Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Dies of Cancer at 64

Widow of President, Ailing, Spent Final Day at Her Home

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, the widow of President John F. Kennedy and of the Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis, died of a form of cancer of the lymphatic system yesterday at her apartment in New York City. She was 64 years old.

Mrs. Onassis, who had enjoyed robust good health nearly all her life, began being treated for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in early January and had been undergoing chemotherapy and other treatments in recent months while continuing her work as a book editor and her social, family and other personal routines.

But the disease, which attacks lymph nodes, an important component of the body's immune system, grew progressively worse. Mrs. Onassis entered the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center for the last time on Monday but returned to her Fifth Avenue apartment on Wednesday after her doctors said there was no more they could do.

In recent years Mrs. Onassis had lived quietly but not in seclusion, working at Doubleday; joining efforts to preserve historic New York buildings; spending time with her son, daughter and grandchildren; jogging in Central Park; getting away to her estates in New Jersey, at Hyannis, Mass., and on Martha's Vineyard, and going about town with Maurice Tempelsman, a financier who had become her closest companion.

She almost never granted interviews on her past — the last was nearly 30 years ago — and for decades she had not spoken publicly about Mr. Kennedy, his Presidency or their marriage.

Although she was one of the world's most famous women — an object of fascination to generations of Americans and the subject of countless articles and books that re-explored the myths and realities of the Kennedy years, the terrible images of the President's 1963 assassination in Dallas, and her made-for-tabloids marriage to the wealthy Mr. Onassis — she was a quintessentially private person, poised and glamorous, but shy and aloof.

They were qualities that spoke of her upbringing in the wealthy and fiercely independent Bouvier and Auchincloss families, of mansion life in East Hampton and Newport, commodious apartments in New York and Paris, of Miss Porter's finishing school and Vassar College and circles that valued a woman's skill with a verse-pen or a watercolor brush, at the reins of a chestnut mare or the center of a whirling charity cotillion.

She was only 23, working as an inquiring photographer for a Washington newspaper and taking in the capital nightlife of restaurants and parties, when she met John F. Kennedy, the young bachelor Congressman from Massachusetts, at a dinner party in 1952. She thought him quixot-
ic after he told her he intended to become President.

But a year later, after Mr. Kennedy had won a seat in the United States Senate and was already being discussed as a Presidential possibility, they were married at Newport, R.I., in the social event of 1953, a union of powerful and wealthy Roman Catholic families whose scions were handsome, charming, trendy and smart. It was a whiff of American royalty.

And after Mr. Kennedy won the Presidency in 1960, there were 1,000 days that seemed to raise up a nation mired in the cold war. There were babies in the White House for the first time in this century, and Jackie Kennedy, the vivacious young mother who showed little interest in the nuances of politics, busily transformed her new home into a place of elegance and culture.

She set up a White House fine arts commission, hired a White House curator and redecorated the mansion with early 19th Century furnishings, museum quality paintings and objets d’art, creating a sumptuous celebration of Americana that 56 million television viewers saw in 1961 as the First Lady, inviting America in, gave a guided tour broadcast by the CBS and NBC television networks.

“She really was the one who made over the White House into a living stage — not a museum — but a stage where American history and art were displayed,” said Hugh Sidey, who was a White House correspondent for Time magazine at the time. He said she told him: “I want to restore the White House to its original glory.”

There was more. She brought in a French chef and threw elegant and memorable parties. The guest lists went beyond prime ministers and potentates to Nobel laureates and distinguished artists, musicians and intellectuals.

Americans gradually became familiar with the whispering, intimate quality of her voice, with the headscarf and dark glasses at the taffrail of Honey Fitz on a summer evening on the Potomac, with the bouffant hair and formal smile for the Rose Garden and the barefoot romp with her children on a Cape Cod beach.

There was an avalanche of articles and television programs on her fashion choices, her hair styles, her tastes in art, music and literature, and on her travels with the President across the nation and to Europe. On a visit to New York, she spoke Spanish in East Harlem and French in a Haitian neighborhood.

Arriving in France, a stunning understated figure in her pillbox hat and wool coat as she rode with the President in an open car, she enthralled crowds that chanted “Vive Jacqui” on the road to Paris, and later, in an evening gown at a dinner at Versailles, she mesmerized the austere Charles De Gaulle.

When the state visit ended, a bemused President Kennedy said: “I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris — and I have enjoyed it.”

Stark Images
Of Bloody Clothes

But the images of Mrs. Kennedy that burned most deeply were those in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963: her lunge across the open limousine as the assassin’s bullets struck, the Schiaparelli pink suit stained with her husband’s blood, her gaunt stunned face in the blur of the speeding motorcade, and the anguish later at Parkland Memorial Hospital as the doctors gave way to the priest and a new era.

In the aftermath, some things were not so readily apparent: her refusal to change clothes on the flight back to Washington to let Americans see the blood; her refusal to take sleeping pills that might dull her capacity to arrange the funeral, whose planning she dominated. She stipulated the riderless horse in the procession and the eternal flame by the grave at Arlington.

And in public, what the world saw was a figure of admirable self-control, a black-veiled widow who walked beside the coffin to the tolling drums with her head up, who reminded 3-year-old John Jr. to salute at the service and who looked with solemn dignity upon the proceedings. She was 34 years old.

A week later, it was Mrs. Kennedy who bestowed the epitaph of Camelot upon a Kennedy Presidency that, while deeply flawed in the minds of many political analysts and ordinary citizens, had for many Americans come to represent something magical and mythical. It happened in an interview Mrs. Kennedy herself requested with Theodore H. White, the reporter-author and Kennedy confidant who was then writing for Life magazine.

The conversation, he said in a 1978 book, “In Search of History,” swung between history and her husband’s death, and while none of JFK’s political shortcomings were mentioned — stories about his liaisons with women were known only to insiders at the time — Mrs. Kennedy seemed determined to “rescue Jack from all these ‘bitter people’ who were going to write about him in history.”

She told him that the title song of the musical “Camelot” had become “an obsession with me” lately. She said that at night before bedtime, her husband had often played it, or asked her to play it, on an old Victrola in their bedroom. Mr. White quoted her as saying:

“And the song he loved most came at the very end of this record, the last side of Camelot, said Camelot. . . . ’Don’t let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.’

“. . . There’ll never be another Camelot again.”

Mr. White recalled: “So the epiphan on the Kennedy Administration became Camelot — a magic moment in American history, when gallant men danced with beautiful women, when great deeds were done, when artists, writers and poets met at the White House and the barbarians beyond the walls were held back.”

But Mr. White, an admirer of Mr. Kennedy, added that her characterization was a misreading of history and that the Kennedy
Lamplight never existed, though it was a time when reason was brought to bear on public issues and the Kennedy people were "more often right than wrong and astonishingly incorruptible."

Five years later, with images of her as the grieving widow faded but with Americans still curious about her life and conduct, Mrs. Kennedy, who had moved to New York to be near family and friends and had gotten into legal disputes with photographers and writers portraying her activities, shivered her almost saintly public image by announcing plans to marry Mr. Onassis.

It was a field day for the tabloids, a shock to members of her own family and a puzzlement to the public, given Camelot-Kennedy mystique. The prospective bridegroom was much shorter, and more than 20 years older, a canny businessman and not even American. Moreover, her brother-in-law, Robert Kennedy, had been assassinated earlier in the year, and the prospective marriage even posed a problem for the Vatican, which hinted that Mrs. Kennedy might become a public sinner.

Bargaining About Money

There were additional unseemly details — a prenuptial agreement that covered money and property and children. But they were married in 1968, and for a time the world saw a new, more outgoing Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. But within a few years there were reported fights over money and other matters and accounts that each was being seen in the company of others.

While they were never divorced, the marriage was widely regarded as over long before Mr. Onassis died in 1975, leaving her a widow for the second time.

Jacqueline Bouvier was born on July 28, 1929, in East Hampton, L.I., to John Vernou Bouvier 3d and Janet Lee Bouvier. A sister, Caroline, known as Lee, was born four years later. From the beginning, the girls knew the trappings and appearances of considerable wealth. Their Long Island estate was called Lasata, an Indian word meaning place of peace. There was also a spacious family apartment at 757 Park Avenue, near 72d Street, in Manhattan.

Although the family lived well during the Depression, Mr. Bouvier's fortunes in the stock market rose and fell after huge losses in the crash of 1929. The marriage also founded. In 1936, Mr. and Mrs. Bouvier separated, and their divorce became final in 1940.

In June 1942, Mrs. Bouvier married Hugh D. Auchincloss, who, like Mr. Bouvier, was a stockbroker. Mr. Auchincloss had been substantially better able to weather the Great Depression; his mother and benefactor was the former Emma Brewster Jennings, daughter of Oliver Jennings, a founder of Standard Oil with John D. Rockefeller.

From her earliest days, Jacqueline Bouvier attracted attention, as much for her intelligence as for her beauty. John H. Davis, a cousin who wrote "The Bouviers," a family history, in 1993, described her as a young woman who outwardly seemed to conform to social norms. But he wrote that she possessed a "fiercely independent inner life which she shared with few people and would one day be partly responsible for her enormous success."

Mr. Davis said Jacqueline "displayed an originality, a perspicacity," that set her apart, that she wrote credible verse, painted and became "an exceptionally gifted eques- trienne." She also "possessed a mysterious authority, even as a teen-ager, that would compel people to do her bidding," he said.

Jacqueline seemed shy with individuals but would flower in large groups, dazzling people. "It was this watertight, interior suffi- ciency, coupled with a need for attention, and corresponding love of being at center stage, which puzzled her relatives so and which in time would alternately charm and perplex the world," Mr. Davis wrote.

Her natural gifts could not save her from the effects of her parents' divorce, and after it occurred, Mr. Davis said, her relatives noticed her "tendency to withdraw frequently into a private world of her own."

John Vernou Bouvier Jr., her grandfather, wrote a history of the Bouvier family called "Our Forebears." The history indicates that the Bouviers were descended from French nobility. Stephen Bingham, who wrote the biography "Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis" (Grosset & Dunlap), called the grandfather's book "a work of massive self- deception." Mr. Davis called it "a wishful history."

From the documentation at hand, the Bouviers, who originated in southern France, had apparently been drapers, tailors, gloves, farmers and even domestic servants. The very name Bouvier means cowherd.

The family's original immigrant, Michel Bouvier, left a troubled France in 1815 after serving in Napoleon's defeated army and settled in Philadelphia. A man of consider- able industry, he started as a handymen and later became a furniture manufacturer and, finally, a land speculator.

After the divorce, Jacqueline remained in touch with her father, but later she also spent a great deal of time with the Auchinclosses, who had a large estate in Virginia called Merrywood and another in Newport, R.I., called Hammersmith Farm. When she was 15, Jacqueline picked Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Conn., an institution that in addi- tion to its academic offerings emphasized good manners and the art of conversation. Its students simply called it Farmington.

She became popular with classmates as well as with young men who visited Farming- ton from Hotchkiss, Choate, St. Paul's and other elite preparatory schools in the North- east. Her teachers regarded her as an out- standing girl, but she once fretted to a friend, "I'm sure no one will ever marry me, and I'll end up being a housemother at Farmington."

When she graduated, her yearbook said her ambition in life was "not to be a housewife."

Just as Jacqueline picked Miss Porter's, she also picked Vassar College, which she entered in 1947, not long after she was named "Debutante of the Year" by Igor Cassini, who wrote for the Hearst newspapers under the byline Cholly Knickerbocker. He described her as a "regal brunette who has classic features and skin the color of Dresden porcelain." He noted that the popular Miss Bouvier had "pole, is soft-spoken and intelligent, everything the leading debutante should be."

Romance With Paris Starts in College

She did well at Vassar, especially in courses on the history of religion and Shake- speare, and made the dean's list. The late Charlotte Curtis, who became society editor of The New York Times and who was a student at Vassar with Miss Bouvier, once wrote that Miss Bouvier was not particularly thrilled with being in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and referred to her college as "that damned Vassar," even though the invitations conti- nued to flow in from young men at Harvard, Yale, Princeton and other leading universi- ties.

In 1949, for her junior year, she decided to apply to a program at Smith College for a year studying in France.

She loved Paris, and when the year was up she decided not to return to Vassar to finish her bachelor's degree but to transfer to George Washington University in Washing- ton. If this new institution lacked some of the élan and elegance of Vassar, its saving grace in her eyes was its location, in the capital. She received a bachelor's degree from George Washington University in 1951.

While she was finishing the work for her degree, she won Vogue magazine's Prix de Paris contest, with an essay on "People I Wish I Had Known," beating out 1,279 other contestants. Her subjects were Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire and Sergei Diaghilev. Her victory entitled her to spend some time in Paris, writing about fashion for Vogue, but she was persuaded not to accept the prize.

C. David Heymann, author of "A Woman Named Jackie," a book on Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, wrote that Hugh Auchincloss had feared that if Jacqueline had returned to Paris and stayed there for any length of time, she might not have ever returned to the United States. Her mother- er came to agree with him. They may have been right. Mrs. Onassis would later said of her stay in Paris as a young woman as "the high point in my life, my happiest and most carefree year."

In Washington, she met and was briefly engaged to John Husted, a stockbroker. Through his stepfather's contacts, she was able to get a job as a photographer at The Washington Times-Herald, earning $42.50 a week. At the paper, she was an inquiring photographer assigned to do a light feature in which people were asked about a topic of the day and who their comments appeared with their photos. Among the questions she asked were: "Are men braver than women in the dental chair?" and, "Do you think a wife should let her husband think he's smarter than she is?"

She continued her work for The Washing- ton Times-Herald and went to work for Washing- ton's restaurants and parties. It was at one such party, given in May 1952 by Charles Bartlett, Washington correspondent for The Chattanooga Times, that she met Mr. Ken- nedy, who would soon capture the Senate seat.
First Lady: In 1962, Mrs. Kennedy, right, and her sister, Lee Radziwill, took an elephant ride during a trip to India.
**Society:** In 1934, 5-year-old Jacqueline Bouvier accompanied her parents, John and Janet, to a horse show in Southampton, L.I.

**Career Woman:** In the early 1950's, she earned $42.50 a week as an inquiring photographer at The Washington Times-Herald.

**Inauguration:** Mrs. Kennedy's stylish pillbox hat contrasted with the President's traditional top hat after Mr. Kennedy took the oath of office on Jan. 20, 1961.
DEATH OF A FORMER FIRST LADY A WORLD OF WEALTH, POWER AND ELEGANCE

On Sept. 12, 1953, Miss Bouvier married Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts at Hammersmith Farm in Newport, R.I.
A Mystique At the White House

After Mr. Kennedy was elected President in 1960, the mystique and aura around Mrs. Kennedy began to grow rapidly, especially after she and her husband made the state visit to France in 1961.

Her elegance and fluency in French captured their hearts, and at a glittering dinner at Versailles, one of Mrs. Kennedy's prize holders was Pres. de Gaulle, a man not easy to mesmerize, as well as several hundred exuberant French people named Bouvier, all of them apparently claiming some sort of kinsmanship.

President de Gaulle, a man not easy to mesmerize, as well as several hundred exuberant French people named Bouvier, all of them apparently claiming some sort of kinsmanship.

At a luncheon at the Elysée Palace, Theordore C. Sorensen wrote in "Kennedy" that President De Gaulle had turned to Mr. Kennedy Jr. A third child, Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, lived only 39 days after she and her husband made the state visit to France in 1961.

To some, Jacqueline Kennedy seemed to fall from grace as her year of mourning ended. She was photographed wearing a miniskirt, she was escorted to lunch and various social gatherings by prominent bachelors, including Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando and Mike Nichols; she toured the Seville Fair on horseback in 1966 and, in a crimson jacket and a rakish broad-brimmed black hat, tossed down a glass of sherry.

"I know," she said, "that to visit Sevilla and not ride horseback at the fair is equal to not coming at all." To some Americans she was no longer just the grieving widow of their martyred President; she was young, attractive and she clearly wanted to live her life with a certain brio.

A Search For Privacy

But Mrs. Kennedy found she also needed more privacy. The more private she became, the more curious the public seemed about her conduct. New Yorkers might be considered the most private of all Americans; urban apartment-dwelling grants anonymity to those who seek it. And so she moved to a villa overlooking Acapulco Bay in Mexico. She later wrote a long letter to her father, forgiving him, but he became withdrawn in the years that followed. He died in 1957.

In the late 1950's, Mrs. Kennedy confided to friends that she tired of listening to "all these boring politicians," Mr. Heymann wrote, but she did her duty as the wife of a Senator. There were trials in her personal life. In 1955 she suffered a miscarriage, and in 1956 she had a stillborn child by Caesarean section.

President Kennedy, who had only narrowly missed winning the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1960, began to worry that they might not be able to have children. They moved into a rented Georgetown home after Mr. Kennedy sold his Virginia home to his brother, Robert. But in 1957 Caroline Bouvier Kennedy was born. Three years later she gave birth to a stillborn child by Caesarean section.

In 1959 Caroline Bouvier Kennedy was born. Three years later she gave birth to a stillborn child by Caesarean section.

"I thought she cast a particular spell over the White House that has not been equaled," said Mrs. Onassis. "Jack Kennedy — Senate's Gay Young Bachelor " was scheduled to be opened in 2067. The interview on tape, was sealed for 100 years and is scheduled to be opened in 2067. The interview by Mr. White is to be unsealed a year after Mrs. Onassis's death. William Johnson, chief archivist at the library, said he believes the interviews contain material that the authors did not use in their books and might prove useful to historians.

Her silence about her past, especially about the Kennedy years and her marriage to the President, was always something of a mystery. Her eloquence, as she spoke of it, out of loyalty or trepidation over her wrath, her closest friends shed no light on it and there was nothing authoritative to be learned beyond her inner circle.

The next year, Mr. Onassis and Mrs. Kennedy announced that they would be married. It had been five years since the President's death. She told a friend, "You don't know how lonely I've been." The ceremony was held on Oct. 20, 1968. She then became Mistress of Skorpios, the Aegean island that Mr. Onassis owned and charted to spend with more than 70 servants on call. There were four other locations where he had homes. Mr. Davis observed that immediately after her marriage, Mrs. Onassis became more cheerful and outgoing but it was not to last. Within a five years, there were reports that Mr. and Mrs. Onassis were arguing. He was again seen in Paris, dining at Maxim's with the soprano Maria Callas. Mrs. Onassis was seen in New York in the company of other escorts. Mrs. Onassis issued a public statement that did little to dampen the rumor-mongering. "Jackie is a little bit of a freer lady," she said, "as well as her security and she gets them both from me," she said. "She can do exactly as she pleases — visit international fashion houses and make public visits without her permission being sought by the National Park Service." New York was not all she had hoped it would be. For one thing, the photographer Ron Galella seemed to be everywhere she went, taking thousands of photographs of her. The preparation for the publication of "The Death of a President," William Manchester's detailed account of the assassination of President Kennedy, turned into an unexpected battle for Mrs. Kennedy that may have cost her some popularity.

Mr. Manchester, whose work was admired by President Kennedy, asked for and received permission from the Kennedy family to do an authorized, definitive work on the assassination. His publisher, Harper & Row, agreed to turn over most of their profits to the Kennedy Library. Mrs. Kennedy, in a rare departure from her usual practice, agreed to be interviewed. Although Mr. Manchester did not stand to profit from the book itself, he did arrange to have it serialized in Look Magazine, starting in the summer of 1966, for which he would be paid $565,000.

Mrs. Kennedy became angry. From her perspective, Mr. Manchester was commercially exploiting her husband's assassination. At one point, she tried to get an injunction in New York State Supreme Court to stop the publication of the book, either by Look or by Harper & Row. The suit was dropped in 1967, with Mr. Manchester agreeing to pay a large share of his earnings to the Kennedy Library.
show and travel and go out with friends to the theater or anywhere. And I, of course, will do exactly as I please. I never question her and she never questions me.”

The marriage continued to founder. Mr. Onassis persuaded the Greek Parliament to pass legislation to prevent her from getting the 25 percent portion of his estate that Greek law reserved for widows. When he died in 1975, his daughter Christina was at his side; Mrs. Onassis was in New York. There was a lawsuit and when it was settled, she received $25 million — far less than the $125 million or more that she might have received.

Beginning A New Career

Mrs. Onassis’s began her career in publishing in 1975, when her friend Thomas Guinzburg, then the president of Viking Press, offered her a job as a consulting editor. But she resigned two years later after Mr. Guinzburg published — without telling her, she said later — a thriller by Jeffrey Archer called “Shall We Tell the President,” which imagined that her brother-in-law, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, was President of the United States and described an assassination plot against him.

In 1978, Mrs. Onassis then took a new job as an associate editor at Doubleday under another old friend, John Sargent, and was installed at first in a small office with no windows. It helped, she said, that Nancy Tuckerman, who had been her social secretary at the White House, already had a job there; the two worked closely for the next 15 years.

At Doubleday, where she was eventually promoted to senior editor, Mrs. Onassis was known as a gracious and unassuming colleague who had no problem pitching her stories at editorial meetings, just as everyone else did. She avoided the industry’s active social scene, probably because she had so little need to expand her network of contacts. She often ate lunch at her desk, for instance, avoiding the publishing luncheon crowd at restaurants like the Four Seasons and 44. She worked three days a week — Doubleday never reinstalled offices — and limited her time to New York and spent considerable time there, as well as in Bernardsville, N.J., where she rented a place and rode horses.

Mrs. Onassis did not marry again. In the years following Mr. Onassis’s death, she built a 19-room house on 375 acres of ocean-front land on Martha’s Vineyard. She spent considerable time there, as well as in New York. There was a weekly, the industry trade magazine, and it passed legislation to prevent her from getting the 25 percent portion of his estate that Greek law reserved for widows. When he died in 1975, his daughter Christina was at his side; Mrs. Onassis was in New York. There was a lawsuit and when it was settled, she received $25 million — far less than the $125 million or more that she might have received.

An Editor’s Work

Selected books edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

POET AND DANCER, by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.

THE NIGHTTIME CHAUFFEUR, by Carly Simon.


DANCING ON MY GRAVE, by Gelsey Kirkland and Greg Lawrence.

MOONWALK, by Michael Jackson.

STANFORD WHITE’S NEW YORK, by David Garrard Lowe.


THE CAIRO TRILOGY, by Naguib Mahfouz.

THE RAVEN’S BRIDE, by Elizabeth Crook.

THE POWER OF MYTH, by Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers.

THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE, by Larry Gonick.

ISIS AND OSIRIS, by Jonathan Cott.
Funeral: On Nov. 24, 1963, Mrs. Kennedy and her children, Caroline and John Jr., watched as the slain President's coffin was taken to the Capitol to lie in state.
Assassination: Mrs. Kennedy crawled onto the back of their limousine to help an agent after the President was shot.

Aftermath: Blood still stained Mrs. Kennedy's skirt as she and Robert F. Kennedy watched the President's coffin being placed in an ambulance at Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

New York: Although she never remarried after Mr. Onassis's death, she had a frequent companion in Maurice Tempelsman. Last year, they attended an American Ballet Theater gala at the Metropolitan Opera House.