

Columns on Mrs. Onassis Denounced

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

Our columns about the private world of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis produced a Vesuvius of angry denials and denunciations.

Individual answers to all the letters are impossible, so we will attempt an omnibus reply. We will offer, too, a few details that were crowded out of the original series.

An enormous investment of national interest, respect, affection and prestige was once made in Jacqueline Kennedy. She was a factor in the imagery surrounding John F. Kennedy's rise to the presidency and in the glittering aura cast by his administration.

As First Lady, she occupied the position of a national exemplar. There is, therefore, a continuing interest in her that does not cease at a convenient moment, an interest in the key events of her life, in how she conducts herself.

There is a historical interest, too, in what kind of person she was at the time when she was a symbol of America, the cynosure of all eyes. Historians are still probing and analyzing the behavior of Mary Todd Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt before, during and after their White House years. So it must continue to be with Jacqueline Kennedy.

For still other reasons she is a particular lightning rod for public attention. Her choice of lifestyle, which by ordinary standards is exotic, attracts the spotlight.

The Jacqueline Kennedy who in the years of Camelot and the days of Dallas won a place in the nation's heart and imagination left the White House with a

prestige that could have been a tremendous force for good.

When fate bestows a staggering opportunity to serve mankind, it also inflicts a responsibility that supersedes private inclinations. Eleanor Roosevelt took up that burden; Coretta King has taken it up. Jacqueline Kennedy has shirked it, pursuing instead luxury, languor, gowns, jewels and the wheeling of unearned wealth.

Her reign as queen of the jet set has been chronicled largely by the gossip writers who report the bon mots, the pouts and the whims of the social butterflies. Our columns, on the contrary, were not based at all upon gossip dropped at posh parties.

The late Aristotle Onassis himself piqued our interest by inviting us to his favorite Manhattan restaurant last December for a private talk. It turned out to be his last conversation with a reporter.

He had little to say about his famous wife except for a mild complaint about her extravagance and her horsy friends. But we learned afterwards that he had indicated to his closest associates we could be trusted. This led some of them to confide in us after his death.

We were also shown private papers, letters and other documents. We spent three weeks pursuing every lead and checking out every detail. For Jackie's side of the story, we spoke to several of her friends, and we offered to go over every allegation with her personally.

We reported thereafter that the huge Onassis estate will be controlled by daughter Christina, not wife Jacqueline, and that the marriage had been preceded by a written contract providing a cash settlement on Jacqueline of at least \$3 million in tax-free bonds.

She also received a spending allowance, which began at \$30,000 a month but was cut to \$20,000 by Onassis in protest over her spending habits. She had other perquisites such as charge privileges in the famous shopping emporiums of the world.

We reported further that Jacqueline systematically converted gowns, gifts and other indulgences of Onassis into cash by selling them off at fashionable New York City resale houses.

As signs accumulated that the largesse was ending, Jackie reacted by intensifying her efforts. During her husband's final illness, she went on a shopping spree at Bloomingdale's.

A close friend of the Onassis family told us: "She thought it might be her last fling. She is so avaricious, so greedy." But her secretary, Nancy Tuckerman, claimed Jackie had to buy many items for her new home in New Jersey. "Life must go on," the secretary said.

Not long after the Onassis funeral, the indispensable Miss Tuckerman was dispatched to the New York headquarters to inquire about the continuation of the allowance. Christina apparently is letting it continue.

If Jackie squandered her late husband's money, she was always tight with her own. She had to pay out of her own budget, for example, to repaint her Fifth Avenue apartment. Once, she called in a representative of the Union Square Painting Company and asked for estimates. When she found it would cost \$3,000 for the paint work, she canceled the project rather than spend the money.

She was lavish, however, with the money not only of her husband but her friends. During a fabulous few days in Tehran as

guest of Iran's top oilman, Dr. Reza Faliah, Jacqueline spent most of her time in the shops buying up expensive jewelry, antiques, artcraft, sheepskin boots and jackets, silk ties, lamps and other loot.

We have evidence that she charged everything to her host. Then afterwards, she announced that she was leaving a \$700 check to be distributed among the servants. But no check was ever found.

Thus has Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who had so much potential for good, chosen instead a life of uselessness. Each year she consumes enough of the world's luxuries to provide necessities for hundreds of families.

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