

nywjt

Nobody's Neutral About

IF A MAN'S MAIL is any barometer, readers just cannot be neutral when they read about the Kennedys. They love them or they hate them. There doesn't appear to be any "don't knows" in this poll. Everybody's positive, for or against.

There's a solid portion of the public which proclaims that it is so fed up with reading about the Kennedys that one more word will be absolutely intolerable. Curiously, the mail from this segment of the writing public indicates that each angry person who sat down to write a letter stating that he/she has had it and has been driven to distraction by Kennedyiana apparently had read every word of the piece that drove them to distraction.

It would seem to me that if a person wanted to read nothing more about the Kennedys the person could simply not read the offending piece. Nobody forces them at gunpoint.

The segment that feels the Kennedys can do no wrong are almost but not quite as zealous as the anti-Kennedy writers. But those who admire or even revere this dynasty that has come upon the American

scene will not rest, apparently, until one of its male line, Bobby or Teddy, is elevated to the White House throne, which they feel is now experiencing an interregnum.

A dozen books are coming out on Bobby Kennedy alone. Indications are that they'll be about evenly divided, pro and con.

Gore Vidal's shrill blast against the Kennedys in the current Esquire will be balanced somewhere else by a panegyric to the whole tribe.

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FOR OR AGAINST, editors find the Kennedy name totally compelling. The spectrum of coverage ranges all the way from Jacqueline's fashions to the outrageous coverage which the European press is giving to Jim Garrison's politically-oriented "investigation" in New Orleans. Look magazine's circulation jumped about 2,000,000 during the running of the Manchester series, and the current issue has a piece by him which seems to be an appeal for sympathy about the terrible ordeal it was to write the book. Not since Liberace has anybody wept more pitifully en route to the bank.

the Kennedys, It Seems

In its current issue, Time magazine, with an air of condescension, appropriates many of the quotes from an interview Frank Conniff and I recently had with Mrs. Kennedy.

Sample: "As Conniff is the first to admit, the interview contains no startling revelations or disclosures." So Time devotes a sizeable portion of its Press department to what it feels was nothing newsworthy. No. 2 sample: "But when Considine stops painting his elaborate word pictures (Ed. note: no specimens of which are presented) and lets Jackie talk, it gives a clear, poignant picture of her present life—along with its travail." Somebody had to chronicle that "clear, poignant picture," etc. I did. Time's writer, always anonymous, must think the "clear, poignant picture" emerged by itself without benefit of the intermediate role played by a reporter.

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FINAL QUOTE: "Conniff and Considine tactfully . . . deleted an exuberant remark Jackie made praising Bobby: 'I'd jump out of the window for him.'"

Time sure as hell didn't.

Here are a couple typical letters in the wake of the interview: From New York: "Mrs. Kennedy's solution for the problem of sparing her children the pangs of publicity etc. etc. seems simply solved to me. No magazine interviews, no newspaper interviews, in fact, no interview of any kind. As long as she permits this, the name 'Kennedy' is constantly before the public.

"As for me, my friends and my family, we are sick, sick, sick of hearing, reading and otherwise being informed of every move the clan makes . . ."

A woman in Normandy, Missouri, writes: "How I wish I knew Mrs. Kennedy's address so that I could tell her how much I admire her and loved her late husband. There will never be another John Fitzgerald Kennedy. I'm appalled by stories critical of Mrs. Kennedy. Why would people want to hurt anyone who meant as much to our country as Jacqueline Kennedy did during that period of shock through which many of us passed after the assassination?" . . . and never the twain will meet.