

Constant Threat of Death Affects Kennedy's Life, Family, Career

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Each weekday afternoon, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy makes an important telephone call to his home in suburban McLean, Virginia.

He talks to his son, Teddy Jr., about school and other things of interest to a nine-year-old boy.

Kennedy is unusually close to his elder son, but the daily telephone calls have another purpose:

Young Teddy Kennedy does not believe that his father, the last of the Kennedy brothers, will make it back home once he leaves the residence each day.

The daily telephone call is to reassure Teddy; Kara Anne, 10; Patrick Joseph, 3, and the senator's wife Joan. It is not an easy task for a man who also believes that he is stalked by death.

Seven years after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas and nearly three years after Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was murdered in Los Angeles, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy is warned frequently and in a variety of ways that the may be next to die.

The constant fear that "somebody out there" may be gunning for the senator is a major factor among those close to Kennedy in any discussion of his political future, although Kennedy is determined that he will not be paralyzed by the possibility of assassination.

See Kennedy, A17, Col. 1



EDWARD M. KENNEDY
... most threatened senator

KENNEDY, From A1

Next to the President and Vice President, Kennedy receives more threats than anyone in government.

It is also fair to say that he receives more attention from the Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Capital police, Metropolitan police and Fairfax County police than any other public official outside the White House.

Sen. Kennedy does not have Secret Service protection. By law, he cannot. But the Secret Service does investigate threats to public officials for intelligence purposes on the basis that such persons are potential threats to the President and Vice President.

A review of Secret Service intelligence contacts with U.S. senators since 1964 reveals that Kennedy has received more than three times as many threats as any other senator.

355 Contacts

Kennedy was elected a senator from Massachusetts in 1962. From 1964 to the present, Secret Service was involved in 355 matters arising out of Kennedy threats.

Threats aren't the exclusive property of any single ideology. Former Senate dove Eugene McCarthy had 99 Secret Service contacts—next highest to Kennedy—while hawk Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) had 94.

Secret Service had 40 contacts with Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and leading critic of U.S. involvement in Indochina.

Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) received 12 threats considered serious enough for Secret Service involvement. Most came during Senate debate over the nominations of Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. and G. Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court.

Other senators and the number of Secret Service contacts during the period included Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), 17; Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), 25; Sen. Philip Hart (D-Mich.), 15; Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), 14; Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), 9,

and Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), 8.

The FBI, which has primary jurisdiction in these cases under the federal extortion statute, does not disclose its investigation statistics. However, it is believed their experience is similar to the Secret Service's. Much information is shared between the two federal agencies and local police.

Also on Upswing

Chairman Tom Steed (D-Okla.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that handles the Secret Service budget, said that threats against the President and Vice President are also on the upswing, a condition that he characterized as a "sickness that won't go away."

Steed said he favors further expansion of Secret Service authority to include—at the discretion of the President—temporary protection of senators and congressmen when they are confronted with what appears to be a bonafide threat. No such legislation has been offered, however.

Current presidential threats are secret, but in testimony before Steed's subcommittee in 1970, Secret Service Chief James Rowley said that threats or obscene mail to the President and Vice President total about 15 a month.

Rowley added, however, that Secret Service examines about 500 packages, gifts and letters to the White House each week.

It was learned that from 1964 until he lost the presidential election to Mr. Nixon in 1968, Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.) had a total of 1,355 Secret Service contacts arising out of threats. During most of this period, Humphrey was Vice President.

Rowley also disclosed at his appropriations hearing last year that President Nixon ordered Secret Service protection for Humphrey for six months after the 1968 election.

In Kennedy's case, the senator does not see the hate mail, which goes into a file cabinet in his outer office. His staff says the ebb and flow largely depends on

events that propel Kennedy into the headlines.

Peaks came in 1964 when he almost died in a plane crash; in 1965 when he tried—and failed—to make Francis X. Morrissey a federal judge; in 1968 following the June murder of his brother Robert in California, and twice during 1969.

Early in that year, hate mail followed his defeat of Sen. Russell Long (D-La.) for the post of Democratic whip, which he has since lost.

Hate Mail Enormous

Then in July, 1969, he drove off the bridge at Chappaquiddick Island, Mass., and a secretary, Mary Jo Kopechne, was drowned. The volume of hate mail was enormous.

At least 100 times a year, the mail includes a threat of death, kidnap or injury to Kennedy or members of his family.

Often, the letters, conclude with what federal law enforcement officials call the "symmetry proposition"—that bad luck comes in threes.

"Your brothers got what they deserved. You're next," some letters say.

It is also estimated that Kennedy's office receives more threatening and obscene telephone calls and even personal crank visitors than other senators and congressmen.

When Kennedy travels in other states, he takes complex security precautions. These are based on briefings by the Secret Service and FBI and are provided to all public officials who have been seriously threatened.

In Kennedy's case, an advance man contacts local police wherever he travels. He has received substantial protection from local agencies.

Resident FBI agents are

Crank Mail Is Rampant

Few persons have ever been neutral about any of the Kennedys. All of them were subjected to more than their share of hate and crank mail. They also have received much adulation mail, too, and that remains true with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-

Mass.)

Persons familiar with mail received by President John F. Kennedy say that his First Lady, Jacqueline, was bombarded with sexually oriented, often pornographic mail.

It is estimated that Martha Mitchell, wife of Attorney General John N. Mitchell, now receives the most crank mail of any woman in Washington. Much is fan mail, but some equals the worst of the antiKennedys. During the Christmas holidays, Mrs. Mitchell received a cake box containing a decomposed rat surrounded by holly.

The Attorney General also receives threats, but he has an FBI agent as a bodyguard.

also alerted when Kennedy is coming to a city, especially since Jan. 2 when President Nixon signed into law a bill that includes a provision making it a federal crime to assassinate, kidnap or assault an elected or appointed federal official.

The measure itself has several ironic twists. First, it was sponsored by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), who dumped Edward Kennedy as Whip last month. The bill grew out of the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy and the subsequent bizarre trial of Sirhan Sirhan in a California state court.

Finally, it was opposed by Sen. Edward Kennedy because it carries a mandatory death penalty provision.

Kennedy's actions last April when he was invited to the first anniversary observance of the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis provide an example of his security procedures.

He did not accept the public invitation. Nor did he accept the recommendation of his staff to pass up the appearance, although he appeared to do so.

Instead, he went on a holiday to Florida. Then, unannounced and unscheduled, he went to Memphis and participated.

He was following a Secret

Service axiom that assassinations are not spontaneous but are planned. That is why a recent ice skating afternoon on the C&O Canal with his family was really of minimum risk although it seemed dangerous.

Kennedy refuses to talk publicly about the anguish that results from his unique situation, although he acknowledges that it encircles his life.

Helps Ease Strain

At his Senate office a grim humor has evolved that would be offensive to an outsider but helps ease the strain for those who must live with the possibility of a murder attempt on the last Kennedy brother.

Kennedy engages in this banter himself, but only with those very close to him — David Burke, Dick Drayne, Andy Vitale, his cousin Joe Gargan, a few others.

There are other outward manifestations: The quorum buzzer sounds. It doesn't sound at all like a pistol shot, but it is loud and sudden.

Kennedy jumps tense; then he relaxes, smiles.

He is particularly sensitive to the effect of his unique position upon his children.

When President Johnson assigned him Secret Service bodyguards in June, 1968, because he feared a plot to wipe out the Kennedys, the senator sent them away after two days because he didn't want his children to see them.

But the family cannot be shielded from grim reminders. Twice each year all the Kennedys — including cousins without fathers — gather for memorial services for the slain brothers at Arlington National Cemetery.