fun Walk

For a Race Form call: 215-238-8900.
Register online at: phillyraceforthecure.org
until 5/1/06.

Grace

(continued from page 100)

him—and Grace—a taste of what life would be like with their disapproval. “We were pretty hard on him that weekend,” Lizanne recalls. “There was a possibility Grace was going to marry him, but I didn’t think my father would go for it. And as much as he didn’t have the final say on her life, we all listened to him. She would not have married someone he disapproved of.”

So in many ways it should hardly have been surprising when Grace had her blond head turned by a prince less than a year later. But even then, the Kellys kept her grounded. “It took our whole family a while to figure it out,” says Grace’s niece, Meg Packer. “I remember my grandmother asked, ‘Is it Morocco or Monaco?’ We had no clue who he was.”

Once the engagement was announced, royal wedding fever gripped Philadelphia. Every day, newspapers spilled gallons of ink on every last detail, from legendary *Inquirer* society columnist Ruth Saltzer’s breathless dispatches about the invitations to Grace’s bridal shower in Penn Valley (in the shape of little yachts—how au courant!) to items on the Austrian yodeling troupe that would be singing and clogging at the reception (*Evening Bulletin*), the lace on the prayer book Grace would carry down the aisle (that’s Seltzer again), and the “light and subtle scent” the bride would apply before her nuptials (*Washington Post*). “We tend to think of that sort of thing as being of this age, with all of the wall-to-wall news and awards shows,” says Kristina Haugland, of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which this month opens a special seven-week exhibit on the wedding. But, says Haugland, “There was no topic—no matter how tangential to the wedding—that wasn’t written about: menus, Monacans’ favorite foods, someone who had been to Monaco commenting.”

It became impossible to escape the microscopic coverage of the wedding plans. Stories detailed the first meeting of the Kellys and the Grimaldis; Rainier’s fishing trip to Florida; who would represent the U.S. at the wedding (Conrad Hilton, of all people); and the news that the bridesmaids’ dresses would be—ta-da—the color of daffodils.

Of course, press accounts also included a healthy dose of John B. Sr., who didn’t disappoint in tossing out pithy quotes to feed the omnipresent media beast. One reporter asked if Grace’s wedding would mean a title for him. “I don’t think so,” he replied. “I want only to be the padrone of the Falls of Schuylkill.”

Clinging to the long-held Catholic tradition of getting married in the bride’s church, loyal East Fallers assumed, more than a little naïvely, that the fairy-tale wedding of the century would be held at St. Bridget’s on Midvale Avenue. Women rushed into nearby Alberta’s

Can't make it out
to Wine Country?



See our wine
tasting room
and 1,500 bottle
wine cellar at

Philadelphia Magazine's

**DESIGN
HOME 2006**
VILLANOVA, PA

COMING SOON...

Beauty Salon to order "the Grace Kelly 'do"; a local bartender, lobbying for a hometown bash, argued that "Grady's blue-plate specials equal anything they can offer on the Riviera—and they cost a whole lot less." As for Monaco's famous casino, one resident commented, "We don't have anything like that here, though some of our folks like to gamble just as they do in Monaco. A spot of numbers or a wager with a bookie often livens things up here."

If the local bookies took bets on the wedding being held in East Falls, they cleaned up. On January 9, 1956, a local headline broke the news: MONACO SAYS MISS KELLY WILL BE MARRIED THERE.

Then the real craziness began.

Like a city that ends up as first runner-up for the Olympics, Philadelphia nursed its wounds at being snubbed. But by the time Grace and her considerable entourage boarded the *USS Constitution* for the sojourn to Monaco, even the most jaded observers couldn't resist a peek. Grace was photographed by *Life* magazine on the ship playing a mad game of charades, showing no sign of pre-wedding jitters. There were endless photo ops and parties. ("So far, this trip seems to be from one cocktail lounge to another," cracked one bridesmaid.) When the *Constitution* lumbered into the Monaco harbor, it was met by the prince and Grace's adopted countrymen. Grace made one faux pas—she wore a hat with a brim the size of Wisconsin, obscuring the face everyone had turned out to see—but still managed, holding her poodle, Oliver, to alight from the boat and greet her new subjects with a princessly air.

The atmosphere in Monaco was "like being in the middle of an MGM musical for a week," says D. Herbert Lipson, the chairman of *Philadelphia* magazine, who at the age of 26 snagged a precious invite to the fete through legendary PR guru Thomas LaBrum, who sometimes worked for John Kelly Sr.

Grace's friend Rita Gam made headlines with a run-in with the relentless press at the Hotel du Paris, where the wedding party was staying. "I think I had a mini nervous breakdown," she says. Maree Rambo (then Maree Pamp) made headlines when all of her jewels—worth \$10,000—were stolen from her room. (They were never recovered.) And matron of honor Peggy Davis, the bride's live-wire elder sister, made headline after headline for her only-from-Philly social clumsiness: wearing black flannel Bermuda shorts to lunch with Rainier's family, then following that up by ordering snails—with a glass of milk.

And the band played on. "Every day at about four o'clock, the lobby of the Hotel du Paris would be filled with guests and celebrities for tea," Lipson remembers. "The Aga Khan would be wheeled in in his wheelchair with a mink lap robe by the Begum, which is

For a beautiful smile... WHO CAN YOU TRUST?



Photo of actual patient, courtesy of Dr. Katz

For the REAL FACTS about Cosmetic Dentistry...
WATCH MDTV Medical News Now Online at
www.DrDonKatz.tv

"Of all the Cosmetic Dentists in Philadelphia, MDTV selects only one..."

**PAINLESS
LASER
Dentistry**

Donald G. Katz, DDS, MAGD

MDTV Select Dentist • MDTV National Medical Expert Award Recipient
"Smile Makeover Authority" as seen on MDTV Medical News Now

Call our Select Dentist Direct for a Consultation

Toll Free **866-360-MDTV** (6388) **215-969-4400**

MDTV[®]
Medical News Now, Inc.
www.mdtvnow.com

Pennsylvania Center For Dental Excellence

11905 Bustleton Avenue • www.DrDonKatz.com

The Patient Advocate

VENEERS • IMPLANTS • DENTURES • CROWNS • BRIDGES • WHITENING

Can't make it to the spa?



See our
luxurious
spa bath at

Philadelphia Magazine's

**DESIGN
HOME 2006**

VILLANOVA, PA

COMING SOON...



This time, Experience Europe

- ◆ Cooking tours to Italy
- ◆ Wine-tasting in France
- ◆ Road Rally in Germany
- ◆ Golf in Ireland
- ◆ The Da Vinci Code Road
- ◆ Bordeaux Wine Festival
- ◆ Cézanne in Provence
- ◆ And even battle gladiators in Rome....

Featuring:

- ◆ Hands-on experiences
- ◆ Small groups
- ◆ Expert guides
- ◆ Great accommodations



Book your *Philadelphia* magazine Reader Tour to Europe now for 2006 and save 10%!

www.csttours.com
215-575-0400

Can't make it to that hot new restaurant?



See our chef kitchen and butler pantry at

Philadelphia Magazine's
DESIGN HOME 2006
VILLANOVA, PA

COMING SOON...

Grace

the term he called his wife." Ari Onassis sat perched on a gaming table, chatting; King Farouk sat in a nearby banquette, surrounded by beauties; Randolph Churchill solicited money for granting interviews. "I danced with Gloria Swanson," Lipson says. "I don't know how that happened."

On the day of the wedding, honor guards from the U.S., France, Italy and Great Britain lined the route to the baronial St. Nicholas Cathedral. At 10:30, Grace and her father left the palace for the one-block drive to the church overlooking the Mediterranean. The organ thundered to life, and the procession began: the clerics, the flower girls, the bridesmaids, then the bride herself, on the arm of her father. A traditional Catholic mass followed. Afterward, Grace and Rainier left the cathedral amidst drumbeats and bugles, and rode in a Rolls-Royce convertible to wave to their adoring subjects lining the streets.

When one views newsreels of the wedding today, the folderol seems a bit overshadowed by images of the bride and groom both looking stricken during the proceedings. They could hardly be blamed: The buildup to the wedding had been ridiculous, and perhaps the enormity of what they'd both signed on for was just now beginning to dawn on them—particularly the American movie star, who was in for a radical change in her way of life. "It does seem a little quick, like they didn't date enough," niece Meg Packer says with a touch of bemusement. "I don't know. Perhaps they just knew."

Or perhaps they didn't. "She didn't realize she was going to have to give up her career. Even Prince Rainier didn't," Rita Gam says. The first few years in Monaco were a time of loneliness and adjustment for Grace, who literally found herself playing the role of the princess in the tower. Still, she clung to the belief she could revive her career and find balance in her life. But when Monagasques balked at their princess accepting the starring role in Hitchcock's 1962 film *Marnie*, the handwriting was on the palace wall. "It came as a huge surprise and shock to her," Gam says, "and I really do think that was a deep, deep disappointment. It cut the legs out of her own sense of self."

Through the years, there has been skepticism about the depth of the Grimaldi marriage. "Those fairy tales have a way of becoming undone," Oleg Cassini, sounding just a tad bitter, told the *Washington Post* in 1981. "These kinds of marriages are organized, arranged. They met each other, they liked each other. That was enough."


"Happy" is a funny word," Meg Packer says when asked if she thought Grace was happy in Monaco. "I think she was very good at what she did. She was really good at what she did."

She pauses. "I could not do it. It's really a horrible job to have." She adds that she thinks Grace did enjoy raising her family and her trips to Philly and Ocean City—even if the latter required Lizanne's husband, Donald Le Vine, to plot decoy cars so the press would leave Grace alone. "I think she would have been happier had she not married a prince and all that that entailed," Packer says. "But she chose for love."

Grace threw herself into raising her children, charity work and promoting the arts, but could never escape the probing media eye that had zeroed in on her with such raw intensity in her parents' living room the day of her engagement. The world devoured details of cold spells in her relationship with Rainier, of the escapades of their daughters, Caroline and Stephanie.

The spotlight on the soap-opera lives of Grace's offspring has been particularly harsh. There was Caroline's crash-and-burn marriage to playboy Philippe Junot, her widowhood when her second husband, power-boat racer Stefano Casiraghi, was killed in 1990, and the odd behavior of her third husband, Prince Ernst of Hanover. Mild middle child Albert, the ruler of Monaco since the death of Rainier last year, has had to deal with relentless speculation about whether he will ever take a wife. And Stephanie's life—the stuff of Judith Krantz—has created twice as much tabloid fodder, which is probably to be expected when you are a jet-setting royal who one day runs off to join the circus. (True story.) Then there is the great unanswered question of what happened that day in September 1982, when Grace, at 52, died after her car went over an embankment on a treacherous hairpin curve high above Monaco. Only Stephanie was in the vehicle with her. Only she knows what really happened. And she has never told what that was.

The Philadelphia Kellys haven't escaped their share of tragedy and scandal. Several members have battled with the bottle. Kell became a city councilman, but eventually dated nightclub maven Rachel Harlow, a transsexual formerly known as Richard Finocchio. (Mercifully, Pa Kelly was already dead.) At the age of 57, Kell died of a heart attack while jogging in Philly. Ma Kelly lived until the age of 91, but suffered a series of strokes and wasn't even aware of her daughter of cancer in 1999 at the age of 43.

In the end, the tale of the wedding of Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier isn't unlike that of most couples who get married. With one key difference. "I think," Meg Packer says, "that Grace gave everybody a feeling that fairy tales can come true." Even if they can't. 

Michael Callahan last wrote for the magazine about the Miss America pageant. E-mail: mail@phillymag.com

THE ART OF PLASTIC SURGERY

The Natural Result
You Are Looking For
Specializing in Cosmetic Surgery

- **BREAST**
Enlargement, Reduction, Lifts
- **FACE**
Face and Neck Lift, Nose, Eyes, Botox,
Laser Wrinkle Reduction, Microdermabrasion
- **BODY**
Tummy Tucks, Liposuction, Laser Hair Removal

Call for a consultation and preview the possibilities with our computer imager.



DAVID A. BOTTGER, M.D.

Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery

Certified by the American Board of Surgery

Member of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons

Bryn Mawr • 610-520-1929

www.drbottger.com

*Main Line
Today
Top Doc
2003*

Can't get away?



We've got it all.
Turn the page for
a first glimpse at
what's in store.

Philadelphia Magazine's

**DESIGN
HOME 2006**

VILLANOVA, PA

For more information
visit [www.phillymag.com/
designhome2006](http://www.phillymag.com/designhome2006)