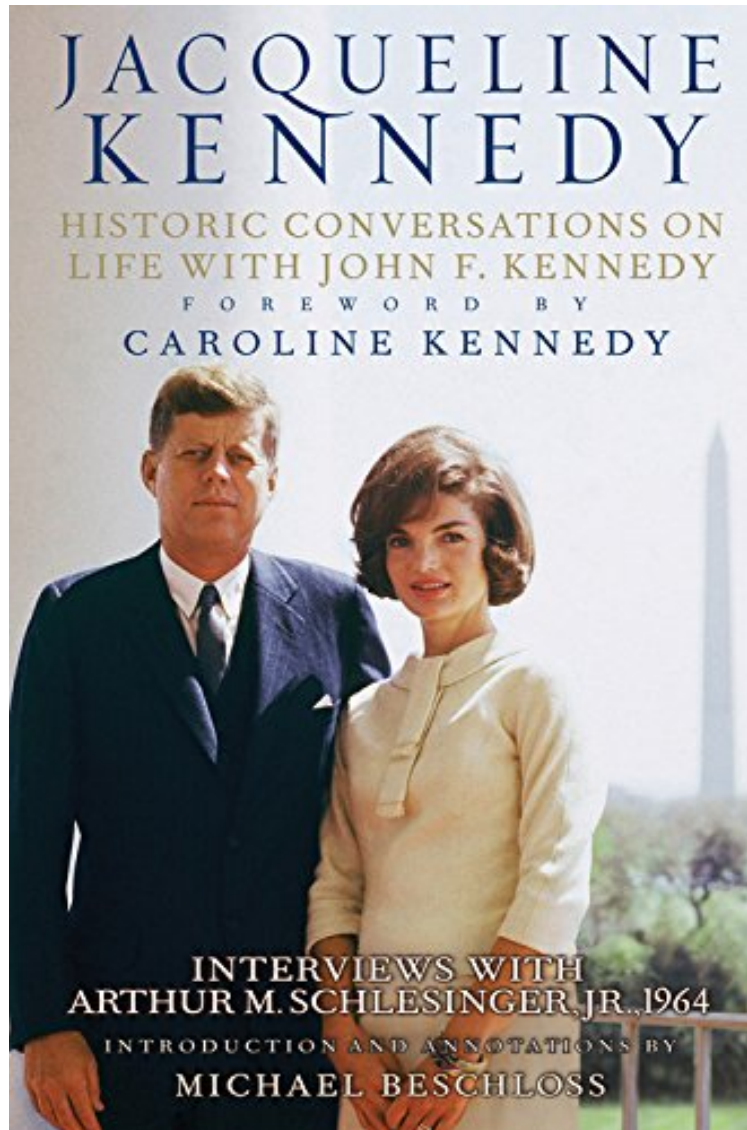


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Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy

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Jacqueline Kennedy : Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy:

499 of 518 people found the following review helpful. MOVING BEYOND WORDS - 5 STARS !!!!By Richard of

ConnecticutI simply cannot put into words the beauty of this book, audio, and project that was put together by Caroline Kennedy and historian Michael Beschloss, but of course you have to consider what they are building upon. It is January 1964; a 34 year old young widow who has captivated America with her personal courage was forced by her husband's death to leave what had become her home, the White House. She must endure the long winter. She is alone, without husband, and she has 2 young children who have been devastated as well by their father's death. She also has to be going through what any of us who have been divorced go through, the feeling of abandonment, and completely devoid of being rooted in reality because the reality is too harsh to contemplate. At this moment less than 4 months into the grieving process, she agrees with Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger to go through a series of interviews to be recorded for history. The historian had taken a leave from Harvard to become an assistant to JFK in the White House. He was considered the egghead of the entourage that had followed the President. There was one caveat to the agreement with Schlesinger and the President's widow. These recordings would not be released until 50 years after the audio sessions were held, and Jackie would have editorial control over any revisions she wanted to make. Thus in January 2004, the widow and the historian began what became 7 hours of recordings. The sessions were held in the Georgetown home that Jackie, Caroline, and John Jr. moved into several weeks after the assassination. The tapes are extraordinary. They have been audio enhanced for quality. You can actually hear things in the background like Jackie lighting up a cigarette, or putting ice into a drink. The emotionality is all there. For those of us who may have thought we understood the first lady, or her relationship to the 35th President, we need to rethink our ideas based on this fascinating new material.

Organization of the Material
What we are looking at her is really a project as opposed to a book or a cd recording. You will receive a slip case which will contain an audio package with cd's; each cd will represent one of the seven interviews conducted by the first lady. It is elegantly packaged, and even the choice of colors (Presidential blue) is exquisite. In the slipcase is a book which contains the transcripts of the audio cd recordings. It is 349 pages of narrative, and whatever you do; don't forget to look at the picture of the President and Jacqueline sitting in the backseat of the Lincoln in Dallas on page 350-351. I have never seen this picture before. She is absolutely radiant and in love with her prince. Since nowhere in the review materials does anyone mention the contents of the recordings, I will give you a brief synopsis of them so you can judge if this is the type of material you would be interested in:

RECORDING I
The First Lady covers then Senator Kennedy's political aspirations. This entire session is devoted to the 1950's. The period preceding JFK's ascension to the White House is chronicled. She also discusses the future President's attempt to win the Vice Presidential nomination in 1956 during the Stevenson convention. Early married life and social life in Georgetown, Washington is also covered.

RECORDING II
We all know that the President was a prolific reader, some say he read at a 1200 word per minute reading speed. Jackie tells us what he liked to read, and then she goes into his opinions of other leaders past and present. These include Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, and Charles DE Gaulle. She also has some interesting words to say about the President's father Joseph P. Kennedy, and she is surprisingly candid about the JFK - RFK relationship. This is the recording which also tells us the story of the 1960 election.

RECORDING III
It is here that the conversations go into the relationship between JFK and United States Senator Joseph McCarthy. You will be surprised at some of the things she has to say. She covers the primaries that took place during the 1960 campaign. How did the President pick LBJ as his running mate; what did she think of the debates between Kennedy and Nixon? Election Day is thoroughly chronicled.

RECORDING IV
JFK was the first President born in the 20th century, and the youngest elected President ever to serve, which is still true. His transition from Senator to President was crucial. How was it done? You will now understand her viewpoint. What were the youthful President's plans for the Presidency and what about the early White House daily life which included the social life and his back problems? The inaugural address is highlighted.

RECORDING V
Here we have the Cuban Revolution, and the Bay of Pigs which completely redefined his Presidency. What is uniquely talked about however are the Presidential visits to Canada and France where she charms De Gaulle?

RECORDING VI
Mrs. Kennedy with emotion describes the Cuban Missile Crisis from her vantage point. Perhaps the most amazing and insightful statement is made in the recordings right here. Jackie tells us that during the darkest moments of the crisis when the missiles were ready for launch, that she tells her husband, that she would rather stay in the White House with her children and die with you, then go on living without you.

The First Lady also tells us about the Berlin Crisis, disarmament, and Civil Rights, but everything pales in comparison to Cuba where we were all in jeopardy and so very close to perishing as a civilization.

RECORDING VII
The recordings are summed up with discussions of JFK's trip to India. We then understand what the President thought about Viet Nam which became the dominate domestic issue of the next ten years. It also threatened to rip apart the social fabric of our country. Mrs. Kennedy talks about her children and the plans for the second term, and the coming campaign.

The PROJECT
Passes from MOTHER to DAUGHTER
The First Lady only granted 3 interviews after the young President died. One was to Theodore White, a fabulous writer who published his interview in Life Magazine shortly after JFK's death. It is here that the President and his Administration were compared to Camelot and King Arthur. Another series of interviews were given to author William Manchester who wrote the best seller "Death of a President", the official chronicle of the assassination, although there were disagreements with the Kennedy family. These tapes that we now have are the only other interviews granted. Upon Jackie's death in 1994, the tapes of the interviews which were stored in a vault at the

Kennedy Library were opened and revealed to Caroline. She made the decision that the tapes would eventually be made available to the public, and to history. Her biggest decision was whether or not to edit the tapes. How interesting that she chose to leave them alone - no revisions, which was her right to do. The only revisions that were made were in the interest of clarification. You know how sometimes when you transcribe spoken language to written language; it can look very awkward, even unintelligible. Those are the only revisions that were made.

CONCLUSION This is an elegant book, it is beautiful, and it is historically meaningful and important. The tapes and the voice will have meaning for all of us that were alive during this period of history. For those being exposed to the life of the slain President, you might get a little bit of the feeling of what the rest of us share. Historian Richard Beschloss in the first sentence of his Introduction to the book says, "It is her turn to speak". How appropriate. Jackie in the tapes says, "He is free and we must live". It says it all, doesn't it?

During this period that Caroline Kennedy shepherded the project, the President's sole surviving sibling asked herself, when does someone no longer belong to you, but history. With the publication of this book and the accompanying tapes we now have our answer, and we are all better off for it. Thank you for reading this review.

Richard Stoyeck
Post Script: I have attempted to be objective in my understanding of both the book and the recordings, but you must understand the hold that this man had on those of us that lived through his administration regardless of our ages. I was once caught in a building in the late 1980's where the fire alarms went off and found myself on the elevator alone with Larry O'Brien, the President's campaign director during the run for the presidency. We began a conversation, and I asked what he was really like? O'Brien turned inward, thought for a moment, and then began. He said "You must understand, I left my family for him during the 1950's. I followed him everywhere. He had that kind of hold on people." This book and accompanying recordings will have an impact on the historical analysis of JFK's life and legacy. Get it today.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A rare offering of direct history
By MickMI
I am absolutely delighted with this book/CD combination. To be able to hear Jacqueline Kennedy talk about her marriage, the White House years, and the campaigns leading to Kennedy's election as president added greatly to the stories. I love to read. I especially love to read history, but, as we all know, you do not get the pauses, the inflections of voice, and the emotion reading quotes on a page. I am not a "Kennedy buff," other than the interest in significant and tragic history, and that interest which comes with the first president I can remember. There are no startling revelations, but I came away with a clearer appraisal of Ms. Kennedy. She was not the somewhat breathy attractive prep school hostess generally perceived. She was an intelligent, well-educated and well-read, engaged, politically astute, attractive woman. Her answers to questions were insightful and revealing, if guarded. I wish there was more to hear. The recordings are clear and easy to understand. The audio quality is surprisingly good. The book has some photos in it and the text of the interviews. The reason to buy this is for the Cd's, however, and I do recommend buying it.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F.
By B. E. Snyder
I thought I was getting the book that wasn't to be released for 50 years. Since, Mrs. Kennedy did this interview 4 months after the assassination it has been 50 years. So in essence it was a book of 50 years waiting to be published. I was a bit surprised about the way Jacqueline answered the questions. It seemed that she hadn't been interviewed much. Her answers were very simplistic. The interviewer even seemed to answer the questions or to help her to fill in the blanks at the end of the questions. I understand he was trying to make it easier for her. But, I don't think it really worked. Then too, being 4 months after the tragedy of the death of her husband just might have been too soon to quiz her. Personally, I don't see how she was able to deal with all she had been through and all she was still going through. I think the love of her husband and the love of her son John and her daughter Caroline gave her all that was most important to her, the reason to continue on. I still feel so bad for her. How horrible to see your husband's head blown apart. She carried herself so well through this horrid time. I know our President would have been very proud of her. She still carried on with the funeral plans. The Lincoln funeral was her example. She did an honor to John Kennedy. I was surprised that she believed that women shouldn't be in politics because she believed we didn't have the temperament for it. But, she did change her mind in later years. She lived for Jack. Always trying to make him happy. She was an old fashioned woman. I liked hearing that. So different from what I knew of her before. I was glad to hear she and Jack did love each other. Now I do believe her. So you see I did like this book because of all I learned about her and Jack's relationship. Very informative! But, I didn't like the way the interview began at the beginning. I do think this is a good read. So much comes back especially when you were alive at the tragic time in history.

Barbara John

To mark John F. Kennedy's centennial, celebrate the life and legacy of the 35th President of the United States.

About the Author Caroline Kennedy is the editor of the New York Times bestselling *A Patriot's Handbook*, *Profiles in Courage for Our Time*, *The Best-Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, *A Family of Poems*, *A Family Christmas*, and the coauthor of *The Right to Privacy* and *In Our Defense: The Bill of Rights in Action*. She serves as the Vice Chair of the Fund for Public Schools in New York City and President of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation. She lives in New York City.