

ETHEL KENNEDY: 'A WOMAN OF GREAT CHARACTER'

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her husband's death.

The tragedy of the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy revealed his widow as a woman of much more substance than many had imagined.

In the six years since her husband was murdered, Ethel Kennedy has carried on her life under difficult circumstances with exemplary dignity.

She has been reported as romantically involved with a number of men — from tennis pro Don Hamilton to Frank Sinatra. But even the most sensational publications have failed to tarnish her with scandal.

From the first moments after her husband of 18 years fell fatally wounded on the night of June 5, 1968, Ethel Kennedy behaved with courage.

THOSE WHO RODE the train carrying the slain Kennedy's body from New York to Washington, remember his widow moving down the aisle the entire length of the 20-car train to personally thank them for being there.

If there were some who were amazed at her ability to withstand the torture of those first few days it was because to them Ethel Kennedy had seemed somewhat frivolous.

They might have expected more had they reflected on her past, for the former Ethel Skakel had endured other personal tragedies. In the 1950s her parents were killed in an airplane accident, and her brother met the same fate in 1966.

The truth is that Ethel Kennedy has always relied heavily on her Roman Catholic faith in times of trial.

This was never more evident than in the first few months after

A FRIEND RECALLS walking with Mrs. Kennedy on the grounds of the Kennedy family compound at Hyannisport, Mass. The friend told Mrs. Kennedy that the weather had been gloomy earlier in the year.

"But this month the weather really turned sunny and warm," Mrs. Kennedy replied. "Up there in heaven, Bobby must have told God that he had to do better."

The remark was typical of Mrs. Kennedy in that it not only reflected her religious faith but demonstrated her resolve not to indulge in self-pity.

SHE HAD TO MANAGE other difficulties without a husband's support. Two of her 11 children have gotten into serious trouble with authorities since their father died.

But somehow despite all the rumors and innuendos, Ethel Kennedy has retained her reputation as a woman of great character.

She most recently recalled the memory of her dead husband when she spoke to some 325 journalists and friends at the Washington Kennedy Center.

In a poignant statement to the gathering for the sixth annual presentation of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Journalism Awards, Mrs. Kennedy thanked CBS reporter Roger Mudd, who chaired the session.

"I would like to add one personal one," she said, as she broke down in tears at the thought of the tragedy in Los Angeles.

"It was because of Roger, who led me through the crowd, that Bobby and I got to say goodbye to each other."



THE WIDOWED ETHEL. NO SELF-PITY