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BEA 2012: Kitty Kelley Captures Camelot

By Karen Jones

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When photojournalist Stanley Tretick left his old Marine Corps trunk to author Kitty Kelley after his death in 1999, she had no idea of the treasures it contained. "I once asked Stanley what he kept in there. He winked and said, 'Nude photos,' and I took him at his word," When she finally opened the battered chest, she found hundreds of photographs, letters, and keepsakes from Tretick's coverage of John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign and presidency. On assignment for Look magazine, he was granted extensive access, and his photographs helped define the Kennedy White House as "Camelot."

Kelley tells PW Show Daily, "I thought the photos needed to be seen because JFK and Tretick collaborated to establish one of the most enduring and inspiring myths of American history. This is a photographer who wanted exclusive photos and a president who wanted an indelible image." The result is *Capturing Camelot: Stanley Tretick's Iconic Images of the Kennedys* (St. Martin's/Thomas Dunne Books, Nov.) which features more than 200 photographs, many never seen before, says Kelley, who provides commentary throughout.

A close friend and colleague of Tretick for nearly 20 years, Kelley writes a heartfelt tribute peppered with insider stories such as JFK's dislike of being photographed eating or drinking, but his love for Howard Johnson restaurants. Kelley quotes Tretick, "Whenever he saw a Howard Johnson's on the campaign trail, we'd have to stop so he could duck in, order two hot dogs and a soft drink. But we could never photograph him because he gave us the slip."

Tretick is best known today for his photos of JFK relaxing with his children, and of John Jr. in the Oval Office. Kelley says her favorite photo was taken during the presidential campaign. "There was a sea of hands reaching up to Kennedy. Stanley felt that was the start of the Hollywood-i-zation of politics, with people yearning to touch the candidate. Eisenhower was a huge hero, but people didn't feel the need to touch him."

Kelley signs blads in St. Martin's booth (3358) today at 4:30 p.m. She is donating her royalties to the D.C. Public Library Foundation.

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