

"Mrs. Gallagher has  
put it all down.."

MY LIFE WITH JACQUELINE KENNEDY

By Mary Barelli Gallagher

Edited by Frances Spatz Leighton

(David McKay Co., 396 pages, \$7.95)

Reviewed by Judith Martin

in the *Washington Post*\*

This book has something far more revealing of Washington life in it than the daily extravagances and economies of a First Lady who turned into a national superstar.

Not that Jacqueline Onassis' foibles aren't fascinating. Somehow, the people who always are carrying on about how disgraceful all the prying is, and how really uninteresting the results are, are the ones who lean forward and say hoarsely, "Say, did you know her? What's she really like?"

It was the Georgetowners who decried tourists' flocking about the then-Mrs. Kennedy's house who, themselves, snatched the local newsstands bare when excerpts from this book appeared in magazine form.

But the character in it who really represents Washington is Mary Gallagher.

Mary Gallagher did secretarial work for the Kennedy family for 12 years, from the time she reported to John Kennedy's Senate office (which made her knees tremble), until the time that Mrs. Kennedy, whom she served as personal secretary from 1957 to 1964, said she no longer needed Mrs. Gallagher (which made her feel

lagger points out in her long salary disputes with the Kennedys, paid considerably below what their skills would be worth in ordinary business. They are expected to put in endless hours and to postpone their own social or family lives until it is convenient for their employers to let them go.

What compensation do they get?

As Mrs. Gallagher writes, "When I was a child, I never dreamed I would work at the White House, walk with Presidents, and be on a first-name basis with a First Lady of the United States. Jackie Kennedy was like a sister to me and neither time nor distance can erase the memories of the years we shared together . . ."

That was her payment: The illusion of participation. Could she seriously believe that the President thought of himself as having "walked with" Mary Gallagher? Or that Mrs. Kennedy thought of Mary Gallagher as a sister, or of herself as sharing her life with the woman who took care of her correspondence, errands and bills?

And yet she is not the only low-ranking, low-salaried Washington drone to



sick).

The book is a compilation of the observations Mrs. Gallagher recorded in her diary while working for the Kennedys. It is trivia but it is the trivia of history and Mrs. Gallagher has put it all down for future social historians.

During those Kennedy years, Mrs. Gallagher married and had two children, but she unflinchingly skipped family holidays and treats, and turned house-keeping and child-care chores over to her mother-in-law whenever the Kennedys needed her, day or night, sick or well.

The Mary Gallaghers and the Mary Jo Kopechnes are here in Washington by the hundreds—working for the Kennedys, if they count themselves as really lucky, or for the less glamorous figures of government.

They are, as Mrs. Gal-

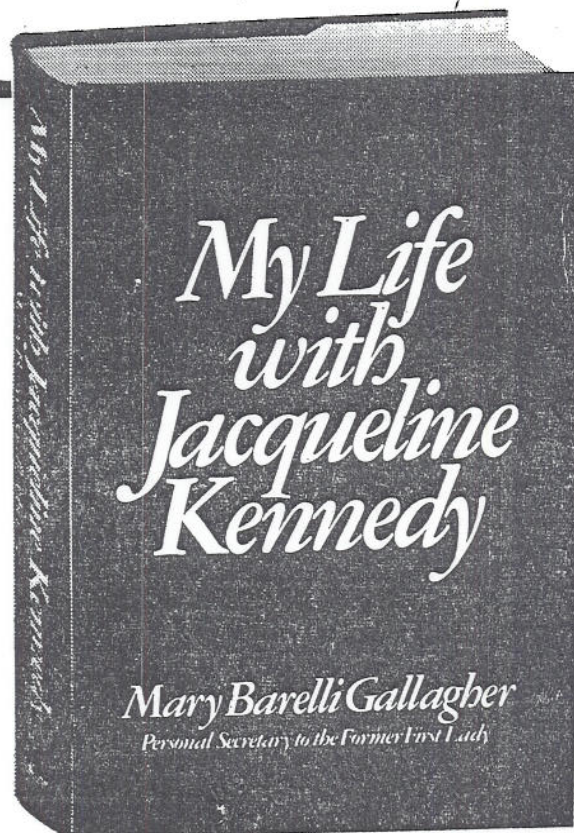
l Gallagher's sense of history was being fed by the privilege of taking the First Lady's dictation.

Saddest of all are the very treasures of Mrs. Gallagher's memory. When the President murmured "What would we do without you?" or the First Lady mused, "Which gloves do you think I should wear?" Mrs. Gallagher apparently went away satisfied that she had influenced his career and her taste.

But that, it seems, is the compensation she was offered for her services. People who pay their employees that way cannot really be surprised to find that payment being spent as freely as money might have been.

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