

# An inside view of the Kennedys

By June Cameron

**THE KENNEDYS — DYNASTY AND DISASTER 1848-1983** by John H. Davis  
McGraw-Hill Book Co., \$19.95.

**P**EOPLE SEEM to have an insatiable reading appetite for news, facts, gossip of the Kennedy family. The Kennedy days in the White House, Kennedy women's clothes, hair styles, divorces, Kennedy children's activities and growing-up years have been subjects of books, news stories and magazine articles.

"The Kennedys" by John H. Davis is the latest book centering on the Kennedy family.

Yes, there's new material and facts in this book. The author is first cousin of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis on the Bouvier side of the family. He was present at many family gatherings and White House parties. His observations of these events and his reactions to the assembled guests are some of the best parts of his book.

No, he does not give the Kennedys special treatment, shielding them from criticism and covering their faults and mistakes. Many sections of the text contain harsh comments on Kennedy actions which are then backed up with indisputable facts.

Davis begins his book in 1848 with the story of a young farmhand, Patrick Kennedy, living in Dunganstown, Ireland. Life was hard. Penal laws prevented Catholics from bettering themselves socially or economically.

It's when Patrick Kennedy, 25, leaves his parents, brothers and sister, in the small Irish village, sails for America and starts his life in Boston that the Davis story of the Kennedy family begins to unfold.

Kennedy dies of cholera — penniless, at 35 on Nov. 22, 1858, 10 years after arriving in America and 105 years to the very day before his great-grandson, president of the United States, would die from an assassin's bullet in Dallas, Texas.

Patrick's widow, Bridget, opens a small "notions shop" and manages a

times brutal decisions went into the Kennedy climb from saloon days in East Boston to White House living.

According to Davis, Joseph Kennedy would always feel ashamed of his Irish heritage. Unlike his son John, who made a special trip to Ireland when he was president, to visit his relatives, Joseph Kennedy ignored his Irish relatives.

In 1926, declaring that "Boston is no place to bring up Catholic children," Joe Kennedy moved his family — in a private railroad car — to a house in Riverdale on the northern edge of New York City. In New York the Kennedys would find social acceptance they felt they could not have attained in Boston.

Joe Kennedy possessed genuine executive ability, self-discipline and phenomenal drive. He and Rose ran a tense Spartan household at Hyannisport. Activities and competitions were planned for each day. All children were expected to compete and were compelled to stick to a strict schedule.

When Father Joe spoke to a child, he or she was expected to give an intelligent answer, no small talk or wisecracks.

His creed for the children and himself always: "Win — winning is what's important."

Ruthless business decisions were made when the Kennedy fortune was amassed. Always family minded, Joe Kennedy knew this money would help his children attain politically important careers. He is always in the background helping with money and influence.

Davis takes the reader behind the scenes when he lunches with Jackie Kennedy, when he attends the Kennedy inauguration, when he was with the family at John Kennedy's funeral and later when Jackie Kennedy visits him in New York City. These glimpses give the reader new insights to the Kennedy family.

The author includes some new observations and questions about the Kennedy assassination and how the family handled those terrible grief-stricken days.

"The Kennedys" shows Davis's careful research. He has produced a book which combines skilled writing and a wealth of material — holding the reader's attention to the last paragraph.

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John H. Davis

## BOOK REVIEW

meager living for herself and three children. Her son, Patrick Joseph, a handsome, well-built young man, becomes a successful saloon keeper in East Boston and it is his son — Joseph Patrick Kennedy — who would make a mighty fortune, become ambassador to the Court of St. James and the father of a president of the United States.

Part 2 of Davis's book is titled "The Long Climb 1888-1960." The Kennedy family fortune, its political powers and its far-flung influence were not built on lucky chance happenings. Careful planning, shrewd business deals, selfish, many