

Fred. Post 7/30/93

The Kennedys: Gossip swirls about America's royal family

BOSTON (AP) - Will John Jr. marry Daryl? Is the latest book about Ted true? Has Willie found happiness in his medical career? And can Joe get his first marriage annulled before he weds a staff member?

After 30 years, the Kennedy family soap opera continues, and the audience remains rapt.

"The Kennedys are the closest thing here to royalty," said Iain Calder, editor in chief of the National Enquirer supermarket tabloid. "There's an American fascination with British royals - well, they're the American royals."

To Mr. Calder, the hottest Kennedy story is whether John F. Kennedy Jr. is going to marry actress Daryl Hannah.

Paparazzi staked out Ms. Hannah's home this week amid rumors of a secret wedding. Gossip columnist Liz Smith reported Thursday the couple were in Indonesia.

But the 32-year-old Kennedy, once picked as "the sexiest man alive" by People magazine, isn't the only family member in the news this summer.

Even family matriarch Rose Kennedy got attention, as she has every July for years, by marking her birthday - her 103rd.

Joseph P. Kennedy II, a Democratic congressman from Massa-

chusetts and son of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, is seeking an annulment to marry Anne Elizabeth Kelly, who began working for him in 1982 as an office temp.

William Kennedy Smith recently told the media his medical residency in New Mexico helped him restore normalcy to his life after his acquittal on a rape charge.

And Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., is the subject a biography that's already been hotly debated even though it's not in bookstores yet.

"The Last Brother" by Joe McGinniss was instantly controversial because a disclaimer that said some parts of the book were "created by the author." Then, others suggested Mr. McGinniss was guilty of plagiarism.

Melody Miller, a Kennedy spokeswoman, said no family member would comment about their personal affairs.

"Members of the Kennedy family don't try to speculate on why people are so interested in them," she said. "They prefer to concentrate on the jobs and public service in which they're involved. And take one day at a time."

Mr. Calder attributes the fascination to the Kennedy's mix of charisma, wealth, glamour and tragedy.

"This is a family that if an author

created them for a novel, people would say it's too far-fetched," he said. "All these things couldn't happen to one family."

It's been 30 years since JFK was assassinated, and Mr. Calder, with the National Enquirer since 1964, said interest in the family waxes and wanes.

Recent Kennedy reports, he said, aren't as scintillating as ones involving Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis or Ted Kennedy's past, but linking John Jr. and the mermaid from "Splash" is not bad.

And tourist interest in Kennedy sites in Massachusetts stays strong.

Every year, 325,000 visitors tour the John F. Kennedy Library, and 17,000 stop by JFK's birthplace in Brookline.

The number of college-age visitors to the library has increased since Oliver Stone's 1991 film "JFK" and with President Clinton's affinity for Kennedy, said Ed Fierros, the library's visitors services supervisor.

At the Hyannis Area Chamber of Commerce, the No. 1 question Director Wendy Northcross hears from tourists is: Can we see the Kennedy family compound in Hyannisport?

"It's very difficult to get people to realize this is somebody's home," she said. "That this is not a tourist attraction."