

■ The evening sun was low on the horizon, just beneath the gently swaying tops of the palm trees, as I arrived at the Kennedy estate in Palm Beach, where the President had agreed to see me. Secret Service agents waved me past the thick hedges enclosing the grounds; I walked up the driveway to the big, white mansion and, ad-

mitted, climbed a graceful marble staircase to the living room.

Through the open French doors, I could see Mrs. Kennedy's sister, Princess Radziwill, strolling to and fro on the adjoining patio. The excited laughter of Caroline and a playmate, and the barking of Caroline's dog, Charlie, sounded clearly above the pleasant,

monotonous murmur of ocean waves lapping the base of the nearby sea wall. And—somehow incongruously, in this elegant setting—a subtle odor of cooking wafted in from the direction of the kitchen.

I was so mesmerized by a sense of well-being that I was almost startled when President Kennedy appeared in a neat pin-



UPI PHOTO

striped blue suit. He settled back easily into a deep-cushioned armchair and began our interview. As he talked to me, I was reminded I was in the presence not only of the President but of a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian with a deep appreciation for the unique problems of a First Lady and how these *continued on page 197*

“With Jackie
I don’t
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have been met in the past. In this light, his view of his wife and how she is fulfilling her responsibilities according to dictates of her own temperament and capabilities are of particular interest.

There is much evidence to suggest that Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy was not eager to become First Lady. "It's frightening to lose your anonymity," she said.

In late November, 1960, three weeks after the election, she sat pensively alone, wrapped in a long, black suede coat, on the roof of a Washington hospital, where she had just given difficult, Caesarean birth to John, Jr. Another woman patient wandered out onto the roof, spotted Mrs. Kennedy, and came toward her. "You're Mrs. Kennedy, aren't you?" she gushed. "I recognize you from your pictures." Jackie bowed her head and sighed resignedly. "I know. That's my problem now," she said, and soon got up to return to the privacy of her room.

At her husband's inauguration, Mrs. Kennedy murmured, "I feel as though I have just become a piece of public property," and later she confessed that in her first months in the White House she felt like a moth banging against a windowpane.

Now, however, two-and-a-half years later, there is evidence that, for the most part, she is enjoying her role. She has been tested and has proved herself, and this must help to deepen her self-assurance and her interest in accomplishing even more.

The beautiful First Lady looks like a fragile, exquisite Dresden doll; but she is also, as artist-friend William Walton once put it, "a strong dame." She means to keep her identity and personal independence.

When she became First Lady, Mrs. Kennedy was determined to interpret the role in her own way—to carry out her official responsibilities and try to set an example in everything connected with the White House, but also to change her private living habits as little as possible.

The President thoroughly agrees with his wife's stand. "Any First Lady will do all right if she is herself," he says. "It is up to each First Lady to do what best fits her temperament and personal inclinations.

"A woman's role is different from a man's," he adds. He believes that a First Lady's responsibilities are totally separate from those of the President. "First Ladies are not public officials. Their responsibility to their family is the same as any other woman's. Efforts on behalf of charity, trips abroad or special projects are extra. It is up to a First Lady to do what she can, within her own limitations.

"She must fulfill the responsibilities common to every woman who is a wife and mother. Her first duty is to her husband and her children. When her husband is also the President, that duty is considerably expanded.

"If Jackie were older and our children older, she would have more time for public things. But she is concentrating on trying to live as normally as possible in abnormal circumstances, for the sake of our children."

Mrs. Kennedy has made a determined effort to shield Caroline, five and a half, and John, Jr., two and a half, from the head-turning publicity which is showered on every occupant of the

White House. She has set up a special nursery school in the White House for Caroline and her friends. She planted rhododendron bushes around a play area on the White House lawn so that the children would not be visible to photographers who poked their long-lens cameras through the fence. She once signed a picture to Press Secretary Pierre Salinger, "from the greatest cross he has to bear," because she protests to him about stories and pictures involving Caroline and John, Jr. Once she even donned a wig and nurse's uniform to take Caroline to Washington's Glen Echo amusement park—both had a wonderful day and were not recognized.

Mrs. Kennedy's problem of protecting her children from public scrutiny is made more difficult by her strong desire to let Caroline and John, Jr. experience normal childhood pleasures. She allows Caroline free run of the White House, which is, after all, her home. But this means that the little girl is constantly bumping into visiting officials, who can't resist describing their encounters with her. She has permitted Caroline to greet such dignitaries as India's Prime Minister Nehru, to whom Caroline presented a rose for his buttonhole—an incident the press could hardly be expected to ignore. On another occasion Caroline observed a diplomatic reception from the stairway—and became the center of interest for the party and a topic of Washington conversation ever since.

The First Lady refuses to attend public luncheons and teas, as well as most dinners and other functions, on the grounds that she prefers to spend that time with her children. She also explained recently that she did not accompany her husband on his frequent trips around the country because "the official side of my life takes me away from my children a great deal. If I were to add political duties, I would have practically no time with my children, and they are my first responsibility. My husband agrees with this. If he felt I should go on these trips, I would."

THERE is no doubt that Mrs. Kennedy is serious about her devotion to her children, and that she arranges her schedule to spend several hours of playtime with them every day. But rearing a child in a family of great wealth, in the White House or no, is not nearly so demanding as in most American households. Caroline and John, Jr. have had a nurse since the day they were born. The First Lady has never been tied to a daily routine of changing diapers, feeding her children (they eat separately from the adults), giving baths and wiping noses, mending torn jackets and supervising unwanted naptimes. She has never been confined to her house for lack of a baby-sitter—and has, in fact, made several trips, to Greece, New York City and Palm Beach, without her children. Moreover, the President and First Lady believe that a President's wife cannot ignore her responsibility to the nation. "The mere fact that she is First Lady, and the highest-ranking woman in the country, is a responsibility," says President Kennedy.

Asked to list his wife's greatest contributions as First Lady in her two and a half years so far, he hesitated not a second. "Her emphasis on creative fields, her concentration on giving historical meaning to the White House furnishings, her success as an ambassa-



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dor on the trips she has made with me abroad. And by carrying out her primary responsibility to back up her husband and care for her children well, she is doing her real job as a woman."

The President is proud of his wife's popularity and her achievements. Her fan mail, which comes from all over the world, ranges from 6,000 to 9,000 letters a week, and requires a staff of thirteen to process.

The late Robert Frost, who read one of his poems at the President's inaugural, once remarked, "There have been some great wives in the White House—like Abigail Adams and Dolley Madison—so great that you can't think of their husbands, Presidents, without thinking of them. It looks as though we were having another one now."

IRONICALLY, the very qualities in Mrs. Kennedy which keep her from undertaking an active private or public political role—the source of many First Ladies' influence—are those which make her uniquely suited for the contributions to the nation which have made her so popular. Her emphasis on creative fields, her restoration of White House furnishings, and her flair for the dramatic and tasteful are natural outgrowths of her personality and background.

Mrs. Kennedy grew up in an elegant, gilded world. She had the leisure and opportunity to pursue the ballet, opera, art, expensive furniture and antiques to a degree impossible for Mamie Eisenhower, growing up in Denver, or Bess Truman, in the small town of Independence. Her life, unlike aristocrat Eleanor Roosevelt's, never included exposure to poverty, hardship or injustice, so she never developed a social consciousness which might have interfered with her interest in aesthetics.

President Kennedy says, "A man marries a woman, not a First Lady. If he becomes President, she must fit her own personality into her own concept of a First Lady's role. People do best what comes naturally."

He finds that one of his wife's chief attractions is her concentration on interests different from his own. "I don't have to fight the day's political battles over again at night," he says. He enjoys the "different kind of atmosphere" Jackie creates in his home life. Attorney General Robert Kennedy once explained, "What husband wants to come home at night and talk to another version of himself? Jack knows Jackie will never greet him with, 'What's new in Laos?'" The President sees her, in his own words, as "romantic by temperament in the old-fashioned sense of the word, fey even. Sensitive by contrast to my sisters, who are direct and energetic."

The First Lady decided shortly after the election that her contribution to the nation would be to inspire interest in history and the performing arts through the example of the White House. Says President Kennedy, "Her emphasis upon culture at White House functions is an expression of her feeling that the White House ought to be the center of excellence."

The First Lady's major project has been, however, the restoration of the White House furnishings. Few people realize how much time and effort she has put into it. President Kennedy says, "The restoration has been a more formidable operation than anyone realizes."

The First Lady conceived the project herself, and organized the several committees which have carried out the

work. Not a scrap of material or a piece of furniture has been accepted for the White House without her approval. She has been deeply involved every step of the way. A guidebook to explain the historical significance of the furnishings was her suggestion, and she contributed to its development.

Several factors have made the restoration such a success that it could be largely completed in two years. First, of course, is the First Lady's enthusiasm and personal attention to the project. President Kennedy says, "The organization of the committees was an impressive executive job. Mrs. Kennedy displayed more executive ability for organization than I had imagined she had." But the times in which we live helped too. Historians believe that people today have a new awareness of the importance of preserving American tradition and an interest in antiquity that was not present earlier. (Mrs. Coolidge tried to appeal for public donations to refurbish the White House, but failed to arouse any response. Mrs. Truman pleaded for a Congressional appropriation to redecorate, but got only \$213,000 for all 150 rooms—less than the cost of Mrs. Kennedy's restoration of the Green Room alone.) Mrs. Kennedy has also had the advantage of mass communications, which have spread the word about her project into every home. The present income-tax laws have helped too: wealthy couples have been willing to contribute furniture or money to the White House restoration because it can be written off for tax purposes as a charity donation.

A large share of the First Lady's working hours is taken up by social planning. The Kennedys give approximately a dozen more formal receptions a year than did the Eisenhowers, and have entertained about twice as many state visitors at formal dinners. Because she feels White House social functions ought to meet the same high standards she has set for its furnishings, the First Lady supervises every detail—menus, flowers, entertainment.

JUST as she has dared to be different in her private life, the First Lady has altered official entertaining, making more social innovations than any other modern First Lady. She has sought, with the President's approval, to reduce the starch and stodginess of White House dinners. She abandoned the formal receiving line; instead, she and the President circulate among their guests, chatting and shaking hands. She lit fires in the fireplaces, which had been unused so long that, during her first reception, they filled the rooms with black smoke.

The First Lady has also launched some new special events for children—the one area in which she has shown an interest outside her home and family. The White House has given a Christmas party for children of the staff, a series of youth concerts, and a musicale for 200 embassy children, who heard excerpts from Mozart's comic opera, *Così Fan Tutte*.

Likewise, the First Lady's rare visits to charities have been to those which benefit children. Generally, however, she feels that her time and energy can be better spent behind the scenes, working on her central projects, rather than making appearances, trailed by dozens of reporters and cameramen, at charity institutions.

The public appearances which the First Lady does seem to enjoy, however, are the trips abroad, where she

has scored her greatest triumphs. She prepares her wardrobe carefully for each trip. (One newswoman who has followed her around for the past two years calculates that she wore 400 different outfits in public last year alone.) She impresses officials with her knowledge of the arts and foreign countries, and by her unpredictable witticisms and frequent, disarming naïveté.

Her greatest asset, however, has been her ability to speak French and Spanish effortlessly. In Paris she melted even the imperious President Charles de Gaulle by conversing animatedly with him in French. In a dusty farm field outside Caracas, Venezuela, she mesmerized a crowd of peasants by appearing like a vision in a lime sheath and greeting them with a warm, simple speech in Spanish.

The First Lady is at her best in small groups—visiting dignitaries, officials, friends, just plain people. Here her apolitical nature is a definite asset, for officials find it easy to relax with her and discuss something other than business. She is briefed before each dinner for a foreign head of state—as is the President—on the visitor's likes, dislikes, his family, his background, his achievements. And she invariably remembers, say her associates, the kind of little personal details which frequently make the biggest impression. "She may not remember what the visitor's job encompasses, but she remembers, for example, that he has a daughter, aged nine, who recently toured Italy," one acquaintance says.

The President goes over guest lists for functions, and usually stops to taste the wine on his way from his office to dress for dinner. But all other aspects of White House social life are Mrs. Kennedy's responsibility. When a staff member or acquaintance proffers a suggestion for an unusual entertainment or reception theme, the President refers him to his wife, saying, "Go sell it to Jackie. She's the one who will decide." The running of the household, likewise, is totally her job. The First Lady once protested, "When I start to ask him silly little insignificant questions . . . about whether Caroline should appear at some reception, or whether I should wear a short or long dress, he just

snaps his fingers and says, 'That's your province.' And I say, 'Yes, but you're the great decision maker. Why should everyone but me get the benefit of your decisions?'"

The First Lady's life in the White House has a certain pattern (though, in recent months, the impending birth of her third child has altered it somewhat). Generally, she rises at 8:00 A.M. in order to spend an hour or so playing with her children before Caroline's classmates arrive at 9:30. (It is not unusual for one of her staff to get a call about some pending matter as early as 8:15 A.M.—or as late as 10 P.M.)

When Caroline's classmates arrive, they file upstairs to the third-floor playroom, now converted into a classroom, for a morning of play and instruction under the supervision of Miss Alice Grimes and Miss Elizabeth Boyd. The first year, when the children were only three and four years old, Mrs. Kennedy and the other mothers took turns supervising their sessions. But now the children are old enough to be left alone under the control of their teachers.

While Caroline is at nursery school, Mrs. Kennedy goes to work on her projects. She discusses social problems with her social secretary, Nancy Tuckerman, reviews housekeeping details with the housekeeper, Anne Lincoln, dictates personal and official correspondence three times a week to her secretary, Mary Gallagher. According to her staff, she makes decisions quickly.

Caroline's school is over at noon, when the First Lady sometimes lunches with her. More often Mrs. Kennedy will continue working as she lunches from a tray, or she will have lunch with a friend or associate in her fine-arts project. The President prefers to have "eating and working" luncheons in the family dining room with aides, out-of-town politicians or officials.

After the children's nap, Mrs. Kennedy usually takes them outdoors to play. Sometimes other children are invited to play with Caroline, since John, Jr. is still too young to be much company for his energetic older sister. A Jungle Gym, sandbox, swing and slide have been set up behind the rhododendron bushes. Macaroni, who is ordinarily kept in the country, is sometimes trans-

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ported to the White House, where he trots around the lawn with Caroline on his back. Mrs. Kennedy, a keen sports-woman with good co-ordination and considerable muscular control, was once observed playing tennis, in white slacks and turtle-neck sweater, on the White House courts with a Secret Service agent, while snow flurries filled the air and the temperature was a chilly thirty-two degrees. Nearby, Caroline's head was visible above the foliage, bobbing up and down as she jumped on a trampoline. The President can see his family at play from his window, and has sometimes briefly interrupted a conversation to watch them.

ABOUT 5:00 P.M., Mrs. Kennedy and the children return to the mansion for the evening. She has frequently remarked that one of the best aspects of living in the White House is that she and her husband are able to spend more evenings together than ever before, because now people come to them.

But this comfortable routine is often broken, for Mrs. Kennedy is away from the White House a great deal—at least, some observers estimate, half the time. She spends more than three months every summer at Hyannis Port and Newport, R. I., long Friday through Monday weekends during the rest of the year at a country retreat or Camp David; and two weeks each at Christmas and Easter in Palm Beach, Florida. She also makes trips abroad with the President, takes frequent two- and three-day jaunts to New York City, spent four weeks in Italy and two in Greece vacationing, and made a three-week semiofficial trip to India and Pakistan with her sister, Lee Radziwill. At such times, her staff says, the First Lady keeps track of continuing White House projects and problems through work folders, which are shuttled back and forth between her and her staff via the mails or courier planes.

Intimates say that Mrs. Kennedy's new poise and self-confidence in her role as First Lady has even affected the Kennedys' marriage, bringing them closer together and adding a new, deeper dimension.

The President professes to notice no change in his wife since the election, but it is his nature to be restrained, even detached, in comments about his family and those closest to him. His attitude is simply that Mrs. Kennedy is still Mrs. Kennedy. And what Mrs. Kennedy is, is a complex, many-sided individualist.

The President once described his own temperament as steady and relatively consistent through both pain and pleasure, and his wife's, by contrast, as intense and mercurial, vibrating continually through the whole range of emotions. Her mother, Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss, has said that her daughter always "felt strongly about things." Sister-in-law Ethel Kennedy described her thus: "The wheels go round constantly in her head—you can't pigeonhole her. You have a hard time getting to the bottom of that barrel, which is great for Jack, who's so inquisitive." Robert Kennedy put it this way: "She's poetic, whimsical, provocative, independent, and yet very feminine. Jackie has always kept her own identity and been different. That's important in a woman."

The family background from which Jacqueline Kennedy came has made adjustment to the life of a First Lady sometimes easier—and sometimes harder—than for other Presidents' wives. She was born July 28, 1929, to

John and Janet Lee Bouvier, both rich, Republican, socially very Old Guard, and very good-looking. She attended fashionable girls' schools—Miss Chapin's in New York, Holton Arms in Washington, and Miss Porter's in Farmington, Connecticut.

When she was in her teens, her parents were divorced; two years later her mother married Hugh Auchincloss, a wealthy Washington broker. Jacqueline then spent her summers on a seventy-five-acre water-front estate at Newport and her winters at Merrywood, an estate in Virginia overlooking the Potomac River. When she was graduated from Miss Porter's school, her yearbook profile noted: "Ambition—not to be a housewife." In 1948, when she was eighteen, she was presented to society at debutante parties in New York and Newport, and was dubbed "deb of the year" by the New York *Journal-American's* society columnist.

Jacqueline attended Vassar for two years, then spent a year at the Sorbonne in Paris. She returned home to finish her studies at George Washington University, then got a job as a \$42.50-a-week inquiring photographer for the *Washington Times-Herald*.

While still a student, in 1951, Jac-

in almost constant pain. In mid-February, a second operation on his spine was performed. This time the operation was successful. Finally out of danger, he utilized his recuperation period to write his Pulitzer Prize-winning study of political courage, *Profiles in Courage*. Mrs. Kennedy helped to co-ordinate material and check facts, and the senator dedicated his book to her.

In May, 1955, after a seven-month absence, Kennedy returned to the Capitol and to politics, limping slightly but otherwise recovered. Within a year Jackie was pregnant, and Kennedy had launched a Kennedy-for-Vice-President boom. But he lost the vice-presidential nomination, and Mrs. Kennedy lost the baby by miscarriage. Shortly afterward they moved to the fashionable Georgetown section of Washington. There, in 1957, Caroline was born, and her birth gave Mrs. Kennedy a sense of purpose which she had lacked. "It's terribly creative to make a house a happy place to live in," she has said. She concentrated on doing just that, and playing with her baby daughter. She has never been a "joiner," and always avoided women's clubs and similar organized activities.

During her husband's campaign for the Democratic nomination and then for the Presidency in 1960, Mrs. Kennedy was again pregnant, and her public appearances were rare.

On election night, November 8, the exhausting campaign at last over, the candidate and his family waited at Hyannis Port for the returns. The candidate, Mrs. Kennedy and William Walton had a quiet dinner; at first they talked about painting, then changed to a series of reminiscences, vignettes from the campaign. After dinner they settled in the living room to watch the returns trickle in on a small, portable television set.

There was little conversation. At ten-thirty, when early returns showed a big lead for Kennedy, Jacqueline whispered, "Oh, bunny, you're President now." He replied quietly, "No... no... it's too early yet." It was indeed too early; the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon, pulled ahead steadily for the rest of the evening. At eleven-thirty, because she was expecting her baby in three weeks, Mrs. Kennedy was sent to bed. The candidate followed at 3:00 A.M., when he had not yet won. But at 5:45 A.M., the Secret Service surrounded the house. When he awoke, John Kennedy was President-elect. His victory margin—a mere 112,881 votes—was so narrow that Robert Kennedy, standing on a sofa in his stockinged feet, told reporters it was a "miracle."

WHEN Nixon's press secretary, Herbert Klein, read Nixon's concession over television at 11 A.M., Mrs. Kennedy was not watching. She was walking along the beach alone. Later that afternoon she met a small group of Washington reporters in Robert Kennedy's house, her one and only direct exchange with them collectively to this day. She appeared shy but straightforward; she said she believed her first duty as First Lady was to take care of the President so he could best serve the people, that she would do whatever her husband wanted her to do, and that her chief interests would be in the area of programs dealing with children or foreign students. And she stressed her intention to try to rear her children in a normal fashion.

She seemed to find it difficult to believe that she was about to become the partner to the President. ♦

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queline had met young Representative Kennedy, then thirty-five, at a dinner party given by Charles and Martha Bartlett, who are still close friends of both. Kennedy was already campaigning for the Senate, and he spent nearly every weekend and sometimes most weekdays in Massachusetts. But in January, 1953, he returned to Washington as a senator—and he began to court Jacqueline. They were married September 12, 1953, in a lavish wedding at Newport.

The newlyweds bought a large house at McLean, Virginia. It proved to be a mistake: the senator did not like the long traffic-snarled ride to the Capitol, and Mrs. Kennedy felt lonely and stranded way out in the country when he was away. There were other adjustments to make: her arty friends bored him, his political ones bored her. Their tastes, in almost everything from reading to eating habits, did not mesh. But by the summer of 1954 there was a bigger complication to worry about—the senator's back, injured when he played football in college and reinjured during the war, became so painful he had to spend much of his time on crutches. In October surgeons performed a spinal operation; but the months slipped by and Kennedy was still flat on his back,