

Oleg Cassini:

THE LIGHTS ARE burning late at the White House these days. But they are burning almost as late at 498 Seventh Avenue, New York, where Oleg Cassini, designer selected by Mrs. Jack Kennedy to create her entire wardrobe, is feverishly at work.

These will be the most publicized clothes in the world, seen on TV and reproduced in magazines and newspapers. And Cassini is twice blessed in realizing a designer's dream to have such a woman wearing them—the slim, elegant, beautiful First Lady.

That other leading designers frankly envy the plum is obvious, and the question they and everyone else asks is, "Why?"

There has been a general impression that Cassini, along with scores of other fashion designers, engaged in a kind of open competition to win this distinction. This was never the case. Shortly after the election, Jacqueline Kennedy wrote to several designers asking them to submit sketches for her consideration. The publicity about these requests unleashed a flood of sketches from leading designers and a rash of stories picturing hats, evening gowns, and sportswear that were "ordered" by the President-elect's wife. Everyone wanted to get into the act.

A great sigh of disappointment echoed in the fashion world here and in Paris when Mrs. Kennedy's secretary announced the appointment of Oleg Cassini to be the exclusive White House designer for four years.

"Mrs. Kennedy," the announcement read, "realizes that the clothes she wears are of interest to the public, but she is distressed by the implications of extravagance, of over-emphasis of fashion in relation to her life, and of the misuse of her name by firms from whom she has not bought clothes."

"For the next four years, Mrs. Kennedy's clothes will be by Oleg Cassini. They will be designed and made in America. She will buy what is necessary, without extravagance—and you will often see her photographed in the same outfit."

It is not surprising that the dapper, 47-year-old mustached Cassini is in a rosy daze. "Before this happened, I was restless, bored, unchallenged," he says.



Dress Designer for the First Lady

Now he works 17 and 18 hours a day, piles appointment on appointment, has his entire staff (he employs 450 people, including his factory workers) in a happy dither, and doesn't know when he will see daylight again.

With the name Oleg Cassini up there on the New Frontier in glittering letters, big-business Bennies in other apparel lines are eagerly knocking on his door, hoping for an inside tip. Editors and reporters from television and the press are deluging him for interviews, and many civic and welfare outfits want him to lend them his name. And through it all are the girls.

CASSINI has never made a secret of the fact that he likes girls. He was married for 10 years to actress Gene Tierney, and his name was linked romantically with Grace Kelly before she became a princess. Now, in addition to the ebullient pleasure of traveling to Washington to talk clothes with Jacqueline Kennedy ("in French, naturally, which is the language of fashion"), he is recognized on the street by girls, receives enthusiastic telephone calls from them, even gets fan mail directed to him in care of the White House.

There are only two flaws in the beautiful picture. One is that he's so busy that he has no time to enjoy being a celebrity. The other is that association with the White House puts a check on his outgoing personality. He has always said what he thought in interviews; now he has to clear it with Press Secretary Salinger. He has taken mischievous delight in giving dresses in his collections slightly suggestive names, and enlivening the showing by commenting, as a low-cut gown goes by: "The natives are restless tonight."

"I've never curbed my mind or tongue," he says. "Now my biggest trial is to be equal to the trust. I have no right or desire to infringe. Yet I'm afraid it will have a permanent effect on my personality!"

Mrs. Kennedy is not the first well-known and beautiful woman for whom he has designed clothes. Among the beauties who have worn Cassini designs are Gene Tierney, Rita Hayworth, Veronica Lake, Grace Kelly,

Meet the man who must help Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy dress in her traditional chicness without

By ISABELLA TAVES