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Tragedy Came Often To Kennedy Family

A thread of tragedy has run through the Kennedy family in the last quarter-century.

The first blow was the wartime death of Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., the eldest son of the family.

Joe, a skilled U.S. flyer, volunteered for a super-secret mission against German submarine pens on the French coast. He died when his plane exploded after successful completion of the raid.

On May 3, 1948, a daughter, Kathleen, widow of the Marquis of Hartington, was killed in a plane crash in the mountains of southern France. Her husband had been killed in action in France in 1944.

Another sister, Rosemary, has been mentally retarded from birth.

In 1955, Mr. and Mrs. George Skakel, parents-in-law of Robert F. Kennedy, met death in a plane crash.

In 1961, Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. suffered a stroke and has been an invalid ever since.

In early 1963, Patrick Kennedy, new-born son of President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy, died of a lung ailment.

And on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, President Kennedy was assassinated.

As a PT boat commander in the Pacific, John Kennedy had almost lost his life when his boat was struck by a Japanese destroyer.

Later as a Senator, a back injury sustained in that episode required surgery and the situation became so serious that the last rites of the Catholic Church were administered to him.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, youngest of the brothers, came near death in June, 1964, when the private plane he and four others were traveling in crashed in an orchard near Southampton, Mass.

The pilot was killed and the Senator sustained a broken back and other critical injuries but he survived.

In September, 1966, Robert Kennedy's brother-in-law, George Skakel, and his closest friend Dean Markham, died in a plane crash.

And on June 5, 1968, Robert Kennedy was shot three times in Los Angeles by an assailant.