

ENQUIRER

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Experts Explain . . .

Why Robert F. Kennedy's Younger Children Are Now Beginning to Suffer Full Tragedy of His Assassination

can become," added Dr. Foraste. Child therapist Joseph Palombo believes the grief of the children is "for what they wished for and will never have.

"They can realize that their father will never experience the kind of pride that a father can have in a child's achievements," explained Palombo, counselor and administrative director of Chicago's Barr-Harris Center for the Study of Separation and Loss During Childhood.

"They can feel sorrow that the parent will never see them achieve a degree of success or fulfill dreams.

"But for the younger children, it's important to experience some aspect of the graveside or funeral ritual to punctuate the reality of what happened.

"Otherwise the child retains the fantasy that the parent has just gone away and will come back in a week or two weeks or a year.

"It could be that Rory finally confronted the reality at the age of 7 . . . for a 4- or 5-year-old, the only meaning of death is 'They've gone away.'

"The real understanding doesn't come until they're 7 or 8."

Lester David, author of several Kennedy biographies, believes that past



GRAVESIDE DRAMA: Ethel Kennedy looks toward her sobbing daughter, Rory, 7, and her son Max, 11, (right) who broke down during graveside services last November 20 — RFK's birthday. Fighting to hold back their tears are sons Christopher 13 (left) and Douglas, 9.

acts of rebellion by the older Kennedy children were triggered by their sense of loss and the pressure on them to live up to their father's legend.

But David believes that Robert Ken-

nedy's older children are now recovering from their rebellion and years of mourning — and are developing into fine adults.

— PETER BRENNAN

The younger children of murdered Sen. Robert F. Kennedy are only now beginning to suffer the full tragedy of their father's assassination.

That's the belief of Kennedy family intimates and a child therapist — who say the burden on the younger members of RFK's family has been magnified because they can't remember their father, only the positive image of him that has been painted by others in the family.

The increasing grief of the youngsters was painfully evident on November 20 — RFK's birthday — when two of his 11 children broke down in tears at graveside services in Arlington National Cemetery.

Eleven-year-old Max, who was only 3 when his father died, had to be helped to his feet and led away to a car while a sobbing Rory, then 7, was comforted by her mother Ethel. Christopher, 13, and Douglas, 9, had to fight to hold back tears.

Such delayed expressions of sorrow among children aren't at all uncommon, according to child psychiatrist Dr. Roland Foraste, a friend of Ethel Kennedy's brother Rushton Skakel.

"At a very early age, death is perceived as something that is not permanent. 'Bang, you're dead — okay you're alive again,'" explained Dr. Foraste.

"But at the grave, children are presented with the real fact that can be grasped, and they let their feelings come out.

"When the reality is presented at the grave, that's about as real as it