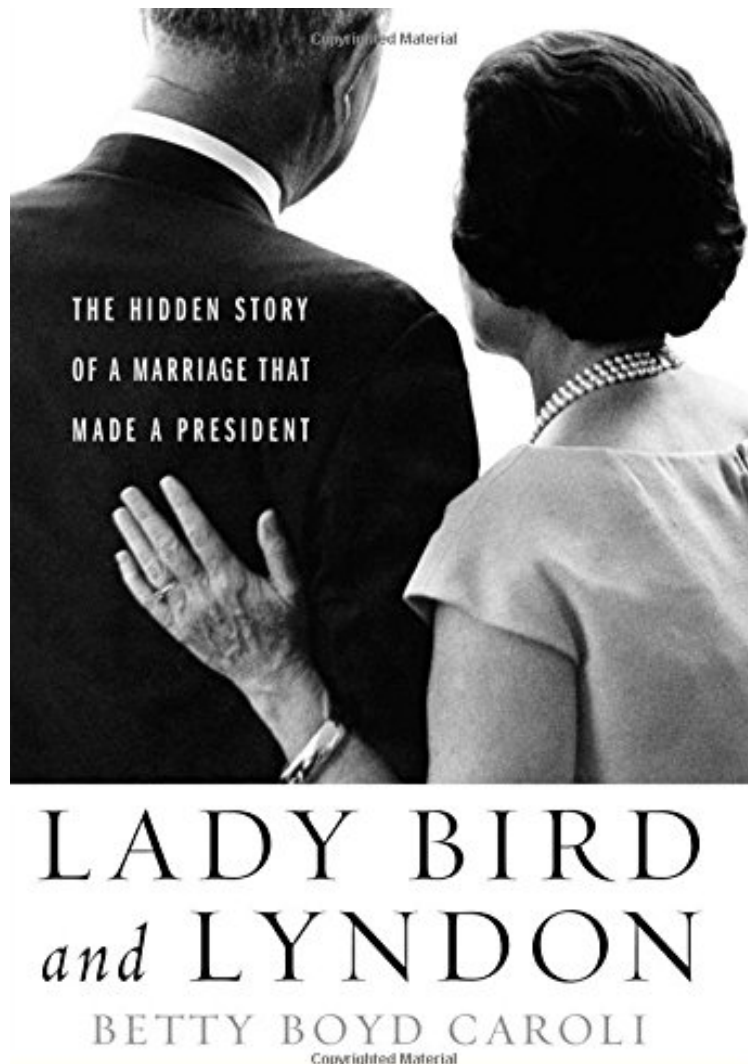


Lady Bird and Lyndon: The Hidden Story of a Marriage That Made a President

Betty Boyd Caroli

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Betty Boyd Caroli : Lady Bird and Lyndon: The Hidden Story of a Marriage That Made a President before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lady Bird and Lyndon: The Hidden Story of a Marriage That Made a President:

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. "Go get me 'Bird'"...By Jill Meyer Betty Boyd Caroli's biography of Lady Bird Johnson, "Lady Bird and Lyndon: The Hidden Story of a Marriage That Made a President", is a well-written look at one of the most famous and yet, curious, political marriages in US history. Claudia Alta Taylor -

known throughout her life as "Lady Bird" - was a calm, smart southern lady who hitched herself to a rising political star when she married Lyndon Baines Johnson. She literally devoted her life to the care and feeding of Johnson - who called her "Bird"; often times to the detriment of raising two daughters. Like many couples devoted to each other, the daughters knew who came first in their parents' lives and affections. Reading Caroli's book and noting the emotional ups-and-downs that seemed to afflict Lyndon Johnson his whole life, it's not difficult to speculate on his deep need for a wife to keep him in balance, particularly in the eyes of the world. And "Bird" did just that for her husband. She followed behind him, cleaning up his messes, and in some cases taking the blame for problems. Was Lady Bird Johnson an enabler for her husband? Sure seemed like it, but then so are many women married to "difficult" men. "Bird" acknowledged her husband's attractions to other women, seemingly unconcerned about the affairs he conducted, some quite openly. But she was always sure he needed her and would stay with her. (But there were a couple of "other" women...) Betty Caroli's book touches on all the parts of Lady Bird's life, from her childhood loss of her mother and her idealisation of her father, a larger-than-life figure. He was replaced by Lyndon - maybe that was a bit of LBJ's initial attraction to Lady Bird - and continues through her education at UT, marriage to Johnson, the raising of their two daughters, and her financial management. But it is in noting Lady Bird's political life - both "behind" Lyndon as he built his political career, and then as First Lady - that Caroli's biography shines. Her book is an excellent look at a political life and a political marriage and all the tact and smarts it takes to succeed at both. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A marriage not exactly made in Heaven By Galla This was a sad story in many ways. I realize that in the past intelligent and ambitious women often had to find their way to success by marrying. That seems to be one reason why Claudia Taylor finally succumbed to Lyndon Johnson. He was attractive then, he was ambitious, and he was her way out of Texas into another world. But, Lordy, what a deal she struck. He was also a spoiled, coarse bully, and probably bipolar to boot (judging from hindsight). She stuck with him despite the humiliations, the very public adulteries, the constant ego massaging he needed, the requirement to put him above and beyond the needs of her daughters, the continuous placating of friends and allies he bullied. When he was in the depths of depression, she seemed to be the only one who could reach him. And despite her loyalty, her nonstop attention to him, Lady Bird seemed to be afraid in 1959-60 he might divorce her for a younger woman. It is obvious that Caroli despised LBJ and there are not many positive things she has to say about him except his achievements as President before the quagmire of Vietnam brought about the end of his political career. After his death Lady Bird had almost forty years to carve out another life for herself, a life full of friends, family and achievement. I always admired her and after reading this particular version of her partnership with LBJ, I admire her even more for her unending patience and service, but I do wish she could have clouted him a few times. This was a fascinating book. What is frightening to think about is the fact that from November 22, 1963, until August 1974, the U.S. was governed by two men who definitely were not psychologically healthy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Complicated Circumstances That Shaped An Emotionally Resilient First Lady By Stella Carrier This kindlebook of Lady Bird and Lyndon: The Hidden Story of a Marriage That Made a President by Betty Boyd Caroli covers among some of the following details of Lady Bird Johnson's life; how she got the nickname Lady Bird, Lady Bird Johnson's father supposedly had a womanizing reputation and one of the children named Sugar was rumored to be one of love children of her (Lady Bird's) father T.J. with a woman outside of his marriage, Lady Bird Johnson's mother unexpectedly died young in her 40s and under mysterious circumstances, being raised by an aunt after her mother's death etc.

A fresh look at Lady Bird Johnson that upends her image as a plain Jane who was married for her money and mistreated by Lyndon. This Lady Bird worked quietly behind the scenes through every campaign, every illness, and a trying presidency as a key strategist, fundraiser, barnstormer, peacemaker, and indispensable therapist. Lady Bird grew up the daughter of a domineering father and a cultured but fragile mother. When a tall, pushy Texan named Lyndon showed up in her life, she knew what she wanted: to leave the rural Texas of her childhood and experience the world like her mother dreamed, while climbing the mountain of ambition she inherited from her father. She married Lyndon within weeks, and the bargain they struck was tacitly agreed upon in the courtship letters they exchanged: this highly gifted politician would take her away, and she would save him from his weaknesses. The conventional story goes that Lyndon married Lady Bird for her money, demeaned her by flaunting his many affairs, and that her legacy was protecting the nation's wildflowers. But she was actually a full political partner throughout his ascent - the one who swooped in to make the key call to a donor, to keep the team united, to campaign in hostile territory, and to jumpstart him out of his paralyzing darkness. And while others were shocked that she put up with his womanizing, she always knew she had the upper hand. Lady Bird began the partnership by using part of her nest egg to help finance Lyndon's first political campaign. Over and over, she kept him from quitting, including the 1948 election when he was so immobilized with self-pity that she had to pick up the phone to solicit donations on his behalf. She was also the one who got him out of bed, when he was in a deep funk, to go to the 1964 Democratic nominating convention. In *Lady Bird and Lyndon*, Betty Boyd Caroli restores Lady Bird to her rightful place in history, painting a vivid portrait of a marriage with complex, but familiar and identifiable overtones.

"With a shrewd and clear eye, Betty Caroli has redefined one of the most compelling marriages of 20th century American politics. Lady Bird Johnson has always been seen as the loyal supporter of her charismatic husband Lyndon, enduring his wounding outbursts, unceasing demands, and flagrant infidelities. Now, in this absorbing study, Lady Bird finally takes center stage, showing the strength and resilience behind her soft Southern manner, and we see for the first time her political acuity and business savvy, which were essential to Lyndon's success. Betty Caroli deeply understands the couple's temperamental dynamic, and skillfully reveals how deftly Lady Bird worked behind the scenes: building bridges, offering wise advice, keeping her volatile husband steady during his darkest moments, and helping him turn his sweeping ambitions into action." (Sally Bedell Smith, author of *For Love of Politics: Inside the Clinton White House* and *Grace and Power: The Private World of the Kennedy White House*) "It's fantastic." (Whoopi Goldberg) This inside look at the marriage of Lady Bird and Lyndon provides stunningly fresh insights into the well-examined political soul of Lyndon Johnson. But the star of this story is Lady Bird, and out of Caroli's strikingly original portrait of this strong, smart woman emerges an irresistible tale of politics, ambition, and the power of unconditional marital love." (David Maraniss, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton*) A great book. Everybody who loves politics has got to read this one. (Chris Matthews, host of *Hardball with Chris Matthews*) "In *Lady Bird and Lyndon*, Betty Caroli takes us inside the biggest mystery there is: a 40-year political marriage. The romance, love affair and partnership between Miss Claudia Taylor and Lyndon Baines Johnson are all here for the first time--and so are their struggles and heartbreaks, a reminder that politics is complicated but family is even more so." (Michael Duffy Nancy Gibbs, coauthors of *The Presidents Club*) "The coach, the advisor, the steady soothsayer to an erratic man in these pages, Lady Bird Johnson bursts from history's shadows to her rightful place at the heart of a stirring story. More important still, Betty Caroli establishes the prominence of a gripping and mysterious relationship, one of the critical intimacies of the 20th century. This is a tremendous work of scholarship and storytelling." (Joshua Wolf Shenk, author of *Powers of Two*) "Engrossing and perceptive. . . Caroli shows that Mrs. Johnson played a crucial part in getting her husband to the White House and through the presidency. One of the essential studies of a modern first lady written by one of the masters of the field." (Lewis L. Gould, author of *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady*) Caroli redefines the First Lady as an iron fist in a white glove." (Vanity Fair) "Smartly written and devoid of gossip and cant. . . Stunning." (Boston Globe) "The spouses of the world's most influential movers and shakers rarely receive similar attention to their lives, regardless of the influence they may have had, but biographer Caroli bucks the trend with this enticing and fun examination of Claudia Alta Taylor 'Lady Bird' Johnson. . . Johnson changed the role of First Lady forever, and Caroli's well-researched work gives readers insight into that shift." (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) [Caroli], an expert on first ladies, provides overdue recognition of the important role Lady Bird Johnson played in an historic presidency. (Washington Independent of Books) "Lady Bird and Lyndon reveals the demure powerhouse behind a president. . . In her absorbing new book, Caroli delves deep into the complex and compelling relationship between Lady Bird and LBJ. . . Groundbreaking. . . Through unprecedented research, including her investigation into previously unpublished letters that LBJ and Lady Bird exchanged during their brief courtship, Caroli fashions a detailed and captivating portrayal of the ultimate Washington power couple: the larger-than-life president, and the woman who played the indispensable role in making him who he was." (BookTrib) Engaging. . . Caroli breaks new ground by drawing on newly available evidence--above all a trove of love letters from Lyndon and Lady Bird's brief courtship in 1934--and advancing a provocative argument to explain what held the couple together for so long despite their enormous differences. . . The book offers a convincing portrait of a level-headed, genial and talented woman who left an indelible mark on the nation. (Austin-American Statesman) "Our idea of Claudia Taylor Johnson as an autonomous individual--someone with great ambition and intellect as well as great compassion and poise--is underdeveloped to say the least. How well do we know the woman who was courted by LBJ and bolstered him as he fought his way up the political ladder to the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Presidency? Betty Boyd Caroli dispels any notion of Lady Bird as LBJ's doormat." (Austin Chronicle) Fascinating. . . What makes Caroli's insightful study of an underreported political partnership so appealing and so much fun to read is her masterful light touch, winning style and deeply informed feeling for her subjects. (Dallas Morning News) "A touching, sympathetic portrait of a successful marriage despite the agony and the stress, emphasizing Lady Bird Johnson's spectacular inner grit. . . Caroli does an impressive job refuting [Lady Bird's] 'doormat' reputation . . . by underscoring the symbiotic relationship that mutually sustained the couple through their whole lives. . . An engaging dual biography of a most intriguing power couple." (Kirkus) "Caroli fills out the portrait of a pragmatic political partnership emphasizing Lady Bird Johnson through many letters unavailable to researchers until 2013, using analysis by historians and details of important face-to-face, email, and telephone interviews with those who understood the dynamics of the marriage of Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird. . . Caroli's suggestion and amplification of a virtual pact teased out of Lyndon and Bird's correspondence during a very brief courtship frames the story of this alliance. Recommended for history buffs and devotees of human behavior." (Library Journal) "President Lyndon B. Johnson was a pretty tough guy, the kind of leader who could steamroll Congress when it was called for. His wife, Lady Bird, was no wilting flower either. . . With research from Lady Bird's personal diaries and newly released letters between her and Lyndon during their brief courtship in 1934, Caroli makes

a compelling case that the first lady was more important to LBJs career than commonly believed." (New York Post)Insightful. . . . Caroli recounts Lady Birds progress from childhood to middle age with telling details and intriguing anecdotes. . . . Carolis book stands alone as a penetrating analysis not so much of two individuals but instead of a marriage that paired two complicated but devoted figures, a coupling that changed the face of America. (Richmond Times-Dispatch)Caroli uses a wealth of primary sources to explore the marriage of Lady Bird and Lyndon [and] skillfully weaves the couples personal lives together with the tumultuous political situations they faced. Her narrative is a soulful account that details the pairs widely divergent family backgrounds and acknowledges that LBJ was indeed the 'human puzzle' that one journalist called him, but also 'head over heels' in love with his wife. (BookPage)Carolis work is a very nice supplement [to Robert Caros volume] that fills in some important gaps. (Fort Worth Star-Telegram)Caroli argues persuasively. . . . Its refreshing to see Lady Bird given her due. (The Daily Beast)Full of fascinating details about the behind-the-scenes functioning of a partnership that affected the lives of many millions of people. (Lone Star Literary (Lubbock, TX))About the AuthorBetty Boyd Caroli is the author of Lady Bird and Lyndon: The Hidden Story of a Marriage That Made a President; First Ladies: Martha Washington to Michelle Obama; Inside the White House; and The Roosevelt Women. She has been a guest on Today, The OReilly Factor, Lehrer NewsHour, Al Jazeera, Booknotes with Brian Lamb, and many others. A graduate of Oberlin College, Caroli holds a masters degree in Mass Communications from the Annenberg School of the University of Pennsylvania and a PhD in American Civilization from New York University. She currently resides in New York City and Venice, Italy.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Lady Bird and Lyndon PROLOGUE AT EXACTLY 4 p.m. on December 9, 1967, Lady Bird Johnson started a slow, dignified descent down the wide stairway from the residential quarters of the White House to the State Floor, where more than six hundred guests were waiting. All of them were dressed for an evening gala, and while some lingered around the foyer at the foot of the stairs, chatting in small groups, others had already taken their places in the huge East Room, where Lady Bird was headed. In the four years of her husbands presidency, she had walked this route dozens of times to greet heads of state and delegations of various sizes from all over the United States. But today was different. And very special. Today her twenty-three-year-old daughter, Lynda, was marrying the military aide she had begun dating that summer. The press had avidly reported on all the prenuptial festivities leading up to this, the first White House wedding of a presidents daughter in more than fifty years, and Lady Bird was determined to deliver an event perfect down to the smallest detail. Since the August morning when she first learned of her daughters decision to wed Charles Chuck Robb, she had devoted more hours than she could count to mulling over white silks for the gown that Geoffrey Beene would design for the bride. She had composed and then revised guest lists and she had considered multiple cake recipes before deciding on the pound cake, flavored with rum and white raisins. She had even taken time to insure that the cameras recording the ceremony would be hidden, their presence indicated only by tiny slits in the white fabric backdrop behind the improvised altar. Dedicating this much attention to her daughter was uncharacteristic of Lady Bird Johnson, who knew she did not deserve high marks for her mothering. Both her daughters had told her so, sometimes in teary-eyed sorrow or in accusatory tones. In her household, Lyndon always came first, and she had often left Lynda and the younger Luci for weeks at a time so she could appear at his side in political campaigns and cater to his every command. Even when she resolved to stay behind with her daughters, she would change her mind and go to him, unable to resist his plea that he needed her. Rather than offer some excuse for falling short, she admitted to her diary that she had neglected her daughters but not enough for me to get a guilt complex. On the wintry afternoon of Lyndas wedding, Lady Birds arrival in the East Room was the signal for the ceremony to begin. As soon as she took her place behind the velvet rope setting off a space around the altar for the wedding party, the groomsmen began filing in, followed by the bridesmaids in their Christmasy red gowns. As the Marine Band struck up Here Comes the Bride, it was as if a drum roll had suddenly hushed the crowd, and Lady Bird could see all eyes turn toward the door to watch Lynda enter on her daddys arm. Beautiful as Lynda looked in her regal high-necked gown, embroidered with silk flowers and seed pearls, Lady Birds gaze fastened not on her daughter but on Lyndon. In her account of that day, she described how she watched him all the way to the altar, her heart full of tenderness for the man whose hair suddenly looked much whiter than before. The East Room was so packed that everyone had to remain standing, except for a handful of elderly guests who had been provided with benches. How different this glittering crowd was from the motley small gathering that witnessed Lady Birds wedding thirty-three years earlier in Texas. Surrounding her today were U.S. senators alongside Supreme Court justices and American ambassadors who had journeyed from posts in Europe and Asia to attend. She knew most of the six-hundred-plus by name, while at her own wedding, an impromptu event put together by a friend of Lyndons, the only familiar face was that of her college roommate. Although clad for Lyndas wedding in a costly designer outfit, Lady Bird knew there would be odious comparisons made between her and her glamorous predecessor, Jacqueline Kennedy. In the aftermath of JFKs assassination, flustered Americans meeting Lady Bird for the first time occasionally blurted out Mrs. Kennedys name instead of hers. Even after that stopped and Lady Bird became a household name, she understood she would never match Jackies magic, her ability to draw people to her like a Pied Piper. But the comparisons failed to sting. Lady Bird blithely brushed off derogatory references to her looks and provincial tastes, and when once faced with a portrait emphasizing her prominent nose, she quipped that it looked just

like my nose looks. When the time came for Chuck and Lynda to repeat their vows, Lady Bird warmed to the way the bridegroom answered in firm and clear tones. But it was Lyndon's response to the minister's question, Who gives this woman in marriage? that she thought sent a ripple of emotion through the crowd. Lyndon had said, Her mother and I. It was a remarkable affirmation of a partnership that had caused more than a little comment during their years in public life. Lady Bird knew very well what people were saying, that Lyndon had married a plain Jane for her money after courting more beautiful women. She had registered the descriptions of her as a dish rag, subject to his bellowed orders and demeaning remarks. But it was her reaction to his womanizing that seemed to baffle everyone. Not only did she put up with it and with his talking about it she was unfailingly polite to every woman with whom he had or was rumored to have had an affair. She invited them to the ranch and complimented them on their looks and accomplishments. Several of them were in the East Room that day. A lot of people were asking each other why. Lady Bird knew what few others did that Lyndon trusted her and only her with his most important secret his own frailty. This big strong man, a genius at politics, could be suddenly undone and once undone had trouble getting himself back on track. When faced with a huge problem or disappointment, he would go to bed and pull the covers over his head, and that's when she stepped in, to get him on his feet and moving again. Only she could do that. She had done it time and again, and while she realized that some of his closest staff during these last two years, years she would describe as pure hell, sensed that something like this was going on, only she knew, and she would never tell. It was their secret. The fact that he had admitted his problem to her and relied on her to help him deal with it gave her the strength to take the hit. She would rather look weak herself than bring him down. She could blow off what others said about her. Those humiliating descriptions, the comparisons with Jackie, her daughters' complaints about her lack of nurturing they counted for nothing. She was as sure now, as when she married him, that she was the most important person in Lyndon's life. In just twenty minutes, the Robb ceremony was finished. As soon as the Marine Band struck up Mendelssohn's special march and the wedding party exited, Bird took Lyndon's arm and moved quickly through the throng of guests and back upstairs for photos. She had not permitted the press pool to witness the taking of vows, but here in the Yellow Oval Room, from which all the furniture had been removed, were dozens of reporters, armed with a vast array of cameras. After pictures were taken of the wedding party, the bride and groom and their parents went back downstairs to greet every single guest, in a reception line so slowed by all the hugging and kissing that it took two hours to get through it. By that time the East Room had been converted to a dance hall, and as soon as Peter Duchin's orchestra struck its first notes, everything became such a swirl that Bird could not remember who danced with whom first. What she remembered very clearly was how quickly Lyndon had cut in on her, and with one of his broadest smiles quipped how far she had come since that purple dress she had worn as a bride thirty-three years earlier. He didn't leave it at that, but, in the very dearest touches of the day, he referred three more times to their own wedding ceremony and that awful purple dress. His jesting words, for her ears only, conjured up so many memories of the day she married Lyndon and of all that had happened since. At times like this, when Lady Bird was thinking about marriage in general and her own in particular, her thoughts went to a little metal box she had carried with her through a dozen house moves. It contained the letters she had written to Lyndon and he had written to her, when she was still Bird to him and all her friends. Those letters laid out the quid pro quo of their relationship, and that box, now carefully stowed in her sitting room on the second floor of the White House, contained the key to understanding what held this marriage together. The morning after Lynda's wedding, she took out that box and spent several hours going over the precious letters. Even in the exhilaration of her daughter's big day, an opulent White House wedding, it was her own marriage that Bird wanted to revisit. It had been her husband, not her daughter, who captured and held her gaze in their walk down the aisle, and it had been his teasing remarks about the purple dress that had provided the strongest emotional pull. It would be those letter-reading hours that she would single out as among the very most satisfying hours of her time in the White House. This is the story of that marriage.