

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

# JACK & JACKIE

Jack Kennedy loved coming to Newport. The wide expanse of The Ocean Drive where he raced his beloved white 1961 Thunderbird convertible as The Secret Service sought to catch up, provided JFK with a much broader playing field than Hyannis Port, Massachusetts (the official Summer White House) where he was confined to the beach-bound Kennedy compound bracketed by tourist-crowded two-lane streets.<sup>602</sup> In Newport, the links of The County Club (home of the first U.S. Open in 1895) were literally across the street from his wife's mother's place. JFK could swim in the saltwater-fed heated pool at Fairholme, the estate of Mrs. Robert R. Young. Jackie was free to water ski in Narragansett Bay off the back of the Presidential Yacht, "Honey Fitz." They could watch majestic 12 meters competing for The America's Cup from the deck of the destroyer Joseph P. Kennedy.<sup>603</sup>

In fact, having access to Marine One around the corner at Fort Adams, Quonset Naval Air Station across The Bay and the home of CRUDES LANT minutes away gave the Commander-In-Chief the resources of the Presidency he could never access on Cape Cod. When the Kennedys were in Newport, in the early Sixties during his 400 day term, there was real excitement around town.<sup>604</sup>



JFK off Newport at the helm of the 62 foot sloop Manitou. (Robert Knudsen)

to be particularly adept sleuths as was my cousin Mary Laverty, a tall redhead with an infectious laugh.

One morning in 1962, Julia, Rita, and Mary staked out Mrs. Young's estate on Ruggles Avenue along with Rita's son, my cousin Joe. The word was that Jack would be swimming that day. Another dozen Newporters were waiting on either side of the gate when it opened. A black Secret Service vehicle emerged slowly from the estate and the agents eyed the small crowd. One of them in the passenger seat nodded and radioed back to the "chase" car that the coast was clear and in seconds, the President drove out in the T-Bird with little Caroline on his lap.

As always, he stopped to chat with the locals who'd heard that he might be there. I remember my aunt Julia telling me how red his hair was and Mary Laverty commenting that he had freckles. "I trust that you're all Democrats and you are registered to vote," the President said, flashing the Kennedy smile and demonstrating the Irish wit that had helped propel him to The White House. "In another two years I'm counting on Rhode Island to send me back."<sup>605</sup> And with that, he drove off, with Caroline gripping the wheel as if she was driving herself.

Sundays it was easy to find the President and First Lady emerging from St. Mary's Church.

A tight network of locals always seemed to know where he would be. My family was among them and they had great sources. One day they'd get word that "Jack" might be seen on the 15th green of the Country Club at the corner of Harrison Avenue and Price's Neck Road. Another day, they'd hear that he was out for an early swim. My mother's sister Rita and her twin sister Julia proved

The photo below shows a throng of Newporters cheering the First Couple as they left Mass in the fall of 1961, Jackie resplendent in a white Chanel suit. The 14-year old with glasses in a striped shirt applauding is my cousin Joe and the woman in sunglasses waving behind him is his mother, my aunt, Rita Tremblay. <sup>606</sup>



**My aunt Rita waving and my cousin Joe applauding the Kennedys**

The President visited Newport twice in 1962, on August 26<sup>th</sup> when he took the helm of the 62-foot Sparkman & Stephens racing sloop *Manitou*, <sup>607</sup> and later in September at the Eighteenth challenge for The America's Cup. <sup>608</sup> During that series, the New York Yacht Club's 12-meter *Weatherly*, skippered by Emil "Bus" Mosbacher, defeated, *Gretel*, representing the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, helmed by Jock Sturrock. The U.S. took it four races to one.

One of my great memories from that year came when my father Joe, who worked at the Naval base, heard some scuttlebutt that if we got over to the Castle Hill lighthouse, just south of Hammersmith Farm, we might catch sight of a rare Naval event.

It was a Saturday afternoon, so we jumped into the family car and raced the back way around “the Drive” from Wellington Avenue. We parked in the lot of The Castle Hill Inn and hurried down to the lighthouse, just in time to catch The U.S.S. Joseph P. Kennedy (DD-850) named for the President’s brother Joe, passing by. Its entire crew of 14 officers and 260 sailors was standing ramrod straight in their summer whites along the gunnel.

I asked my father what this was, and he said, “They’re manning the rail.” Then, as the destroyer approached Hammersmith Farm, the crew snapped to a full salute. Joe Lance, who had served as a Chief aboard “a Battlewagon” in World War II, put his hand over his heart and gritted his teeth to suppress the emotion he felt as the ship’s band broke into “Hail To The Chief.”



Aboard The Joseph P. Kennedy watching the 18<sup>th</sup> challenge for The America’s Cup

I was fourteen at the time and I'd just starting working at The Reading Room. Five years later as a reporter for *The Daily News* I got to cover the 20<sup>th</sup> Cup race, a rematch between the U.S. and the Aussies with Mosbacher's Intrepid defeating Sturrock's Dame Patti four to none. Stringing for *Agence-Press*, the French wire service, I watched the races from The Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant, filing stories with some of the great sports reporters of the day. But for me, no single experience of growing up in The City By The Sea, equaled that moment with my family watching those sailors "man the rail."

## THE MYSTERY OF ANNANDALE FARM

In researching this book I went into the online archives of *The Daily News* and found one piece that had a sad, ironic significance when it came to the Kennedys' love affair with Newport. In the fall of 1963, just three weeks before he was killed in Dallas, there was a front-page story authored by Emil Jamail, a senior editor, announcing that Jack and Jackie planned to rent Annandale Farm, the estate next to her mother's place, for the summer of 1964.



**PRESIDENT LEASES THIS ESTATE**—This is aerial view of "Annandale Farm," the Barclay Douglas residence on Ridge Road which President and Mrs. Kennedy have leased for next August and September.

### Kennedys To Occupy Estate Here In 1964

By EMIL K. JAMAIL, Staff Writer

President and Mrs. Kennedy have leased "Annandale Farm," the estate on Ridge Road for next August and September from Mr. and Mrs. Barclay Douglas.

Pierre Salinger, White House press secretary, today disclosed the rental when he was asked about it by the *Daily News*.

"I am glad," he said, "that the President and Mrs. Kennedy will be able to give the complete family the use of the estate in Newport."

That summer to and Mrs. Kennedy occupied the home in Newport. That was in the summer of 1963.

The estate is situated on a hill overlooking the harbor. It is one of the finest estates in Newport. It was built by the late Douglas family.

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### U.S. Demands Departure Of 3 Soviets In Spy Case

Dated October 30<sup>th</sup>, the piece quoted Press Secretary Pierre Salinger as confirming the rental, which was facilitated by Senator Claiborne Pell and brokered without a fee by Johnny Richmond, another Member of The Reading Room. Two years earlier, a group of Rhode Islanders had raised \$250,000 to purchase the estate with the goal of making it the permanent Summer White House, but the President declined the offer, saying it would be "asking too much of Rhode Islanders."

Then, after three memorable summers in Newport, he was ready to rent for the '64 season.<sup>609</sup>

JFK's assassination derailed those plans and Annandale Farm sat empty for four more years. Finally, the Swiss bank that held the mortgage decided to auction it off along with Broadlawns, an adjoining parcel. On July 24<sup>th</sup> 1968, Jim Edward sent me to cover the bidding at the estate.

It was a hot summer's day. The representative of the bank, Benson Scotch, was a tiny man in spectacles, dressed in a blue pin-striped suit under a straw boater. He was moving about amid the prospective bidders who were seated in wooden folding chairs lined in front of the estate's White House-like portico. At that time, Cosmos Bank of Zurich held the principal mortgage of \$337,000; the equivalent of just over \$2.5 million today.

Those present to bid on the estate resembled a series of wealthy archetypes straight out of central casting. There was a titled British woman, a Texas oilman (complete with Stetson) and one or two representatives of the Arab Emirates. State Senator Patrick O'Neill Hayes, a prominent Newport attorney, was representing unknown interests.

Francis G. Dwyer, the auctioneer, opened the bidding at \$375,000. Hayes countered with \$380,000 and then something surprising happened: Scotch, who represented the mortgage holder, began bidding for *the bank itself*. He went up another \$5,000. Hayes upped his bid to \$387,000, then said, "That's as high as I'll go."<sup>610</sup>

Scotch then topped him with \$390,000 and Dwyer lowered his gavel. "Sold."

At that point, the other stunned bidders could only shake their heads as the bank that held the mortgage outbid itself and held onto the property. I approached Scotch for a brief interview.

"So, what's going to happen to the estate now?" I asked.

"I have no idea what plans my client may have."

"But I thought they already *owned* it."

He smiled at me enigmatically. "I have nothing further to say."

The auction had started an hour late and I had to rush back to *The Daily News* on Thames Street to write up the story before the 1:00 pm deadline.

When I got there and told Jim Edward what had occurred, his eyes narrowed. “So you’re telling me that a Swiss Bank just bought up a mortgage it already held for the estate right next to Hammersmith Farm?”

I said, “Yeah.” I’d never covered an estate auction before, but it seemed unusual.

“How long has Cosmos held the mortgage?”

I checked my Reporter’s Notebook. “Since 1965.”

“That was two years after the plans to make it “The Summer White House,” said Jim. “So who the hell is Cosmos Bank?”

I eyed the clock on the wall. It was 12:30 pm. I had a half hour to make deadline. This was 1968. There was no internet. I glanced over at our “Research Table,” full of old Newport Directories. As always, it was covered with a pile of yellowed newspapers. I didn’t have any contacts back then on Wall Street, much less the international banking community.

“Why don’t you give Pat Hayes a call,” said Jim.

I rang the law offices of Corcoran, Peckham and Hayes, but the receptionist said that the Senator wouldn’t be in for the rest of the day. I called his house and got his son Michael, another De La Salle boy, on the phone. He said he’d leave word for him to call me at the paper. So with nothing else to go on, I wrote up the piece with this lead:

A 41-acre parcel of waterfront property on the Ocean Drive was auctioned today to a Swiss Bank that held the mortgage on the land. Annandale Farm, the former home of Barclay Douglas was sold for \$390,000 to the Cosmos Bank of Zürich. The bank which held the principal mortgage of \$337,000 on the property, was represented by Benson Scotch, a New York attorney who was high bidder after a brief bidding duel with a local lawyer, Sen. Patrick O’Neill Hayes.<sup>611</sup>

Given the deadline pressure, I had zero appreciation at the time of the story’s significance. Jim was right. Who *was* Cosmos, this mysterious Swiss banking house that had bought up its own mortgage on an estate adjacent to the summer home of the fallen President’s widow?

Later, that fall, after I’d returned to college where I was Managing Editor of The Northeastern News, I was as surprised as most Americans

on October 20<sup>th</sup> when Mrs. Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis, the Greek airline and shipping tycoon. It had been a very private ceremony on the island of Scorpios in The Ionian Sea. When I heard that news, I thought to myself, “Onassis. Greek. Cosmos. Ari must be the one behind that bank in Zurich. My God. He’s had that mortgage since 1965. That’s how long he’s been coveting Jackie.”

At least that was my initial hunch.

Like the mystery behind the death of Eduardo Tirella, it was one of those elusive stories I wasn’t able to chase at the time, given my class load and duties on the NU News. So I just filed it away under, “stories I should look into some day.”

Cut to 2018, fifty years later.

In researching this book, when I went into *The Daily News* archives and retrieved my old stories, I found the auction piece under the headline, “Annandale Farm And Broadlawns Sold to Swiss Bank For \$390,000.” At the time, *The Daily News* copy editor on “the slot desk,” who wrote that headline, didn’t read deep enough into the piece to appreciate the *real* story: that a Swiss bank had staged an auction with the apparent intent of buying a property that it already owned. But in retrospect, that was *my* fault. Back in the summer of ’68 I had buried my lead. And now that I’ve had time to explore who was *really* behind Cosmos Bank, I’ve stumbled onto a story of far greater significance.

## THE MOBSTER, THE CASINO & THE BANK

I was wrong about Aristotle Onassis. As it turns out, Cosmos, which closed its doors in 1974, has since been linked by several investigative reporters to racketeer Meyer Lansky who invested in The Paradise Island Casino in The Bahamas after he was forced out of Cuba by Fidel Castro.

Initially, that casino was owned by none other than Huntington Hartford, former owner of Seaverge, heir to the A&P fortune, and the cousin of Nuala Pell, wife of Rhode Island’s U.S. Senator, who had been instrumental in securing the rental of Annandale Farm for the Kennedys. But Hartford’s sale of the casino is where the clean money ended and the dirty money began.



As reporter Don Bauder wrote in *The San Diego Reader*, “Hartford initially wanted (the casino) free of mob influence. But that was not to be, and (he) eventually sold most of his holdings.”<sup>612</sup> At the time the Paradise Island resort, accessible *only by boat*, had been failing -- that is, until a causeway was built, financed by *Cosmos Bank*. After that, the casino flourished.

Enter Richard M. Nixon.

In the year 2000, investigative author Anthony Summers presented evidence that Nixon’s friend and confidante Charles Bebe Rebozo, had a joint account with Nixon at *Cosmos*. Summers traced four deposits, totaling millions of dollars, that had allegedly gone into that account from October 1971 to April 1973, just months before Nixon resigned the presidency.<sup>613</sup>

Summers also found that Nixon made annual trips to Zurich, site of the bank’s home office. Investigating further, I discovered that *Cosmos* had gone to strange lengths to hide its ownership of the Annandale mortgage. Six days after mortgaging the estate in 1965, *Cosmos* moved the loan to Chemical Bank, which moved it back to *Cosmos* on the same day as the auction. A curious bit of banking sleight-of-hand. Then, in that extraordinary move, *Cosmos* bought up its own interest in the property.

I’m still working the story, but at this point here’s the question: Did Richard Nixon, who’d been obsessed with JFK ever since his loss of the presidency to him in 1960, use a mob-related Swiss Bank to gain an interest in an estate next to Jackie two and a half years after her husband’s death and then get another major bank to hide his connection to the property? The investigation continues, but one thing is clear, when a reporter begins to disturb the firmament in Newport Rhode Island, any number of buried secrets may fall to earth.