

Freedom From Politics for Joan Kennedy

By Maxine Cheshire

Joan Kennedy has a "new freedom" from the pressures of politics and won't be doing much campaigning for her husband if he runs for the presidency in 1976.

According to one of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's closest associates, the couple have reached an informal agreement that permits her to lead a life of her own and pursue her own interests.

Joan Kennedy will be asked to make only "major" political appearances at her husband's side in the future and will do no independent "First Lady campaigning" if he becomes a Democratic contender.

Disclosure of the new arrangement came this week after Mrs. Kennedy was photographed at a ball in Venice, dancing with Italian publicist Giorgio Pavone.

The event was billed as "The Party of the Year" for international jet-setters. It was not the usual scene for the wife of Sen. Kennedy and focused attention on the fact that she spent much of the summer in Europe, while her husband remained here and in Massachusetts.

Asked by a reporter at the Venice party about Kennedy's whereabouts, she is said to have replied: "He's back in Hyannis Port, baby-sitting."

Mrs. Kennedy, whose absences from Washington were frequent and often lengthy last winter, went abroad twice this summer. In June, she took her daughter Kara, for a grand tour. After bringing the child home to the family's summer residence on Cape Cod, Mrs. Kennedy returned to Europe by herself.

Sen. Kennedy said there is no possibility of an impending separation or any kind of rift.

"It would come as a surprise to me," he said last week.

His wife is expected back this week, "probably Wednesday or Thursday," he said. She had gone back to Europe the second time to attend the Music Festival in Salzburg, he said, and "decided to visit some friends of my parents in Venice."

She "probably" will not be doing any political campaigning the rest of this year, he said, because he is not planning to do any himself after a couple of upcoming speaking engagements are fulfilled.

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