

This Day in History... July 28, 1929

Happy Birthday Jackie Kennedy

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier was born on July 28, 1929, in Southampton, New York.

Jacqueline, or “Jackie” as she was popularly known, enjoyed a relatively privileged childhood due to her father’s success as a stockbroker on Wall Street. She learned to ride a horse when she was just a year old and, by age 11, had already won several national championships. A private girl from a young age, Jackie became more introverted after her parents divorced when she was seven.

Jackie did well in school, attending Vassar College in New York, where she studied history, literature, art, and French. During her junior year, Jackie studied-abroad at the University of Grenoble and the Sorbonne in France. After graduating from George Washington University, Jackie got her first job. She worked as the “Inquiring Camera Girl” for *The Washington Times-Herald* newspaper. In that role, Jackie wandered the city photographing and interviewing people on issues of the day.

In May 1952, Jackie attended a dinner party where she was introduced to a young US representative, John F. Kennedy. Kennedy was in the midst of running for the US Senate. After winning that election, the pair quickly grew close and announced their engagement in June 1953.



Jackie had a lifelong love of horses that she later shared with her children.

The Kennedy’s September 1953 wedding was the social event of the season. Some 700 guests witnessed the ceremony, and even more attended the reception. Following their honeymoon, the Kennedys returned to their busy life in Washington. John Kennedy suffered chronic back problems from football and wartime service and had to undergo two surgeries. Jackie encouraged him to remain busy during his recovery time, resulting in his 1957 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Profiles in Courage*. That same year, Jackie gave birth to their first child, Caroline.

In January 1960, Kennedy launched his presidential campaign. Jackie traveled the country by his side until she found out she was pregnant and was instructed to stay at home. She did so, but used the time to answer hundreds of campaign letters, tape TV commercials, deliver interviews, and write a weekly newspaper column. That November, Kennedy narrowly won the election. The Kennedys enjoyed another celebration a few weeks later – the birth of their second child, John Jr.

While Jackie was happy for her husband’s success, and committed to fulfill her role as hostess,



Grenada souvenir sheet picturing Jackie and John

This Day in History... July 28, 1929 continued

she made it clear from the beginning that her first priority was to be a good wife and mother. Incorporating the importance of family with her duties as first lady, Jackie's first project was restoring the White House. She turned the sun porch into an integrated kindergarten for Caroline and 15 other children.

Jackie also enriched the experience of visitors and established a White House Fine Arts Committee and curator. She tirelessly collected art and furniture from around the country, specifically those that had belonged to former presidents, and restored every public room in the White House. When she was done, Jackie hosted a televised tour of the White House that made her a celebrity, and her fashion was copied around the country.



Issued for JFK's 100th birthday.



Jackie founded the White House Historical Association and the Committee for the Preservation of the White House. She also pushed for a bill establishing White House furnishings as part of the Smithsonian collection and not a president's personal belongings.

Another issue close to Jackie's heart was promoting the arts. She frequently held parties where artists, writers, scientists, poets, and musicians discussed issues with politicians, diplomats, and statesmen. Jackie was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the National Cultural Center in Washington, DC (which was eventually named for her husband). Her ideas and commitment to arts also laid the groundwork for several national arts foundations, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Arts.

Though she did not frequently speak out on political issues, Jackie was known to share her stern opinions with her husband when they were alone. She did make occasional statements – most notably an address in Spanish aimed at Cuban fighters following the Bay of Pigs Invasion. Jackie showed her support for the growing Civil Rights Movement by releasing pictures

of her racially integrated kindergarten at the White House. She also went on more international trips than any first lady before her. She traveled both with and without her husband, established friendships with world leaders, and gained support for US interests.

The Kennedy's time in the White House is often referred to as the "Camelot" era, as it was a time of positivity and success. Yet it came to an abrupt end following tragedy. First, in August 1963, Jackie gave birth to a child who died two days later. Still recovering from the loss, Jackie sat beside her husband that November as he was assassinated in Texas. She was a widow at 34, a single mother of two, and had become the face of the grieving nation.



Jackie selected the design for this stamp commemorating JFK's 47th birthday.

Shortly after her husband's death, Jackie began work on the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. She remarried in 1968, but would be widowed again seven years later. With her children grown up, Jackie embarked on a new career as an editor, first at Viking Press, then at Doubleday. She enjoyed her job and spending time with her children until her death on May 19, 1994.



The East Garden, which Jackie redesigned, was later renamed in her honor.

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