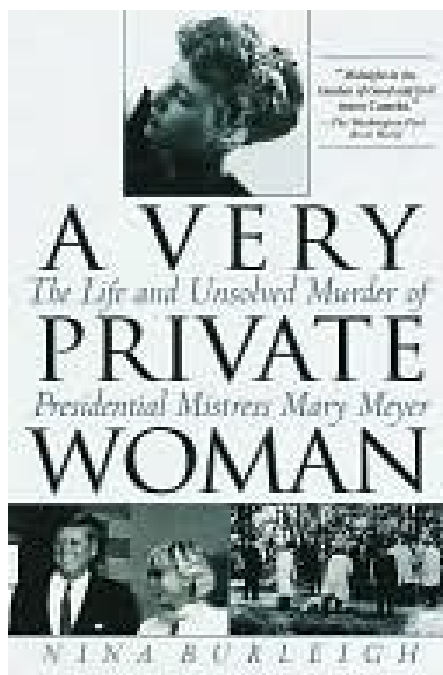




A Very Private Woman: The Life and Unsolved Murder of Presidential Mistress Mary Meyer

Nina Burleigh

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In 1964, Mary Pinchot Meyer, the beautiful, rebellious, and intelligent ex-wife of a top CIA official, was killed on a quiet Georgetown towpath near her home. Mary Meyer was a secret mistress of President John F. Kennedy, whom she had known since private school days, and after her death, reports that she had kept a diary set off a tense search by her brother-in-law, newsman Ben Bradlee, and CIA spymaster James Jesus Angleton. But the only suspect in her murder was acquitted, and today her life and death are still a source of intense speculation, as Nina Burleigh reveals in her widely praised book, the first to examine this haunting story.

A Very Private Woman: The Life and Unsolved Murder of Presidential Mistress Mary Meyer Details

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Jeri Johnson says

Nothing particularly spectacular about the writing style. But the actual true story of Mary Meyer's life was very interesting. I am an artist myself so I was interested in the group of artists she associated with. I looked them up on the internet to see what their work looked like. Her comings and goings at the White House was also very interesting.

Sarah Miers says

I've been done with this book for a while but haven't had a chance to write the review I wanted to till now. It's a good book -- as the author points out, much of the documentary evidence needed to "prove" anything about Mary Meyer has been destroyed. Still, it's an interesting look at a very interesting woman who was a free spirit at a time (the 1950s and 60s) and a place (Washington DC) where that wasn't necessarily welcomed. I found myself more interested in Mary as an artist than as an alleged JFK mistress or as the victim of a murder -- I learned a lot about the Washington art scene and was really fascinated. I did not know about the Institute for Contemporary Arts, which hosted literary greats like Robert Frost, W. H. Auden, Octavio Paz, and Vladimir Nabokov. And I certainly did not know that DC was such a hotbed of abstract expressionism! I learned a lot more about the Washington Color School and its contribution to the field. I really enjoyed that part of the book.

Marie Carmean says

Oh how complex are my feelings about this book! Yes, I did like it. I almost gave it another star because after all, it is extremely well-researched and well-written! But, the life of this ill-fated woman really disturbed me. The world I wasn't aware of that existed in the 60s disturbed me, though I have made myself aware of many of its darker aspects in my adult years. I am no longer the naïve teen I was in those years, happy with a simple existence that was NOT complex. And yet this swirl of complexity did exist even as I was immersed in Simon & Garfunkel tunes and sundresses and first romantic love. I was appreciative of its raw telling of the tale, helping us to understand all that was going on in those years of JFK's rise to prominence and then assassination and so many sordid plots. I wanted to read about this woman who held Kennedy's fascination, even as Marilyn Monroe and others did behind the scenes, and the rise of the everlasting war that eventually held its power over my own life. Timothy Leary culture, misogynistic men, overindulgence in smoking and drinking and catting around in circles of power were things on another plane as I worried about fitting in with my peers, then planning my wedding and beginning my adult life. Those things were very real, and tempered our very government and thus our history. It was a raw read, but one I appreciated.

Andrea Eckelman says

This book didn't grab me like I thought it would. It is an interesting portrait of women who went to college, but were then expected to be dedicated wives and mothers. Mary Meyer bucked tradition somewhat, but unfortunately very little is known since her diary was destroyed after her murder. I was disappointed by the lack of information surrounding both her affair with Kennedy and her death. But, if you like this era of history, and don't mind things being uncertain or unclear, you might love this book!

Ruthanne Taylor says

This was an excellent book. It was well researched, well written & answered a multitude of questions which I didn't know to ask as I was a child during the period covered. I graduate from high school in 1961, & much of the information presented in this book was not available or not discussed.

Carmen Thompson says

Facts vs rumors

Author gives detailed history of the world in which Mary lived. Also states rumors allowing the reader to reach their own conclusions. I found this book interesting and was astounded by how tightly knit the group of elite people around Kennedy were connected since his childhood as were many Washington elites.

Elizabeth says

The biography of Mary Meyer, Vassar grad, CIA wife, and mistress of John F. Kennedy, who was murdered a year after Kennedy was assassinated. Only one chapter is about her relationship with JFK. There is a great deal of the history of the early CIA. I enjoyed reading about life in Georgetown and DC in the 1950's.

Chamie says

Great book, well written, kept me wondering.

Kimberly Ann says

ah... 2 Stars.....maybe 3 Stars (if you like lots of information & politics)

This reads like a long and boring (as in TMI) novel. The crux is an upper-crust, privileged, gal meets JFK while at Prep-School & on Vassar weekends. They meet up again after she's just gotten married at the opening of a U.N. Convention in San Francisco....and they continue to meet socially & politically on & off through the years. Her husband turns out to be a strong willed, opinionated sod high within the u.s. government (CIA), whom she divorces.....and so on & so forth.

She continues her life in the upper crust social & political circles, where she becomes particularly close

friends w/ the President, JFK.....

So let's see, one evening she goes for her evening walk, is found murdered on the tow path, and the police see some hapless black man who had been fishing and try to railroad him!

I didn't need to read all the intimate details of her family life, I just wanted to know the juicy bits and I got very fed up trying to skim the pages in order to get to the actual story that the title suggests.

Booooooooooooooooooring!

Roberta says

A really interesting book, especially if you live in DC (and yes, I started to read this before I realized that a movie about Mary Meyer was coming out). My only complaint is that the author seems to have come up with certain key themes or summary points that she uses over and over to clarify a section and transition to the next -- led to over use of the same sentences over and over again through the book, but that was interspersed with a lot of interesting information about DC, the DC art scene in the '50s/'60s, the CIA, Kennedy, Timothy Leary etc.

University of Chicago Magazine says

Nina Burleigh, AM'87
Author

From the author: "A dissection of Washington's most intriguing murder mystery, of American aristocrat and CIA wife Mary Pinchot Meyer, and a glimpse into the twosite private lives of the Cold Warriors of the Georgetown set. Meyer, a JFK friend and lover, was killed in a daylight murder ten days after the Warren Commission Report was released. Her murder was never solved. Brother-in-law Ben Bradlee admitted handing her diary over to CIA spook James Jesus Angleton, and Timothy Leary claimed she had turned on President Kennedy."

Shelia's Kindle says

Mary Meyer

Interesting read on the history of American History and politics. Not sure if the book was biographical enough for me. The book focused a lot on the atmosphere she lived in.

Janet says

Fascinating biography of Mary Pinchot Meyer but even more fascinating was the view of Washington, the

CiA, and DC culture during the Cold War. I learned a lot in from this well written bio. (Another read at the gym on my Kindle book.)

Bob Mayer says

Intriguing look into a character who may, or may not, have had a large role in our history. Was she JFK's confidant through the Cuban Missile Crisis?

What I found fascinating, and led to writing my latest book, is the fact she was murdered almost a year after JFK's assassination and the killer was never found. The way she was killed-- bullet to the heart and head, suggests a professional. Even more interesting, is the day after she was killed, Khrushchev was forced out of power.

It's these quirks of history that often give me the best ideas for writing. Truth is stranger than fiction.

Did Angleton from the CIA really destroy her diary? Was it even the real diary?

This book is an intimate look into the lives of the powerful in Washington; an underbelly few have evr experienced.

Kent says

For Baby Boomers like myself, this book takes you back to 'simpler times', the 50s-70s. It turns out that those simpler times weren't so simple after all. Post-war Washington was still considered a small town; WWII veterans, mostly officers, men considered heroes by their peers, are filling the ranks of the replacement for the OSS - the CIA. Even though this book is a biography of Mary Pinchot Myers, the author takes you through the changing landscape of the times. Some of the things I learned in this book were: -a young Gloria Steinem received CIA funds to organize the American student presence at the Vienna Youth Festival in 1958, an event expected to be under Soviet influence - the CIA funded research into LSD, disguising the source of funds through false foundations - JFK had a voracious appetite for women...women other than the beautiful Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy - the murder of Mary Meyer, presidential mistress, was never solved; some think it was the work of the CIA...we'll never know. Only one of the ten chapters in this book deals with the affair with JFK, but the remaining chapters were very informative for me. There's nothing special about the writing, but it's the progression through that periods, and all of the changes in society, race relations, international posturing, and national security that intrigued me - I enjoyed reading 'A Very Private Woman: The Life and Unsolved Murder of Presidential Mistress Mary Meyer.
