

# How a film reignited Tata's 'first true love'



Photos: HarperCollins from the book, Ratan Tata: A Life by Thomas Mathew

Ratan Tata's official biography reveals his long-lost romance with Carolyn Emmons, the daughter of a renowned American architect. A Hollywood film rekindled their bond decades later

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**New Delhi:** Ratan Tata found his "first true love" in the teenage daughter of a famous architect in the USA in the early 1960s and the relationship was filled with possibilities but fate willed otherwise, reveals a farm-fresh official biography of the industrialist who passed away last month.

The association was revived in recent years; noted Hollywood director Wes Anderson's 2007 film, *The Darjeeling Limited*, playing a key role in the rekindling.

Carolyn Emmons was 19 when she was introduced to the debonair young Indian by her architect father Frederick Earl Emmons, the business partner of fellow designer Archibald Jones Quincy. The two had founded Jones and Emmons, which went on to become a vastly successful architectural firm.

"She said that she was attracted to Ratan at first sight. Her parents were also very fond of him... But the relationship was short-lived," writes Thomas Mathew in the billionaire businessman's new biography, *Ratan Tata: A Life*.

The common link between Carolyn's father and Ratan was architect-

ture. In January 1962, Ratan had completed a five-year-course in architecture receiving a BSc degree from Cornell University. Jones, the business partner of Carolyn's father, had evaluated his fifth-year thesis. Ratan wrote a letter and dialled Jones. The positive response led the young Indian to fly to Los Angeles where he was offered a job in the firm.

Carolyn's father "loved" Ratan, the book says. Her mother also thought that the debonair and "polite" young architect was "the most wonderful thing" that could happen to Carolyn. But the relationship couldn't proceed further because in July 1962, Ratan returned to India to meet his ailing grandmother.

"Carolyn was expected to follow but on Oct 20, 1962, war broke out between India and China. Although in just a month, a ceasefire was declared in the subcontinent, to an American, the situation looked too fraught. Soon afterwards, the two drifted apart," the book says.

Not giving the relationship a better chance remained a lingering regret with Carolyn. She later married Owen

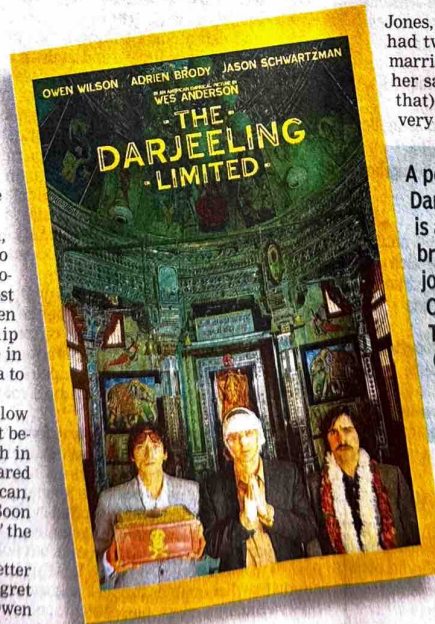
Jones, an architect and a pilot. She had two children from a steady marriage. But the book also quotes her saying, "The funny thing (is that) I married a man who was very much like Ratan."

journey to India. After the show, one of them asked Carolyn if she ever thought about visiting India. "That was all it took to trigger an avalanche of memories," the book says.

Carolyn replied that she knew someone in India and expressed a desire to google him. She discovered online that Ratan was now chairman of Tata Sons and Tata Trusts. Re-establishing links via email, Carolyn informed him that she planned to visit India. The trip fructified the next year and she spent about five weeks in India.

"Ratan and Carolyn met in Delhi and spent some time with each other. Since then, Carolyn has travelled to India quite regularly. She made it a point to visit Mumbai on Ratan's 80th birthday on Dec 28, 2017 and visited him again in 2021. Ratan also takes Carolyn out for dinner almost every time he is in the USA," writes Mathew, a retired bureaucrat whose book draws on "hundreds of hours of interviews with Ratan Tata," apart from his friends, family and associates.

The industrialist passed away on October 9, 2024 in a Mumbai hospital. His last rites were performed with full state honours.



A poster of the film, *The Darjeeling Limited*, which is about three estranged brothers on an emotional journey to India. It made Carolyn look up Ratan Tata online. (Above) Old pictures of the two published in Tata's biography

Owen died in 2006. A year later, Carolyn was watching, *The Darjeeling Limited*, with her friends. The movie, starring Owen Wilson and Adrien Brody, is about three estranged brothers on an emotional