



Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis: A Life

Donald Spoto

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From Publishers Weekly

Veteran film biographer Spoto (*Notorious: The Life of Ingrid Bergman*, etc.) does a masterful job of capturing--and explaining--the complex personality of a figure who was arguably the most important icon of American womanhood of her day. Particularly attentive to the ways in which his subject both shaped and was shaped by American social history, Spoto finds that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, whose stated ambition upon graduating from high school in 1947 was "not to be a housewife," virtually embodied the shifting and often contradictory notions of ideal womanhood that defined her generation. A fierce intellectual and a compulsive shopper, a craver of solitude who nevertheless shone in the spotlight, a snob with a strong social conscience, a would-be career woman who also sought out the security of marriage to wealthy, prominent husbands, Jackie is indeed a study in contradictions. But Spoto convincingly accounts for each facet of her personality as a consequence of her upbringing (as the child of unhappily wed, social-climbing parents), of a cultural climate that at once encouraged women to nurture their talents and expected them to view themselves primarily as wives and mothers, and of her inclinations and abilities. While this is an unreservedly sympathetic and admiring portrait, it is also a candid one, detailing the ups and downs of Jackie's marriages and of her other relationships. Spoto concludes that Jackie found personal and professional fulfillment in her later years: in her relationships with her children and with Maurice Tempelman, and in her career as an editor--a vocation at which, he maintains, she truly excelled.

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