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By Betty Boyd Caroli



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Marriage is the most underreported story in political life, yet it is often the key to its success. Historian Betty Boyd Caroli spent seven years exploring the archives of the LBJ Library, interviewing dozens of people, and mining never-before-released letters between Lady Bird and Lyndon. The result “redefines the First Lady as an iron fist in a white glove” (*Vanity Fair*) and helps explain how the talented, but flawed Lyndon Baines Johnson ended up making history.

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, they married within weeks with a tacit agreement: 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 and demeaned her by flaunting his many affairs, and that her legacy was protecting the nation’s wildflowers. But Caroli shows that she was also 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 jump-start Lyndon out of his paralyzing dark moods.

In *Lady Bird and Lyndon*, Caroli restores Lady Bird to her rightful place in history. But she also tells a love story whose compromises and edifying moments many women will recognize.



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### Editorial Review

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"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* )

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"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* )

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"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)

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"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 Reviews)

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#### About the Author

Betty 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 O'Reilly Factor*, *Lehrer NewsHour*, *Al Jazeera*, *Booknotes* with Brian Lamb, and many others. A graduate of Oberlin College, Caroli holds a master's 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.

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