

'My Life With Jacqueline Kennedy'

Tirade by Jackie, Then an Apology

Last article of a series that tells what it was like to work for Jacqueline Kennedy, by her former personal secretary.

On July 7, 1964, five days after she telephoned me she was going to live in New York City, the announcement of Jackie's move appeared in the newspapers.

The stories offered no enlightenment concerning my position. Nancy Tuckerman and Pam Turnure were mentioned as remaining with Jackie.

I felt hurt and puzzled. The next morning, Jackie called early from the Cape and dictated with normal fluency. Then she paused, and said, "I suppose by now you've read the newspapers about my move to New York."

"Yes, Jackie," I answered. "I have, but . . ."

"Well," she announced, "since my life is all changed now and my staff will be located in New York, I guess I really won't be needing you anymore after September first." I was speechless.

Actually, moving to New York had been the very least of my desires and expectations. But I had hoped and expected that, when the time would come for Jackie to announce she no longer needed me, it would be in a warm, face-to-face manner.

Then, in the final touch, Jackie asked whether I would be in Washington for the summer to help with her move.

"Have you had your vacation yet?" she wanted to know.

"No," I answered, "there's been so much work to do, I haven't had time to even think about a vacation."

"Oh, great!" she exclaimed, "Could you plan to take it later, then? I'll let you know when to start moving my things . . . but I really think you should be all finished by September first."

Calls From Cape

At 9:30 a.m. on July 20, Jackie called from the Cape and, among other things, reminded me to get in touch with the employment agent, Mrs. Pauwels, to find out about free-lance jobs for Provi's summer schedule. Provi, Jackie's personal maid, had been "let go" for the summer.

Mrs. Pauwels invited me to have lunch with her. Though the invitation in itself was not unusual — she had extended it many times before

Staff Mess with you. All you were expected to do was simply handle the discussion by telephone. That was all you were supposed to do. And, Mary, I just don't like the idea of your sending a government car for Mrs. Pauwels."

"It's okay if you want to keep Mrs. Lincoln company at the Staff Mess," she declared, "but that's for President Johnson's people."

Then, apparently feeling the need to substantiate further, she continued, "Don't you know the Johnsons despise us? They won't even allow the Secret Service agents to wear their PT-boat tie clips anymore."

I was aware that anything I said might cause Mrs. Pauwels to suspect what this conversation was all about.

Jackie kept after me, ". . . and, Mary, getting your office all painted up," she remonstrated. "You know, I just don't like the way you're throwing your weight around!"

I was stunned. My mind was absorbed in trying to figure out the reasoning behind this angry monologue.

Incommunicado

When I got back to my office, I immediately got in touch with the switchboard operators. "Should Mrs. Kennedy call me at any time this afternoon," I instructed, "will you please tell her I'm not available?" And for 24 hours, at the office and at home, I refused to take any calls from Mrs. Kennedy, who repeatedly tried to reach me.

When I finally accepted

— it was unusual that, for the first time, I felt free to accept.

I was reluctant to go to one of the downtown restaurants Mrs. Pauwels suggested, because Jackie frequently called me around lunchtime. So I invited Mrs. Pauwels to join me at the White House Staff Mess.

She offered to take a cab, but I told her one of the White House drivers would pick her up.

Noontime found us comfortably seated, enjoying lunch and carrying on our discussion. During lunch, a Navy steward brought a telephone to our table. Mrs. Kennedy was calling.

"Mary," Jackie began, "are you at the Staff Mess?"

"Yes, Jackie, I am," I replied.

"And do you happen to have Mrs. Pauwels there with you?" she asked next, in what I quickly sensed was a disturbed, angry mood.

"Yes, Jackie, I do."

Jackie Angry

I could only listen in disbelief. In angry tones, she proceeded to voice her displeasure.

"You do not have the right to take Mrs. Pauwels to the

her call, she began offering her apologies in her sweetest, softest voice. "Oh, Mary, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to blast at you," she said, explaining that her "nerves had been on edge."

"Jackie," I said, "the one thing I'd like to ask now is that you never speak to me that way again. I was never more hurt or humiliated."

She apologized once more and asked that we just forget the whole thing.

"No, Jackie," I answered, "I'm afraid I can't let it go

at that. I have to explain my side of the story." I told her that it was Mrs. Pauwels who was so insistent on having lunch, and added, "My membership at the Staff Mess remains exactly the same under the Johnsons as it did before, guests included."

I also explained that it was not at my orders — but someone else's — that my office had been repainted. By the time we finished on the phone, we were both in much better spirits.

It was on August 14, 1964, that I received a call from Tom Walsh of the Kennedy family's office in New York City. "Mary, dear, would you be interested in working for Ethel Kennedy?" he asked. My answer came quickly. "No, thank you, Tom," I said, "I appreciate your asking, but I'm afraid I've given just about all I possibly can for the Kennedys for now."

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