

Jackie Makes News Wherever She

One might have guessed that from the assassination of President Kennedy on, short of robbing a bank or committing some other unlikely crime, Jacqueline Kennedy would have been above and beyond criticism.

Within a year or two of her husband's assassination, Jackie was reproached for minor things she did — dining out with movie stars, having places renamed after JFK — and didn't do: for not moving to Harlem as a symbol of her late husband's civil rights bill, for not attending Lyndon B. Johnson's inauguration. The love affair was over and it didn't end as amicably as some affairs do.

After Jackie's attempt to censor William Manchester's "The Death of a President" in late 1966, the press treated Jackie like a jilted lover, and two national polls determined that her image had been tarnished by the Manchester flap.

The public took Jackie's marriage to Aristotle Socrates Onassis in October 1968 as a personal affront. After six straight years of being No. 1 on Gallup's Women-The-American - Public - Admirers - Most List, Jackie plummeted to seventh place.

The press, ever sensitive to the shifting winds of public opinion, realized that the "good" Jackie was out of season and that there was now more mileage to be gained from maligning the "bad" Jackie.

"MY LIFE WITH Jacqueline Kennedy," the 1969 tattle-telling book by Mary Bar-elli Gallagher, Jackie's former personal secretary, depicted Jackie as a penny-wise but pound-foolish, terrible-tempered petty tyrant whose personal maid was required to change her sheets for her afternoon nap and to iron her stockings — a far cry indeed from Mary van Rensselaer Thayer's adorable bride, "Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy," of eight years before.

One tends to regard the Jackie-of-the-moment as the "real" Jackie. It was this latest Jackie — the post-Manchester, post-Onassis, post-Gallagher "bad" Jackie whom it was hard to imagine as the author of the letter to Teddy.

The main difficulty with this supposed transformation of Jackie from fairy-princess



Jackie and son John Kennedy Jr. stroll down a New York City sidewalk with Aristotle Onassis bringing up the rear. The Onassis take little part in splashy social events.

Goes

inaccurate impression of Jackie's life.

to gold-digging, super-consuming, jetsetting hedonist (according to a recent series of newspaper articles. She and her second husband spent \$15 million to \$20 million during the first year of their marriage) is that, upon examination, it seems to have more to do with the making and debunking of a legend than with the subject of the legend.

What is interesting about Jackie is that she hasn't evolved from "good" to "bad" but that she has always been a very diverse personality: an intriguing mix-

One of a Series
By
SUSAN SHEEHAN
New Yorker
Magazine Writer

ture of the provocative, the willful, the fey, the bitchy, and the sensitive, along with a good many other paradoxical qualities as well.

CONSIDER HER lifelong willfulness. It has always been a characteristic of Jackie to want her own way and she has had a talent for getting it. At 15, when her parents wouldn't let her take her favorite mare off to boarding school with her because they thought it an unnecessary \$25 per month expenditure, Jackie was able to persuade her paternal grandfather to pay the mare's stable bills.

During her White House years, she continued to call her own tune. One day in 1962, she had a "cold" when she was supposed to play hostess at an afternoon reception for foreign students; she was photographed in a Washington art museum that morning.

Even if we lived in the best of all possible worlds, and if every item we read about Jackie in our newspapers and magazines was accurate — two very big ifs — these items would give us an

A news item is, by definition, an event. It was an event when Jackie went to see the X-rated Swedish film "I Am Curious (Yellow)" in New York on a Sunday afternoon last October and when, upon leaving the movie theatre, she either did or didn't use judo (eye-witness accounts of the incident differ) on one of the photographers who was standing on the sidewalk outside the marquee waiting to snap her picture. The event was reported in our newspapers for days and contributed to our belief that Jackie is constantly besieged by photographers and creating scenes.

JOURNALISM almost invariably alters the truth if only by withholding non-events. Jackie now spends about half the time at events like the "I am Curious (Yellow)" episode would lead one to think.

Take, for example, a movie excursion she made with her old friend William Walton, the abstract painter. One Saturday morning in late January, Walton ran into Jacqueline Onassis on Fifth Avenue. Walton asked Jackie what she was doing that evening. She said she was free after dinner, so he suggested that they "go see a flick."

They hailed a cab and set out for the midtown theatre where "Z" was playing. The line looked endless so they kept the cab and proceeded to a newsstand, where Walton bought a copy of Cue magazine. They studied the movie listings and chose another movie playing nearby, "The Damned," where there was no line.

They had no trouble finding a taxi when the movie was over. Around 12:30, Walton dropped Jackie off at her apartment house and continued by cab to his studio on the Bowery. Not a word about the evening, a non-event, got into the newspapers.

Jackie's nonmoviegoing life is equally pacific — not the stuff of which legends are made, or even debunked. She walks, shops, goes to the hairdresser and to doctor's appointments. Sometimes she has lunch or dinner out with a few friends; occasionally she gives a small dinner party at home. The Onassis go to a nightclub every once in a while but take little part in

splashy social events — they don't attend charity balls or large cocktail parties.

A GREAT DEAL of Jackie's time in New York passes quietly in her 15-room apartment, which one visitor describes as "just like anyone else's Fifth Avenue Apartment" and another as "very pretty but not very opulent" and which Jackie, with characteristic understatement, sometimes refers to as "this dump." She spends many hours drawing and painting, reading books ("Jackie has read more books than any other woman I know," her

friend Robert S. McNamara, the former Secretary of Defense, says), and magazines, from which she clips recipes and sundry other material.

"The public wants to think that Jackie is at El Morrocco every night," a friend of Jackie's said to me on a recent evening. "First off they can claim to be scandalized by her frivolity. As it happens, Jackie spends more of her time at home with her children than anywhere else. I bet if I call her now, she'll be in her apartment, helping the kids with their homework." I conceded the point.

(©, 1970, New York Times Service)



Glowing beneath the traditional headdress of an Andalusian woman is Jackie at a bullfight in Sevilla, Spain. The picture was taken before her marriage to Onassis.