

PROFILE IN COURAGE

HOPE DIES

After JFK was murdered at her side, she calmly put together a funeral that kept the nation together. She was only 34

The morning of Nov. 22, 1963, started out with laughter. When a crowd outside the Kennedys' Fort Worth hotel asked where Jackie was, the President quipped: "Mrs. Kennedy is organizing herself. It takes her a little longer. But, of course, she looks better than we do when she does it." She was, in fact, getting dressed, putting on a pink Chanel suit and matching hat that the President had picked out for her to wear.

After a political breakfast, the couple flew to Dallas for a motorcade through the hot, sunbaked city. As they came through Dealey Plaza at 12:30 p.m., Jackie heard what she thought at first was a motorcycle backfiring. Three shots hit her husband. "My God! What are they doing?" she shouted. "My God! They've killed Jack! They've killed my husband! Jack! Jack!" The limo rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital—but it was too late. Before the doctors covered the slain President with a white sheet, Jackie kissed his feet, his lips and his open eyes and placed her wedding ring on his finger. (It was returned to her that night.)

She rode with JFK's casket in a rear compartment of Air Force One back to Washington, refusing to change out of her suit and stockings, which were spattered with his blood. "I want them to see what they have done to Jack," she said. Once she returned, she began to work through the night, orchestrating every aspect of her husband's funeral. It was to be like Abraham Lincoln's, she decided, down to the muffled drums and the riderless horse. Her husband would be buried in Arlington National Cemetery—across the Potomac from the Lincoln Memorial—not in Boston, as the Kennedy family had hoped.

No detail was too small for her attention: the positioning of the casket in the East Room, the hanging of mourning drapes, the placement of a military honor guard. She went through her husband's effects and found a memento to give to each of his friends, along with a personal note; press secretary Pierre Salinger, for example, received an engraved cigar holder. She wrote out instructions on how memorial programs would be laid on seats in St. Matthew's Cathedral. And outside the church, when they played "Hail to the Chief," she cued 3-year-old John Jr. to salute his father's casket—perhaps the most famous farewell gesture in American history.

Two weeks later she gave a rare interview to correct an important omission; she had found a name for the Kennedy years. She told writer Theodore White that JFK had played a recording of the musical *Camelot* nearly every night. The lines he listened for, she said, were: "Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment, that was known as Camelot." And she added, "It will never be that way again." ■

"I should have known that it was asking too much to dream that I might have grown old with him and seen our children grow up together," Jackie wrote in a brief memoir a year after she—and the nation—had buried her slain husband. "So now he is a legend when he would have preferred to be a man."



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