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Another Peek Behind

BY LEAH GARCHIK

We were old enough to know that America wasn't perfect, but young enough to hope it could get better. A shiny new president and his gleaming wife were in the White House and anything seemed possible.

They were witty, they were rich, they were cultured, they were smart, they were winners and they seemed so much in love. It's taken a long time — almost 40 years — to becloud the perfectly framed images.

Now, however, with the publication of Christopher Andersen's "Jack and Jackie: Portrait of an American Marriage," little of the legend goes unchallenged.

Andersen, whose 16 previous books include biographies of Katharine Hepburn and Susan Hayward, doesn't refrain from dishing the dirt, authenticating his assertions with chapter-by-chapter lists of personal interviews and oral histories. Unlike Gary Aldrich, whose new Clinton exposé seems to rely largely on testimony from political enemies, Andersen claims to have talked with scores of friends, polit-

ical associates and family members.

Detailed footnotes on who said exactly what would have made "Jack and Jackie" even more doubt-proof, but it's clear that Andersen meant to write a page-turner, not a scholarly tome.

There seems to be no such compelling purpose to "Jacqueline Bouvier: An Intimate Memoir," a first-person account of the former first lady's childhood as recalled by her cousin John H. Davis.

Family Trivia

Scouring his brain for the tiniest detail he might have overlooked in four previous books about the Kennedys, Davis devotes more than a page, for example, to a meaningless account of Blackjack Bouvier chastising a young cousin for exploding a noisemaker near his daughter Jacqueline at a family dinner.

Davis' branch of Jackie's family — the Bouviers — was pretty much discarded when her mother remarried, so his insights about his cousin past the age of 13 are limited. The text feels meager compared with Andersen's gush of infor-



Jacqueline Kennedy's life is explored in two new books.

mation.

JFK was a man with a need for sex but no particular feeling for romance. He married Jackie when he was well into his 30s, writes Andersen, because his father warned him that voters would think he was gay if he didn't have a wife.

Camelot's Closed Doors

BOOKS

JACK AND JACKIE *Portrait of an American Marriage*

By Christopher Andersen
Morrow; 400 pages; \$24

JACQUELINE BOUVIER *An Intimate Memoir*

By John H. Davis
Wiley; 200 pages; \$24.95

She was a smart young woman with a longing for financial security, who married Jack, writes Andersen, because his father had a big bank account. Throughout the marriage, all her personal bills were paid by her father-in-law.

The love affairs of JFK are old news, but Andersen's explanations for the roots of his sexual appetites are fascinating:

Joe Kennedy encouraged his boys to prove their manliness by behaving like bulls. Papa Kennedy laughed and stayed the course when JFK, his young son, found him making love to his mistress on

the deck of his sailboat.

Jack's need for sex was spurred as an adult by an assortment of drugs he took for physical relief from pain and to keep his energy levels up, Andersen says. Max Jacobson, the New York physician known as "Dr. Feelgood," shot the president full of amphetamines to increase his stamina and elevate his moods. "I don't care if there's panther piss in there," JFK told Jacobson, "as long as it makes me feel good."

Andersen writes that Jackie, too, was a patient of Jacobson's. "When I learned that Jack was getting these shots from Dr. Max, I told Jackie, 'Watch out. Stay away from him,'" recalls Gore Vidal. "I didn't know at the time that she was getting the shots, too."

And while she couldn't match her husband's sexual conquests in sheer volume, Andersen says she wasn't 100 percent faithful, quoting David Schoenbrun, who was Washington bureau chief of CBS: "Nobody should worry about Jackie." The author speculates that her lovers included Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric and Washington lawyer Walter Sohler.

In 1955, when the marriage was at an all-time low, writes Andersen, Joe tried to avert a divorce by offering to pay off Jackie to stay.

In the last pages of "Jack and Jackie," Andersen manages to draw back from the sordid details of the relationship, maintaining that the Kennedys were over the worst. They went to Dallas with a new love for each other, he writes, and, if Lee Harvey Oswald hadn't intervened, would have ridden off into old age together.

Sweep of Sentiment

Their marital problems "were nothing like us," he concludes, with a sweep of sentiment, "and everything like us. There was an American marriage."

Seeing those problems now, however, the reader is led by the weight of Andersen's evidence to a different conclusion: Jack and Jackie were figures on the stage, and we were mesmerized by the magic of their performance. We forgot that what we were seeing was pure artifice.

Leah Garchik writes the *Personals* column for *The Chronicle*.