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The Day JFK Yelled at Jackie: "STOP SEEING ONASSIS!"

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and
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I first saw the gracious lady who was to become the most publicized female of this century in a newspaper city room, 18 years ago, when I was a copy girl on the now-defunct Washington *Times Herald.*

The woman was Jacqueline Bouvier, who, in the years ahead, would become a Kennedy *and* an Onassis.

Early one evening, as I entered the semihysterical atmosphere of the city room—a place not noted for *haute couture*—I saw sitting at a desk a most attractive young lady, cool as a gin and tonic, wearing one of those simple but stunning little shirtwaist dresses with a solid gold circular pin at the collar, the uniform of the post-debs in the early '50s. Her dress alone—probably from Henri Bendel—cost twice the paltry $32.50 paid each week to girl reporters.

I asked a rewrite man who she was. "The best-dressed woman in the newspaper business," he replied. "Jacqueline Bouvier."

"What's she doing here?"

"I guess she's killing time until someone rich enough asks her to marry him."

Miss Bouvier had been employed as the "Inquiring Photographer." Carrying a camera about the size and shape of a shoe box, she was assigned to stop passers-by in the streets, ask them a pertinent or, more often, an inane question—"Do you sleep in pajamas?"—and take their pictures.

Jackie brought in some pretty dreadful pictures, generally out of focus, unprintable. She was summoned to the Photo Department one day and told that she should stand six feet from the subject while snapping pictures.

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A seasoned photo hand lay down on the floor on his back, his toes to Jackie's toes, and said: "Now, see my head? It's approximately six feet from you."

But to return to the evening I first saw Jackie, who, I must say, lit up the drab newsroom like a bunch of American Beauty roses in a hospital ward. She had finished her work hours before, but was sitting around, killing time, until the young man she was then dating, Congressman John Fitzgerald Kennedy, finished his business on Capitol Hill.

After some months as a cameraman, Jackie wangled herself a free-lance assignment to cover Queen Elizabeth's coronation. She sent back chatty, intriguing interviews, accompanied by quite passable sketches she had drawn of the aristocratic people gathered for the occasion.

Jacqueline Bouvier never returned to the newsroom. She went the usual route—"from graduation to marriage"—and at a fabulous Newport ceremony married John Kennedy. When it was learned that Jackie would no longer be with us, one editor said: "Jackie meant well, but this was not her home."

But my days with Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy did not end there. I left the paper to work for Lyndon B. Johnson in his fight for the 1960 Democratic Presidential nomination, and when he lost to Mr. Kennedy, I assisted his campaign for the Vice-Presidency. After the Democratic victory at the polls, I was appointed to the White House staff as a researcher-writer in the speech department.

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Alas, the Kennedy years ended all too soon. A few weeks after the President was murdered, I remember standing with a group of staffers in the driveway that snakes along the west side of the executive mansion and watching as Jackie stepped into a waiting limousine, waved farewell to all of us, and took her leave. One man standing nearby sighed: "Jackie meant well, but this was not her home."

Having seen, at first hand, Jackie Kennedy in the newspaper business and in the White House, I must agree: She was at home in neither. The people in the press world were not her kind of people, and the politicians who surrounded her as First Lady were not her kind of people.

On many occasions during the 1960 campaign when Jackie's presence might have helped her husband, she avoided political rallies as if they were barroom brawls. Fortunately, she had an excuse—she was pregnant with John-John. Later, when the gossips criticized her avoidance of the formal duties usually associated with being the First Lady, her various excuses for ducking stuffy formal functions were weakened by repetition, and it was finally accepted that Jackie was not and would never be—as her husband had desired — another Eleanor Roosevelt.

"Imagine Jackie visiting a coal mine or inspecting a public electric project in her latest Dior creation!" one fashion commentator exclaimed in print.

Once, Jackie herself, in an unguarded moment, confided to a friend how ghastly bored she was not only at official affairs, but during meals at Hyannis Port when the conversation was dominated, as usual, by politics. In *her* set, politics and religion were taboo at table.

Jacqueline Bouvier was raised in the genteel atmosphere of conservative high society: debutante parties at the Clambake Club, and formal dinners with the very proper people whose ancestors not only came over on the *Mayflower* but whose staterooms on that crowded vessel were in the deluxe section. Jackie disapproved of informality in any form. The one time she joined in the Kennedys' favorite game of touch football she sprained her ankle.

Nancy Tuckerman, who was Jackie's roommate at Miss Porter's finishing school, once said: "Jackie is one of those people who dress for dinner."

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Those of us near the First Lady often sensed the underlying tension between Jackie and the other Kennedy women, particularly between her and Ethel.

English fashion writer Eve Pollard, who knows all about international society and its political offshoots, wrote in her just-published book, *Jackie*:

"The lives of Ethel and Jackie could not be more different. Ethel had no desire to experience the social scene. Her Hickory Hill home was decorated in American style, full of comfortable sofas and television sets. Jackie's homes were elegant French versions. As much as art fascinated Jackie, it confused Ethel, who could not understand or be at ease with intellectuals. She preferred to organize barbecues and outdoor parties."

These differences were further illustrated in a story told to me by a friend who had sailed aboard the Kennedy family yacht, the *Honeyfitz*, one day in the Camelot period. During lunch, on the bow sat Ethel and Bobby, Joan and Ted, the President, assorted friends and political cronies, and children, children, children. The women wore a jumble of blue jeans and foul-weather gear with scarves over wildly blowing hair; some were barefoot. They ate sandwiches and potato chips out of paper bags, and drank their beer straight out of the can.

On the fantail sat Jackie and Lee wearing "correct" sailing attire of white sharkskin slacks with little nothing T-shirts from Jax. Their male companion was the very social LeMoyne Billings, who was dressed in gray flannels and a crested blazer. They were served, from silver trays presented by a white-coated steward, with chilled cracked crab accompanied by the right dry white wine.

It was but a short distance from the fantail to the bow, but for Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy it was forever.

Jackie's relationship with Ted's wife, Joan, was even chillier. She chose to ignore completely her beautiful blond sister-in-law. Jackie was in a particularly catty mood one day when a friend asked her what she thought Joan would do with her life. As cool as a note from the Soviet Foreign Office, Jackie replied: "Have children! What else?"

One of Jackie's intimates, who often reflected the First Lady's thinking, commented one evening: "Oh, that Teddy! He looks

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so God-awful, 4H healthy. Every time I see him, I think he's the delivery boy who just brought the groceries."

Jackie and her sisters-in-law greatly differed in the manner of raising children. Jackie believed, as befitted her background, that children should be seldom seen and never heard. Whenever her kids kicked up a storm, she summoned their nanny, Maude Shaw, and said quietly: "Miss Shaw, please take the children."

(After one of Jackie's periodic shakeups of the White House servants, the President was overheard saying to Mrs. Kennedy: "Good Lord, Jackie, who will be next? Maude?" But I was told: "Jacqueline would never dare fire Maude Shaw. This is one thing the President would not have, come hell or high water. Really, Jackie couldn't cope with the children herself, not for a minute.")

In Ethel's and Joan's homes, kids were all over the place, and scuffed and stained furniture attested to their rambunctious, permissive upbringing.

"The children cling to the guests like plaster," said a Washington colleague after a hectic meal at Hickory Hill, Bobby's home. "They surround you in the swimming pool, when you are trying to read on the terrace, and turn dinner into feeding time at the zoo."

Jackie, a Victorian on the subject, would no more have her children at table when she was entertaining, than she would invite a celebrated trunk murderer to dine.

The only Kennedy girl who was really Jackie's cup of tea was Pat Lawford, divorced wife of the handsome, urbane actor, Peter Lawford. After all, Peter Lawford's mother *is* Lady Lawford, a kind of bargain-counter British aristocrat, and Peter, whom she adored, had a way with him, and he ran with the Hollywood aristocracy led by His Majesty Frank Sinatra and The Royal Rat Pack.

After the President's death, Jackie found Bobby an understanding friend. He spent endless hours at Jackie's temporary home on "N" Street in Georgetown. A lady reporter, based in the White House, who kept a 24-hour-a-day vigil outside Jackie's home, one evening witnessed something of a scene between Bobby and Ethel.

Bobby arrived with his wife in their limousine and stepped out. Then he leaned through the open window and spent several minutes urging Ethel *please* to go on to a party without him. He wanted

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to spend the evening comforting Jackie, alone. Ethel had a few things to say about that.

Later, Ethel was heard to say, at a private party she attended, again without Bobby: "Maybe he's right—he's got to comfort Jackie. But we've got a houseful of kids who'd like to see their father once in a while."

As the world now knows, the President was troubled by Jackie's spending sprees. "It is damn poor politics," he often said, well within hearing of the staff.

In March, 1963, when slavies such as myself were turning out reams of research material that might be of some use to the beleaguered President who was wrestling with Vietnam, West Berlin, and Civil Rights, the First Lady presented her own interesting piece of information to Mr. Kennedy.

She had *only* spent $16,000 on personal effects during January and February of that year. In the same period, during 1962, she had spent $28,000 — a considerable portion of it for clothes.

Jackie's compulsive shopping was hardly a secret to those in the business of selling objets d'art, jewelry, and high-fashion clothes in Paris, New York, and Rome. But no one in the White House dared leak a hint of this to the press for fear of being sacked. Retailers were equally discreet, for fear of losing Jackie as a customer. One time, Oleg Cassini, briefly Mrs. Kennedy's favorite designer, almost physically evicted a reporter from his office because the newsman asked about the First Lady's clothes budget.

When it was reported that Mrs. Kennedy spent $50,000 — which to those of us in the know was a conservative figure — on clothes in her first 15 months in the White House, Jackie, embarrassed, said publicly: "I couldn't spend that much—not unless I wore sable underwear."

Jackie was a master of deception. In the White House, she never wore her double-breasted mink coat when she could be photographed. But after her husband died, and she moved to New York, she wore the mink, as one fashion writer put it, "to do errands around Manhattan."

Jackie's spending, and the ensuing publicity, drove Pierre Salinger, the Presidential press secretary, to biting clean through his cigar whenever the subject was raised. Jackie realized Mr. Salinger's problems, and he kept on his desk in the pressroom a silver-

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framed picture she had given him, inscribed, in her school-girl scrawl: "From the cross you have to bear."

The President most objected to Jackie's numerous (and well publicized) trips to New York on her shopping sprees. She stayed at the swank Hotel Carlyle. During her stay, there passed before ever-watchful reporters camped in the lobby, a parade of dress designers to show Mrs. Kennedy their latest creations.

But shopping was so much a part of Jacqueline Kennedy's life style—it was a compulsion—that she could not and would not end her New York sorties. Once this caused a sticky situation. Offering a "diplomatic" alibi, the First Lady was "unable" to appear at a reception for Secretary of State Dean Rusk. But it was soon whispered among the guests attending the reception that "Her Elegance," as Jackie was known in fashion circles, was in New York shopping.

The President was particularly grieved by a trip Jackie made to India. He had stressed to her the importance of *not* making a big thing about clothes in that country with its grinding poverty.

President Kennedy was hardly delighted when he saw, on the evening TV news, a film of his wife's huge steamer trunks going aboard the Pan American Airways jet. Mrs. Kennedy's entourage included a hairdresser and her personal maid, and the television reporter said that the clothes she had with her included unworn gowns from the most expensive dress houses—Chez Ninon, Lanvin, Castillo, and Oleg Cassini.

In the office, where we collected clippings from foreign papers that might interest the President, we did not quite know what to do with the reports that soon poured in from the left-wing Indian press. They made anti-American symbols out of Mrs. Kennedy's Somali leopard coat and mink sweater.

Whenever the President felt that Jackie was "too much," even in the fashion line, he asked his father, Joseph E. Kennedy, one-time Ambassador to England, to speak to her. The elder Kennedy was just about the only one who could influence Jackie once she had put her foot down. It was generally believed that he talked her into lengthening her dresses at a time when critics were carping at her rising hemlines.

When the President's father had his tragic stroke with resulting speech difficulties, it seemed

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to the White House staff that Jackie became ever more obstinate in setting her own independent course.

Not only was Mrs. Kennedy a blessing to interior decorators, dress designers, hairdressers, and milliners, but she often included them in her luncheon and theater parties and visits to discotheques. On one visit to New York, a photographer got a candid shot of her dancing with a more-than-somewhat effeminate clothes creator. When the President greeted his wife on her return to the White House, he promptly said: "For God's sake, Jackie, can't you steer clear of the Nellie boys until I'm reelected?"

Despite elaborate attempts to keep Presidential family affairs quiet, the White House is a fishbowl. One day at the White House mess, the luncheon entertainment concerned the story of how the President had walked into Jacqueline's suite without warning and erupted when he saw carpenters enlarging his wife's overflowing clothes closets.

"Jackie," snapped the President, "at this rate you're going to need the Pentagon for your wardrobe."

It seemed to those of us on the White House staff that relations between the Presidential couple were most brittle in the months just before the tragedy in Dallas. There was a real difference over—of all things—an invitation Mrs. Kennedy received to make a Mediterranean cruise on Aristotle Socrates Onassis' yacht, *Christina*....

The Kennedys had met the multimillionaire Greek shipping tycoon when John Kennedy was still in the Senate, and Mrs. Kennedy's sister, Princess Lee Radziwill, was Onassis' close friend.

However, now that he was President, Mr. Kennedy realized that Mr. Onassis was, to say the least, political poison. The Greek-born shipping man had been indicted in 1954 for "conspiring to defraud the U.S. Government" by illegally purchasing, through dummy corporations, several wartime Liberty ships at bargain prices. Although he spent considerable time in America, Mr. Onassis paid no taxes here, for his ships sailed under flags of convenience. If that wasn't enough, his private life, in which he associated with many of the most glamorous women on earth, was the subject of much public gossip. It was rumored around the White House that the President had been heard to yell: "Jackie, stop seeing Onassis!"

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But Jackie insisted on making the Mediterranean trip. She said she needed privacy and rest after losing her infant son Patrick.

The President eventually consented after being assured that the yacht was being put at Mrs. Kennedy's disposal, but Onassis would not be aboard.

The *Christina* sailed from Piraeus and made several stops, constantly shadowed by the press. Mr. Onassis was not seen. But when the yacht docked in Istanbul, down the gangplank came Onassis, who had remained hidden during previous stops.

It was later learned that it was Jackie who talked him into going ashore at Istanbul, because she "was sick and tired of this silly secrecy."

The news of this small deception caused an uproar. The Greek press, at least that part of it hostile to the shipper, chided Mrs. Kennedy for "dignifying" Onassis by her presence.

Republicans made it an issue because of, as one Congressman said, "Mr. Onassis' shady reputation." On top of that, columnists suggested that the real reason Onassis invited Mrs. Kennedy was to upstage his rival, shipping man Stavros Niarchos, who had recently been host on *his* yacht, to Princess Margaret of Britain.

President Kennedy exploded. Using the special microwave hookup that had been arranged (at considerable cost to us lowly taxpayers), he called Jackie, and is reported to have said: "I know you're on the high seas, and I don't care how you get off that yacht, but get off! Jackie, you're a good swimmer."

Jackie did *not* get off the yacht. The *Christina* sailed on with its famous passenger—its giant compressors cooling gallons of champagne and caviar. Jackie had no intention of cutting short her cruise. That was her life style; she was Jacqueline Bouvier.

At the time, a story circulated in the White House that later seemed almost prophetically significant. Talking about Jackie's go-it-alone attitude, columnist Joseph Alsop, a friend of the Kennedys, said: "Jackie is as indepen-

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dent as Maria Callas."

President Kennedy's constant concern about Jackie's public appearances and her private expenses was a far cry from the attitude expressed recently by her present husband, Mr. Onassis.

The shipping tycoon recently said: "Jackie is a little bird that needs its freedom and security—and she gets them both from me. She can do exactly as she pleases. . . . I never question her and she never questions me." ■ ■

Mrs. Kennedy's Melton Coat by Oleg Cassini (1960)

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