

Cancer takes Onassis's life



NEW YORK (AP) — Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who charmed the nation with her style and calmed it with her strength first as wife and then as widow of a president, died Thursday of cancer. She was 64.

Her children, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg and John F. Kennedy Jr., other family members, and long-time companion Maurice Tempelman, and with her when she died at her Fifth Avenue apartment, said her spokeswoman, Nancy Tuckerman. Tuckerman said Mrs. Onassis died at 10:15 p.m. from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

"Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was a model of courage and dignity for all Americans and all the world," President Clinton said in a statement. "More than any other woman of her time, she captivated our nation and the world with her intelligence, elegance and grace."

"Even in the face of impossible tragedy, she carried the grief of her family and our entire nation with a calm power that somehow reassured all of us who mourned. We hope that Mrs. Onassis' children, John and Caroline, and her grandchildren find solace in the extraordinary contributions she made to our country," he said.

The former first lady, who only Sunday was photographed strolling in Central Park, entered the hospital Monday. She returned to her home Wednesday after doctors at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center said "there was nothing more to do for her," Tuckerman said.

As Kennedy relatives filed in and out of her cop building, Monsignor George Bardes of St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church heard her confession, gave her communion, and administered the sacrament of the sick, said church spokeswoman Margaret Peet.

"She is very, very sick and it's very sad," Rep. Joseph Kennedy II, son of the late Robert F. Kennedy, said after visiting his aunt during the day. But he added, "There's a lot of love in her room and

in her apartment."

About two hours after her death, family members began leaving in small groups. None spoke to reporters. Mrs. Schlossberg and her husband, Edwin, both wearing baseball caps, left in a cab. They stared straight ahead, tight-faced and grim, and made no comment.

The New York Times reported that the cancer had spread to Mrs. Onassis' brain and liver. Quoting an unidentified health care provider in Friday's editions, the Times said Mrs. Onassis had been suffering from pneumonia and had slipped into a coma Thursday.

Tuckerman said that Mrs. Onassis stopped taking medication in her final hours.

Singer Carly Simon, a neighbor from Martha's Vineyard, where Mrs. Onassis has a home, left after a visit Thursday in tears. "I love her very much," she said.

Sen. Edward Kennedy told reporters only hours before his sister-in-law's death that she was "enormously grateful to all the people who have been kind enough to send her notes wishing her well."

The Massachusetts Democrat, who had flown back and forth between Washington and New York on Wednesday and Thursday, was on a plane back to Washington when Mrs. Onassis died, said Melody Miller, his spokeswoman.

The flag at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston was immediately lowered to half-staff.

"Few women throughout history have touched the hearts and shaped the dreams of Americans more profoundly than Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis," former President Reagan said in a statement.

Former President Bush said "Jackie Onassis brought great dignity and grace to the White House and was, indeed, a charming and wonderful first lady."

Mrs. Onassis disclosed she was suffering from cancer of the lymph nodes in February. The lymph system is responsible for processing white blood cells, which in turn bolster the body's immune system.

Hubble photographs rings of light

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Hubble Space Telescope has photographed two rings of light hovering like giant hula hoops near a distant exploded star and astronomers are trying to puzzle out an explanation.

"These are unlike anything I have ever seen in space," said NASA astronomer Steve Maran. "It is a mystery."

Images of the rings were captured in a Hubble study of supernova 1987A, an exploded star discovered seven years ago. The supernova, or SN87A, is in the Large Magellanic Cloud, a small galaxy 169,000 light years from the Milky Way, the Earth's home galaxy.

Chris Burrows of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore said the Hubble photographs show the expected bright ring surrounding SN87A. This was created when the star exploded, sending out gas, material and shock waves expanding in a spherical-shaped bubble. The bright ring is about one light year — 5.8 trillion miles — across.

But beyond the inner ring, the photographs gave the first detailed views of two outer circles that are about twice as large and tilted slightly.

"We have thousands of photographs taken in all directions," said Maran, "but nowhere else have we seen rings like these."

One theory explaining the large rings is that they are illuminated matter spraying out from a previously unknown remnant of an earlier supernova that is only about a third of a light year from SN87A, said Burrows. The remnant could be a neutron star that is pulling material in from a companion, a third star nearby.

Ed Weiler, a NASA astronomer, said a spinning neutron star would capture the companion's matter and then spew it out in two directions, a phenomenon called a bipolar jet. With a slight wobble on the spin of the neutron star, the jets would form a circle of dense material in the heavens, rather like moving a garden hose nozzle in a circle to form a ring of water.

Burrows said the large rings could have become visible when the flash from the explosion of SN87A impacted a dense layer of material at the edge of the bipolar jet.

He developed the theory, Burrows said, when he noticed that the large rings were almost mirror images, with bright segments in each ring directly opposite similar bright patches in the companion ring. By connecting the bright patches with straight lines, Burrows said he realized the origin of the rings centered on a point to one side of the supernova. This, he believes, could be the location of the neutron star.

He rechecked the Hubble image, Burrows said, and found a very faint point of light that could be a companion star.

Maran, however, cautioned that Burrows' explanation is still only a theory and that other astronomers may come up with different ideas once the Hubble images are circulated in the astronomical community.

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