

Jackie: 'America's Queen'

British bio comes closest to the 'real' celebrity

By JULIE HATFIELD
The Boston Globe

THIS IS the book that answers the question, "Can anything new be written about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis that we don't already know?"

Thanks to extensive research and hundreds of interviews, the answer is, unexpectedly, yes. It is ironic that it has taken a British viscountess living in London to write such an insightful book about a quintessentially American woman and American subject.

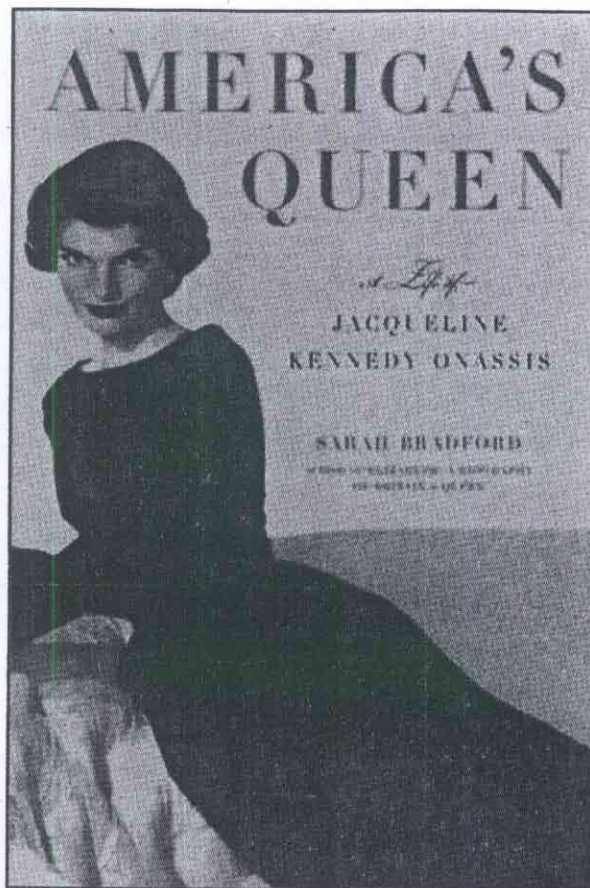
Book Review

America's Queen: The Life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis
By Sarah Bradford
The Viking Press
500 pp., \$29.95

But then, historian Sarah Bradford was already known for her biographies of Benjamin

Disraeli, George VI, Princess Grace and Queen Elizabeth II, so it may have been easier for her to delve into the private life of this extremely private celebrity. She earned the respect and trust of some of the woman's most intimate friends, and as a result provides some of the most personally knowledgeable observations about her that have ever been put into print. From them, we find out much more about the complex personality of this poor little rich girl who became, upon her first marriage, American royalty. And of her subsequent creation — or, as Pierre Salinger called it, her "Camelotization" — of the myth of the Kennedy years.

Jackie (as Bradford calls her throughout, echoing the near universal practice) was obsessed with money and lived in fear of poverty, despite the outward appearance of a jet-setter life of world travel and horse farms, couture, and jewels. The



insecurity arose, we are told, because her father squandered his money; even though she and her sister lived amid great wealth in her stepfather's home, they knew they would not be inheriting any of Hugh Auchincloss' money. Gore Vidal, a close friend, said, "Both sisters were brought up like geishas, to get money out of men." Both of Jackie's husbands eventually complained about her spending. She would not have married Jack Kennedy if he had not been rich; after his death, her first serious affair was with architect John Warnecke, but her friends conceded that he wasn't "big enough money" for her to consider marrying.

The familiar soft, little-girl voice was created for effect just

after Jackie left college and entered the marriage market. She had big, ugly hands. She was a nail biter and a chain smoker all her life, but she kept those secrets, as so many others, hidden from the public.

She was warned before her marriage that JFK suffered from satyriasis, and she knew about all of his affairs, including two 20-minute sessions with a mother and daughter during a party at which she was also in attendance. When Aristotle Onassis went quickly back to his mistress Maria Callas (who called Jackie "the Gold Digger") after their marriage, Jackie realized that once again, she was not number one in her husband's life. But she and JFK had grown closer just before his death, and for sever

al years afterward, she was a shattered person, going over and over the last few moments of that day in Dallas, wondering if she could have somehow deflected the bullet if she had been looking toward her husband instead of off to the left as she had been directed, "to catch more voters' eyes." JFK's last words to her were, "Take off the glasses, Jackie," referring to her ubiquitous sunglasses. He knew the voters wanted to see her eyes; she wanted to hide them. What gave her that inexplicable aura was her ability to distance herself from others, reverting into her "ice zones" when she felt threatened by outsiders.

JFK came to realize her assets as a political wife. For one, he respected her ability with languages, which was much better than his. She was brighter than she seemed to many people, a serious student always. After her marriage to Onassis, she studied the language, architecture, history, and literature of Greece, and she had her children learn the language as well. In both of her publishing jobs (at Viking and at Doubleday), her co-workers told Bradford "she was the perfect editor, treating other people's texts with the precision and intelligence with which she edited her own life — shaping, cutting, deploying the *mot juste*, the precise image." She was a fine, risk-taking horsewoman and was at her happiest riding in the Virginia horse country.

Bradford is thorough if not always meticulously accurate. But thoroughness is what we want. Even after reading this intensive portrait, we remain insatiably curious about the woman. There will no doubt be plenty of interest left on the day the JFK Library finally releases the detailed interview historian William Manchester conducted with a tearful Jackie shortly after the assassination.

That text is locked away the library until 2067.

The reviewer is with *The Boston Globe*.