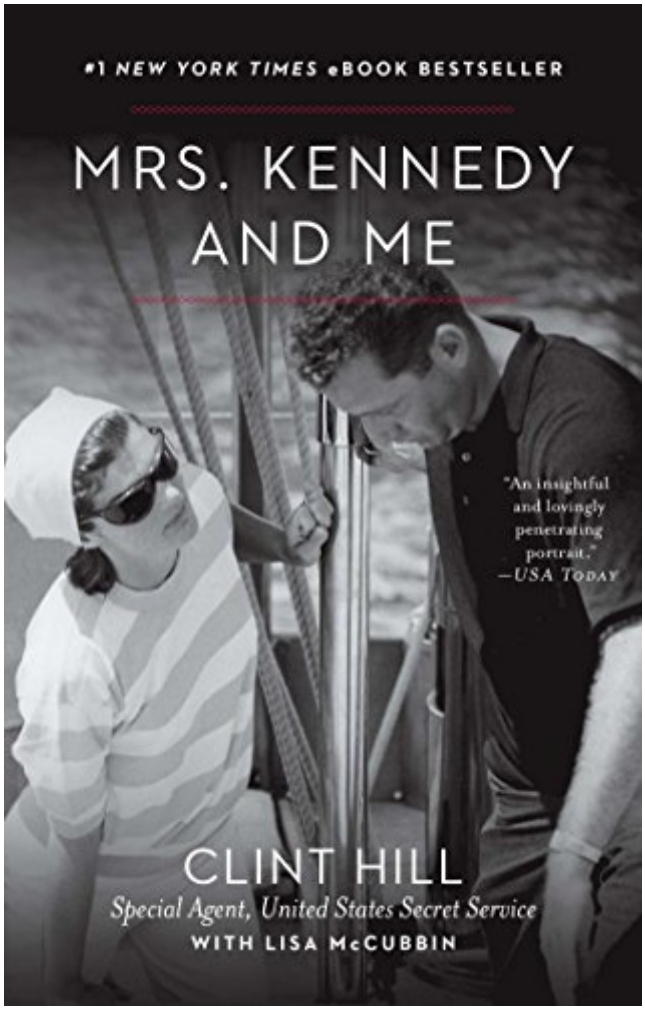
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Mrs. Kennedy And Me: An Intimate Memoir



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Synopsis

The #1 New York Times bestselling memoir by Clint Hill that Kirkus Reviews called Ã¢â ¬Å“clear and honest prose free from salaciousness and gossip,Ã¢â ¬Â• Jackie KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s personal Secret Service agent details his very close relationship with the First Lady during the four years leading up to and following President John F. KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s tragic assassination.In those four years, Hill was by Mrs. KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s side for some of the happiest moments as well as the darkest. He was there for the birth of John, Jr. on November 25, 1960, as well as for the birth and sudden death of Patrick Bouvier Kennedy on August 8, 1963. Three and a half months later, the unthinkable happened.Forty-seven years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the one vivid image that never leaves Clint HillÃ¢â ¬â„¢s mind is that of President KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s head lying on Mrs. KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s lap in the back seat of the limousine, his eyes fixed, blood splattered all over the back of the car, Mrs. Kennedy, and Hill as well. Sprawled on the trunk of the car as it sped away from Dealey Plaza, Hill clung to the sides of the car, his feet wedged in so his body was as high as possible. Clint Hill jumped on the car too late to save the president, but all he knew after that first shot was that if more shots were coming, the bullets had to hit him instead of the First Lady. Mrs. KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s strength, class, and dignity over those tragic four days in November 1963 held the country together.This is the story, told for the first time, of the man who perhaps held her together.

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Customer Reviews

I just finished reading Agent Clint Hill's book, Mrs. Kennedy and Me. As an ex-secret service agent and the first African American Agent to serve on the White House Detail under President Kennedy, I want to congratulate Agent Hill on a very well written and interesting memoir. I served on the detail with Agent Hill in 1961. When the terrible incident happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963 and the reports circulated that one agent had responded by trying to shield the occupants riding in the presidential limousine, I knew immediately that that agent was Clint Hill. The reader should know that, in my opinion, this book is the memoir of one of the most diligent, responsible, trustworthy, dutiful agents ever to serve on the White House Detail. This book is a must read for anyone endeavoring to obtain an insightful agent's view and understanding of the tragic occurrences of November 22, 1963.Abraham W. Bolden, Sr.

The short:This book is a moving memoir of the Secret Service agent, Clint Hill, who was assigned to guard Jackie Kennedy and who almost - but not quite - made it in time to take the fatal bullet for her husband, president John F. Kennedy, when he was brutally assassinated on 22 November 1963 in Dallas, Texas.It is a book for people interested in the 'normal' lives of the Kennedys (as normal as they could ever be!), and who want to read about the spectacular events and the everyday routines, the heartwarming and sometimes embarrassing, and look over the should of a first-hand witness to all of this as well as all the tragedies, such as the loss of baby Patrick and Kennedy Sr.'s stroke. It is all in this book, as experienced by the man who guarded and served Jackie Kennedy virtually 24/7. No gossip. Only a stint of politics. And absolutely no conspiracy-theories. You will have to go elsewhere for all that.The narrative is constrained at times by the understandable need for Mr. Hill to still protect his own privacy as well his laudable intention to protect some privacy for Jackie's memory - an intention which conflicts somewhat with the genre and topic, but there you have it. However, Mr. Hill's dry wit anecdotes and emotional (but never sentimental) accounts of how it was to be part of American history through all of these times more than compensates for that constraint. And it is an added bonus that there are many pictures of the family, and especially of Jacqueline, in

less formal situations.This book has my warmest recommendations if you are just the least bit interested in this legendary first family of the United States.The long:This book is, for all intents and purposes, a decision to heal for Mr. Hill himself and a final gift to his beloved "Mrs. Kennedy" - as he always refers to her.It is healing in the sense, as Mr. Hill has described in the afterword, of being able to let go of the past by allowing his feelings about all that happened (good and bad) to finally be ... shared. Instead of keeping it all in the "dungeon", as he calls it - a dungeon from which he almost never emerged after a near-fatal battle with alcoholism in the late 70s and early 80s, following his Secret Service-retirement.Mr. Hill is indeed ably assisted in this healing process by co-author Lisa McCubbin and it is probably her pen that allows the most vivid descriptions of everything from Onassis' opulent yacht to the colorful crowd spectacles from Paris to Pakistan to come to life. I did, however, get the clear sense from reading - as well as from watching interviews with both of them on YouTube later on - that McCubbin has never played anything but respectful and conscientious role as facilitator for Mr. Hill's story.Since the book, from a commercial and journalistic POV, to a large degree has had to take into account the appeal to an audience who is probably very interested in the glamour that surrounded Jackie Kennedy, it is refreshing that every time her 'Camelot-life' comes close to exhausting the arsenal of English superlatives, then there is *always* a dry anecdote directly from Hill to balance it all. For example: His recollection of the logistical head-aches about "how to get that damn horse home", when the Pakistani president gifted JBK with just such an animal during a state visit.And not to forget - to balance the glamour, there is also, sadly, the whole series of soul-burdening events in the lives of the Kennedys: The stroke and incapacitation of Kennedy's father, the loss of baby Patrick, or the row of high-strung political exigencies, culminating in the Cuban Missile Crisis, when president Kennedy only narrowly avoided the unspeakable: Nuclear war.As for the political crises, however, they are only sketched - and the so called scandals are only hinted at. But I didn't feel any of the latter were 'glossed over' - never in a way which reduced my overall enjoyment of the book. Sometimes the deliberate downplaying of some of the salacious stories the Kennedy's have become known for actually made me smile and gain more respect for him at the same time:When Mr. Hill for example refers to Marilyn Monroe's infamous birthday song to the president with only one sentence: "We never discussed this" - I felt it spoke volumes both as to his awareness of what it *may* have signified to the president's wife - but also to his professional ethic of not going into the whole 'scandal-discussion' (read: alleged infidelities). He curtly acknowledges what may have been there and moves on. And I appreciated that.To my view the topics of, say, the alleged infidelity of JFK or the overspending of on 'excessive holidays' of JBK, seem somewhat petty considering that JFK were in constant physical pain, and dealing with crises

that included avoiding possible nuclear war, plus the rest of his 24/7 political life and results. And Jackie lost her *second* child during all this and had her share of exhausting political duties as well, all the time being chased by paparazzi. Her many weeks abroad were definitely not spent *only* on water-skiing and sight-seeing.I have some mixed feelings, though, regarding the very limited focus on the family of Mr. Hill himself in the book. The consequences of such single-minded devotion to his job obviously cost his wife and children, but, like leading the United States, Hill's job was a job that *somebody* had to do. Somebody had to be willing to pay the price to protect the leader and his family all year round, on travels, etc. After thinking about it, I can only say that I feel it is a very modern POV that may compel us - myself included - to judge harshly a man from 50 years ago, who leaves his home 80 percent of the time to do this kind of job. It should also be highlighted that Mr. Hill was probably the sole breadwinner, although this is never stated specifically. But even if this was not so, his excessive work-hours were part and parcel of normal gender-roles in the 1950s and 1960s.I am not saying it was all 'okay', then. I am glad that the times, at least to some degree, seem to be heading towards more equality and consciousness about the importance of work/family-balance - even for military and other important jobs. Nevertheless, I did miss a bit more attention to the family consequences for Mr. Hill himself, though - and I missed it especially when I looked in vain for a comment on what he told his wife and children during the Missile Crisis! So that is why there is one star less than five in this review. However, I do think it is beside the point to make too big a deal out of this lack. Mr. Hill is obviously a very private person and those *were* different times. For some people in our Western world that is still the way roles are distributed in the family.(BTW: I did a YouTube-search and found a C-SPAN interview from 2012 with Mr. Hill. It answers some of the questions about the family repercussions from his career with the Kennedys, which are barely touched on in this book).The bottom line is: This book is NOT about Hill's family - or even about the Kennedy family at its deepest level. It was written, as said, as part of a path to healing - healing the trauma from having been unable to foil an *assassination* . That is worthwhile remembering.All of this brings me, at length, to the second purpose I believe this book had: It was also written to be a gift. To Jacqueline Kennedy.As this way of seeing the book dawned on me while I was reading, I gradually gave up trying to second-guess Mr. Hill's feelings from 50 years ago and label them either as 'being in love' or as 'friendship'. His feelings for Jacqueline were neither, the more I think about it. And it was not helpful, I found, to try to squeeze them into this or that category. It was - and is - enough for me to realize just this: There grew between Jacqueline Kennedy and Mr. Hill a strong human bond, including a high degree of mutual respect, both of which inevitably comes from living and working so close to another person, and for being responsible for her life and safety -

even if you are in two very different leagues as regards economic and political class.The closest I can come to a categorization here is 'courtly love' - the relationship that a knight of old could have with a fair lady to whom he professed his undying devotion and dedicated protection. The knight would even swear that he was willing to go to his death for his lady, and add many heartfelt professions of 'love' to this vow- even though it was understood that he and his chosen lady would never speak personally or touch in a romantic or sensual way. It is definitely not the way of modern lovers. It is not a friendship in any normal sense of the word. It certainly is not a guise for sexual lust. It is ... something else. It is also deeply fascinating to me, when this kind of relation seems to crop up again in the modern world. And at one point Mr. Hill indeed remarks that many of the other agents felt the same way about Jackie. They were willing to go through fire and water for her. But he became the most dedicated of them all.Many people, myself included, probably won't ever understand the true quality of the bond Mr. Hill came to experience towards Jacqueline Kennedy ... and perhaps he doesn't even understand it fully himself to this day. He can only acknowledge that it existed, and for all its costs, it was something precious to him, even as it came to be precious for her - whatever particular reasons Mrs. Kennedy may have had herself to acknowledge this bond (which she does at some pivotal moments in the story).By sharing with the world some of that beauty that was indeed Jackie Kennedy's life - and especially that which was the bond between her and her protector - Mr. Hill has contributed to balance the glaring spotlight of endless political disseminations of the Kennedy years, the shadows of their many tragedies and of course the 'scandalism' which has always been magnetically associated to their lives. In sharing this story has also made a courageous attempt let go of a Guilt that must have lasted the better part of 50 years. A guilt, which at the end of the day, is about the most horrifying, unthinkable event of all: Not being able to save the life of someone you care about.It seems that this particular guilt has haunted Mr. Hill since that fateful day in 1963 and I think I can now understand why, although I never gave it much thought until this book dropped into my lap. I was always interested in the conspiracy theories, and to some extend in the politics. Not so much in the people, in the family. Mr. Hill invited me to focus on this, and by doing so he also took me to a point where I could care and sense the despair of not being able to protect them.For not only did Mr. Hill fail to save a husband and a father and a president, he also failed to save the *happiness* of this man's wife - whom he was devoted to and had also sworn to serve and protect. In a way, Mr. Hill must have felt that the bullets that took Kennedy's life had indeed did hit Mrs. Kennedy. Not in her body, but in her soul. It was just a few months after the most recent tragedy of her dead infant child, after all, and now the assassination had taken one who was most precious from her - her husband. The pain of this loss was real, and

raw and shattering, whatever strains, real or imagined, that the Kennedy marriage had been subject to until that day. Mr. Hill's description of Jackie after the assassination leaves no doubt as to that.This book can never erase the horror that was real 22 November 1963. It can never completely erase the sense of failure and depression that inevitably had to come after, if you were a de facto part of the president of the United States' family like Mr. Hill seemed to have become. It is the same horror for everyone who is human - rich and famous or the millions of Others, lesser known, in this world who have lost loved ones to a murderer, in all of history. Murder is murder. Death is death. Failure to protect from this atrocity brings crushing guilt. Both grief and guilt may never truly be wiped away from the mind and the heart. But I believe they can, in time, be balanced in such a way that they become bearable to live with, maybe even fade into the background as the Good once again becomes what matters.I feel that with this book, Mr. Hill has made his deeply personal commitment, long overdue, to not let the guilt win. He has therefore opted to show us, alongside the horror and grief, the true beauty of both some very real parts of Mrs. Kennedy's life and of that special bond that grew between these two, admittedly, very different persons. All as he saw and lived it.I don't think there is any need to point out that you can never truly be a 'failure' if you unhesitatingly throw yourself between an assassin and that assassin's victim - even if the last shot has been fired (which you do not know) - and even if there was nothing in the first place which you could have done to reach that person *in time* to block the killing bullets. (Mr. Hill was on a car behind the Kennedys and he barely was able to reach the president's car in time to latch on to it and shield Mrs. Kennedy from further harm, before the car sped towards Parkland Hospital.) So there was failure for Mr. Hill that day, yes, but only in a professional sense. Never in a human sense.That is an intellectual exercise, however, and one which did not help Mr. Hill, especially in those years when he looked too deeply into the bottle. There inevitably arises a need to heal such a huge wound in your memory, by finally allowing the memory to *be* there - without further judgment; by finally deciding to lift your gaze up again so you can see and appreciate once more the *entire* picture of the lives and bonds that were real, and not just see them from the vantage point of the day they all ended. And then to give that beauty and love back, in the form of this book, to someone you felt that you had taken it all from, even if she is no longer with us in the here and now.For Mr. Hill had never really taken anything from Mrs. Kennedy. He only gave selflessly.With this book he has given her memory - and thus our memory - something precious.

Wow! This was a heartfelt and rich memoir of the Kennedy years in the White House. It is very well written and brings the people, stories, and events to life. In it you will travel with Jackie and Clint Hill

to distant countries and get insights into the thoughts and feelings of the former first lady. You may even grow to love and appreciate her like I did. I also learned a lot about U.S. history, global relationships, and the secret service. I came to love Clint Hill and wish we could all have someone that brave and loving in our lives. Wonderful book, loved every minute of it. I will definitely read it many times over!

Clint Hill was the Secret Service agent assigned to protect Jacqueline Kennedy during her White House years. At first he was disappointed with his assignment, believing that it was a demotion to guard a family member rather than an official. But he found that guarding Mrs. Kennedy involved fascinating experiences, travel to exotic places, and attendance at concerts by the finest musicians. He also grew to love and admire the Kennedy family, especially the First Lady. He always referred to her as Mrs. Kennedy and she always called him Mr. Hill. This is not a tell-all, warts-and-all kind of memoir. Mr. Hill is writing about people he truly respects and cares about, and the last thing in the world he wants is to spread gossip or defame their memories. His recollections, as reported, are all favorable to the Kennedys, and I found this approach admirable, professional, and quite touching. The book also is not political. The author doesn't get into any of the issues of the administration unless they directly affected his work, and most of them didn't. The Cuban missile crisis got a few pages, but that was about it.Any reader of this book is bound to keep an eye on the calendar and dread what's coming. Because the Kennedys are presented as human beings rather than celebrities or historical figures, the assassination is even more traumatic, and Mr. Hill always felt responsible because he wasn't able to take the bullet in place of the President. (He wasn't riding on the back of the car because President Kennedy had told him not to.) The author continued to protect Mrs. Kennedy for a year after she left the White House, but he didn't see her after that. I was sorry to hear that he never made contact, even during her illness, but he was afraid that his presence would only remind her of what happened in Dallas.I would recommend this book to any reader. It presents an entirely different perspective on the Kennedy years, and it's a moving story for everyone, regardless of their political views.

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