

She'd Rather Be a Smithsonian Director**Mrs. Morris Cafritz Shrugs Off
Mrs. Mesta's Party-Giving Mantle**

July 3-1949

By Marie McNair

"I'D MUCH RATHER be on the board of directors of the Smithsonian Institution," says Mrs. Morris Cafritz, who's been more than once mentioned as Mrs. George Mesta's successor to the title, "Washington's No. 1 hostess." Perle Mesta, unchallenged queen of party givers, abdicated from the throne when she accepted the post of American Minister to Luxembourg. And strange as it seems, the title's going begging.

Gwen Cafritz, slim and sloe-eyed, and without question right up in the top brackets as one of "the best dressed," is a delightful hostess. But she majored in history of art at school and she'd rather hang a painting than give a party anytime. And if there's a call for volunteers by the Red Cross and the Community Chest, Gwen's among the first to answer.

Not that Gwendolyn Cafritz doesn't like parties and people. She freely admits she does. But there's no allure for her in the queen of the glitter guest list.

Dancing Dowagers and Debutantes

AT THE Cafritz home on Foxhall road, with its modern facade and its enchanting view of Washington through the tree-tops, diplomats find themselves dancing with debutantes and dowagers for the first time in their lives. For no matter how formal the dinner there's usually dancing before the evening is over in the ballroom downstairs. Gwen Cafritz brings together at her dinner parties such personalities as Senator Owen Brewster and Drew Pearson, his bitter foe, watched with satisfaction as their enmity ended.

Dinners of 22 are the perfect number for Mrs. Cafritz, who does her own menus, planning, seating and table decoration. Moreover, unlike Mrs. Mesta, she employs no social secretary; writes her own invitations and does her own telephoning on the countless other details which arise. She selects her guests with care, believes that good looking women are an asset at any dinner table, and picks her men for what they can contribute to interesting conversation.

ALTHOUGH Perle was becoming more noticed and noticeable hereabouts the society writers still weren't any too sure of her background. They hedged by referring to her as "Mrs. George Mesta of Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Pittsburgh." Then as she got around more, they added Newport, New York, and Palm Beach.

This prompted wags, when she came sweeping into a gathering, to intone:

"Mrs. George Mesta of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Pittsburgh, Newport, New York, Washington, Palm Beach, train leaving right away on track 6, parlor cars in the rear!" 10/10/1950

BY JANUARY of 1948 she had begun to vie furiously with Mrs. Morris Cafritz, the bewildering Gwendolyn, for the title of champion society feeder. The feud turned into the answer to a freeloader's prayer.

Because of her "in" with President Truman, Perle was able to command bigger brass to her binges. Gwen tried to counterattack by loading herself down with about \$1,000,000 worth of jewels, but about all that got her was back-strain.

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Daughter of Dr. Lippel Dettre
biologist at Geo Washington Univ, D.C.
Her husband is unquestionably the
richest man in D.C. made
his money in gigantic real
estate deals