Shriver is currently in the midst of her own balancing act. With her children still in L.A.-based schools, she treks out one night a week to join her husband in the state capital, where she's not ruling out "a full-time move." The couple's arrival on the scene has turned Sacramento on its head, and the Schwarzeneggers are poised to acquire (through a foundation) the nine-bedroom ranch-style house designed in part by Nancy Reagan during her husband's tenure as California's governor. "Arnold likes leather, dark woods and chunky furniture," says David Phoenix, their decorator. "Maria, on the other hand, is very feminine—fresh flowers, pretty china." The couple entertains casually, with American fare like turkey and mashed potatoes. "Of course, the really hot ticket," Phoenix adds, "is their annual Christmas party in Sun Valley [Idaho]."

Shriver is determined to keep her family's rituals intact in the changing environment that political life is fast creating for them. As the offspring of

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