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## 'My Life With Jacqueline Kennedy'

# A Passion for Precious Gems

*This is the ninth article of a series about Jacqueline Kennedy by her former personal secretary. It tells among things, how Jackie tried to have the diamonds removed from a sword given to President Kennedy by Ibn Saud, who was King of Saudi Arabia.*

By Mary Borelli Gallagher

IT WAS in the spring of 1962 that jewelry seemed especially important to Jackie. At Wartskis', in London, she had seen and fallen in love with an antique 18th-Century sunburst clip, and she wanted it to wear in her hair. It was priced at 2200 pounds. She had me find out exactly how much that amounted to in dollars. The answer was \$6160. (Ed. Note—The pound was worth \$2.80 at this time.)

Jackie wanted to make an exchange, or at least, to trade a few pieces of her jewelry and make up the difference in cash. She asked me to have her jewelry appraised.

Soon my private office looked like a jewelry store; Charles Ernest Jewelers ar-



**JACKIE WEARS SUNBURST CLIP**  
Traded jewelry of her own plus cash

rived one afternoon to look it all over with their jeweler's glass and other paraphernalia. As they examined the jewelry, I watched. It took several hours, and I could tell they were fascinated, complimenting various pieces.

There was a big aquamarine given her by the Brazilian government and the diamond wedding-present clip which the ambassador — Joseph Kennedy — had given her.

There was a sapphire and diamond bracelet from Van Cleef & Arpels, and a gold pin, given her during her visit to Greece in 1961 — gold laurel leaves with an emerald.

There was a ruby and diamond pin of two strawberries that the President had bought Jackie for Christmas in 1960, and Jackie wanted to check Tiffany to see what it was worth.

And finally, there were what Jackie called "bits and

pieces of gold jewelry."

### Had Appraisals

After their appraisals were submitted copies of them were sent to the Kennedy office in New York, to be filed with Jackie's jewelry inventory.

Jackie was especially interested in the appraisal of the Brazilian aquamarine. After much discussion and negotiating, Jackie got something close to \$4400 in cash for the aquamarine, the diamond wedding clip, and the gold jewelry, and had to pay less than \$2000 difference. She checked the transaction with the New York office, and she got her antique 18th-Century sunburst clip.

Besides the sunburst business, she was involved at the same time in other jewelry matters. There was a gold minaudiere from Paris that Van Cleef & Arpels had, and Jackie wanted to know the price of it.

About the same time, Jackie was also concerned about the price of still another piece of jewelry she had chosen, and she was most pre-

cise in regard to its value.

I didn't fully realize how much precious gems meant to her until she called me into the Oval Room one day that spring — 1962 — and showed me a diamond-encrusted sword that had been given to the President by Ibn Saud, King of Saudi Arabia.

### Strictest Confidence

Jackie asked me to call New York and have Tom Walsh come to the White House in strictest confidence. I was to show him the sword and find out whether the diamonds could be taken out and glass "gems" be substituted in their place.

Jackie told me to explain to Tom Walsh, that the President says okay, and that when Walsh came to Washington, he was to take the sword to a discount jeweler and watch the man take out the stones. Then Walsh was to keep the jewels for Jackie. He came to the White House

alone, and I showed him the sword. He did not take it with him.

I sighed with relief when he eventually reported that it would not be worthwhile to take out the gems. They would be too difficult to get out, and the cost would be prohibitive.

The most amusing part of the story to me, knowing Jackie's cleverness, was the explanation to be given to the artisan — that the sword was an old thing Ambassador Kennedy had, which Mrs. Kennedy wanted made into something else.

The President now entered her jewelry saga, Jackie had decided she didn't like the emerald engagement ring he had given her, and he let her go ahead to see what the jewelers could do to make it more suitable to her taste.

### Ring Problem

Early in 1962, this was one of Jackie's big projects — the problem of re-designing

her ring. She asked Van Cleef & Arpels in New York to do three wax models.

One day's diary entry, in particular, tells the story:

June 15, 1962: Upon receipt of JFK Emerald/Diamond Engagement Ring, "remounted" into a Wax Model of her choice, Jackie asked for my opinion before making a definite decision.

As I studied the extra rows of little diamonds, which now surrounded the two beautiful, initial stones, they seemed to detract from the true beauty of her ring in its original state.

"Oh, no, Jackie—I think you'd be making a big mistake to change your ring

this way," I told her. "To me, it looks much too bulky and takes away from the whole beauty of the ring." Her disappointment could not have been more obvious. "Oh," she stammered in disgust. "You're just like Jack."

She returned the ring, and wax models continued to go back and forth. In the end, Jackie finally gave up. She seemed to realize, as had the President and I, that her lovely ring required no further adornments, after all!

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NEXT: The Grecian Isles.