

# *Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis*

## Flair, Taste & Imagination

By: Joyce Brooks

Jackie Kennedy brought her love of glamour, style, elegance, couture fashion, art, music and theatre to the American identity which was very innovative at the time. Standing 5'8" with a mane of dark brown hair and sparkling brown eyes, Jackie was a brilliant combination of refined beauty with a touch of the exotic. Her mind and her nature being naturally inquisitive landed her a job with The Washington Times-Herald as its Inquiring Camera Girl. Among the first people which she interviewed was the handsome and charismatic Senator John F. Kennedy, whom she later married.

Jacqueline Bouvier was born of Irish, English, French and Scottish descent. No wonder she possessed such a fabulous mixture of wit, humor, intelligence, grace, beauty and the ability to stand up against adversity. From an early age Jackie learned tact and diplomacy. Her parents whom she adored unfortunately did not adore each other. There was a lot of emotional conflict in the Bouvier home and Jackie dealt with it in the quiet graceful way. Her poise and natural composure endeared her forever in the hearts of the American people upon the death of her husband.

It was her love of life and beauty which inspired the "American Camelot," a transformation of the White House into the front row of American art and culture. Jackie sought to use the White House as a showcase for the arts. She hosted performances of opera, ballet, Shakespeare and modern jazz, all performed by American companies. The French Minister of Culture, Andre Malraux was so taken with her charm that he gave the Mona Lisa on loan to the US so that Americans would have the opportunity to view this magnificent piece of art. This eventually led her to help create a US Department of the Arts and Humanities. She used her sense of style and taste to restore the White House to its splendiferous glory. She created a committee of advisors led by Henry Dupont along with sub-committees led by experts on painting, furniture and books. She searched government warehouses for displaced White House furnishings. She solicited the nation to donate important historical and artistic items. The 87th Congress would later pass what became Public Law 87286 which decreed that such donated items would become inalienable property of the White House. In 1962 CBS aired A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy, the show was a sensation. Jackie Kennedy was so well received and so popular she started appearing on the covers of many popular magazines.

Jackie's flair for the creative was not limited to just interior design. She often designed her own clothing which were so sought after that commercial manufacturers copied them and they were sold to the public. The pillbox hat became a must for women after the 1961 swearing-in ceremony of John Kennedy. She was such a sensation that what she wore became almost as important to the public as was the swearing in at the inaugural ceremony.

Was it not for the continuous efforts of Jackie Kennedy our beloved Grand Central Station, New York, would have been destroyed. Working with the New York Municipal Arts society she led a successful public information campaign to save Grand Central. She also lobbied legislators in the New York State capital of Albany, to prevent private organizations from altering or destroying their property if it was deemed historical architecture. She was involved in the revitalization of the Broadway theatre district, the Central Park Conservancy, the Literary Lions of the New York Public Library, the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian wing and the Costume Institute, and the American Ballet at Lincoln Center.

Jackie Bouvier Kennedy Onassis left this world in 1994, but her legacy will forever continue to live on and inspire.



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