

# Jackie's Days

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## Second in a series

I loved that first office I had in the White House proper — the Mansion, as we called it. It was in the elegant and historic Monroe Room in which three Presidents had made momentous decisions — Lincoln, concerning the Civil War, McKinley, the Spanish-American War, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, World War II. It was a serene island in the living quarters of the Presidential family on the second floor.

For the first three months Jackie used the Queen's Room for her bedroom, while the President used the Lincoln Room.

Jackie breakfasted from a bedtray, while looking over the morning papers.

At times, the tray and newspapers would still be on the bed when I went in. If Jackie wanted to start right in with the morning's dictation, I'd simply take the tray and put it on the carpet by the door.

As I sat in the tufted chair by her bed, I'd invariably marvel to myself how wonderful she looked. She really needed no makeup; and I rather enjoyed seeing her without it—young and fresh as a child. She needed no curlers. Her hair, already brushed, fell loosely around her face, accentuating the youthful, carefree appearance.

Her dictation was sure and fluent, and covered a vast variety of details. They centered mainly on the ordering of her clothes, cosmetics, jewelry and household items. There were details of running or decorating the White House, as well as the weekend house in Middleburg, the acceptance of gifts or the polite rejection of them. Some were dealings with various art galleries and art scouts, who were looking for things for her personal art collection. Others concerned paintings that were being offered for loan, as gifts, or were being purchased for the White House. And some were decisions about press interviews and requests that she pose for pictures (usually denied).

The amusing thing was that some of the current things she was sending from the White House that moment also were being looked at and saved. And that was causing problems. The items in question were small checks she signed to cover daily purchases.

Many people who received these checks were not cashing them, preferring instead to hold on to them as "souvenirs"! The same situation prevailed with those sent out by the President.

See JACKIE, B4, Col. 1

JACKIE, From B1

The result was bookkeeping chaos.

But the Kennedys quickly solved these problems in a manner that soon became quite familiar to me. In the future, it was to be my signature that would appear on all the checks being sent out for Jackie—with a brand-new bank account established in the name of "Mary B. Gallagher—Special."

It was set up at the Riggs National Bank of D.C., the same bank Lincoln had used a century before. An initial deposit was made in the amount of \$10,000, and it was kept at this level through monthly deposits.

Our morning work sessions normally would last until around lunchtime.

Afterwards, she would take a nap, putting on a nightgown. Provi would even change the sheets because, as she put it, "Mees Kennedy likes nice fresh sheets." And indeed Provi would have the bed freshly made up again, looking fit for a queen, at that! (Providencia Paredes was Jackie's personal maid.)

After her nap, Jackie would dress in slacks and a loose-fitting blouse or pullover for our afternoon work sessions. She particularly liked turtleneck pullovers with long sleeves made of lightweight jersey, which we bought in great quantity from a store called Jax-Manhattan, Inc., in New York. In the winter, her slacks would be gray or brown, but in the summer, she would

blossom out in the colors of the garden — pinks and other bright colors.

It was to the Monroe Room that Tom Walsh came down from New York March 21, 1961, to help me set up my new ledger system for keeping strict account of where Jackie's heaviest expenses were incurred.

After dinner, I posted figures to ledger until 10 p.m., including every check written over the past two and one-half months. This, as it turned out, was the very beginning of the mammoth bookkeeping system for which I was to be responsible to the President over the ensuing years, along with my regular secretarial duties for Jackie.

I always thought that any woman would have enjoyed the chance to step into Jackie's dressing room and glance over the colorful array of clothes that hung in the closets — a real treat to the feminine eye! Provi neatly arranged the garments in their various categories — suits, blouses, slacks, dresses, evening gowns—with matching shoes carefully lined along the floor beneath the racks. One could simply spot the shoes that went with each particular outfit.

In another closet, a walk-in, pretty hats sat on their head forms on the shelves, with even more shelves holding the assortment of handbags. And it was almost like walking into a little shoe store—even more shoes were lined up along the floor.

Sweaters, lingerie, gloves, scarves, stockings — all carefully laundered and folded — rested neatly on shelves in the dressing room just beyond the clothes racks, always readily accessible. In this same general area were Jackie's jewel cases — about two or three —

for her quick selection of an appropriate piece.

I thoroughly enjoyed working for Jackie at the White House—whether it was switching from typing to telephoning to bookkeeping, or switching from signing my name to her name in paying Jackie's bills.

How satisfying it was to be able to help Jackie this way — to be able to take her dictation, no matter how fast, without interrupting her as she went along, or asking her to repeat something, which would cause her to lose an important thought along the way.

Then, suddenly, I was to be evicted from the east solarium! Mrs. Kennedy had plans for it to become a little classroom for the children.

So, off I went to share Provi's quarters with the racks of clothes and the couch full of gloves.

There were gloves of every length—wrist, above-wrist, elbow, above-elbow, arm-length. Black gloves, white gloves. I don't believe that I have ever seen the couch in the room when it was not covered with dress boxes, lingerie, and gloves, gloves, gloves.

My new office suddenly looked like a dress shop with the overflow clothes from the closets hung on racks.

I remember when Jackie was finally going to unveil the Treaty Room to the press. Only minutes before her scheduled appearance in the room, she had a sudden inspiration and sent me in to "copy the names of all the signers of the treaties in there."

I jotted down the names and rushed back to her. As

she stood before her mirror, making last-minute adjustments to her hair, she quickly memorized the names as I read and reread them all to her. Then she went in and made a brilliant presentation that sounded as if she had been studying it all for months.

I felt very proud of her that day.

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