

The Week in BOOKS

By MART. MacGREGG

"I am sure this book is going to be misinterpreted," said Jean Stafford at a press conference Thursday. She was talking about her three-day interview with Mrs. Marguerite Oswald ("A Mother in History") and told how at a cocktail party guest challenged her: "How come you're capitalizing on the assassination?"

"I'm sure," said Miss Stafford, "that people are going to be so repelled by the subject that they're going to pay no attention to the book at all."

Asked if she had heard how Mrs. Oswald felt about the book, Jean Stafford said no. "I think it's pretty plain. She thought I was going to write a great long valentine to her."



JEAN STAFFORD

Will Mrs. Oswald realize how unfavorable the portrait is? "Yes, I think she will, but I don't think she'll care," Miss Stafford said. Mrs. Oswald had shown her an enormous album of clippings, extremely unflattering: "It didn't matter if she got the space." Was Mrs. Oswald paid for the interview (initiated by McCall's)? "Oh, yes."

Reached by telephone in Fort Worth, Tex., Mrs. Oswald spoke in a surprisingly girlish voice, light, ladylike, not unattractive. "Yes, of course, I read Jean Stafford's book. I prefer not to comment. I feel it would

be beneath me to comment. It's about me, but it's her book, her party. I don't think it would be the proper thing for me to make a comment on whether it's fair or not. Fair or unfair, I will say this much: If it is unfair, let them have fun at my expense."

The candy-sweet tones continued with a note of grievance: "Yes, I saw Miss Stafford on the Today Show because this is my lifework. I was not told Miss Stafford was going to be on the Today Show, she did not tell me, her publisher did not tell me, a neighbor who takes the TV guide told me, I had no knowledge." Or comment. However, Mrs. Oswald said if anyone wished her to review the book she would be most happy to. Would she expect a fee? Certainly not. Only her expenses, if she had to make a trip. "I have never made any money out of my son. I never take anything but expenses." She added, apparently unconscious of the irony: "I have no money. I have even had to sell my son's letters."

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At the Algonquin, Agnes Newton Keith ("Children of Allah") talked about the place where her husband was a reforestation expert