



Hermann Deutsch

*Ted First Brother to Tarnish
Kennedy Clan Image of Sanctity*

THIS final year of the dying 1960s has been rough on many of our most highly respected institutions. Some recent weather anomalies have found one area of the nation breaking every low temperature record for a given date on which another section was making mincemeat of every record for the highest temperature.

We still are awaiting the emergence of three immortal astronauts from quarantine to give them ticker tape triumphs that will eclipse every welcoming tribute ever tendered a home-coming victor.

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IT IS MY SURMISE that a word of detraction uttered heretofore with intent to tarnish the aureole of sanctity which has enshrined the Clan Kennedy would have been deemed not merely libelous, but sacrilegious. Not one of the three oldest of the four sons of Joseph and Rose Kennedy threatened to violate this tradition. Joseph Jr., was killed in action during WW II. Jack (John F.) and Bobby were felled by assassins. And now the youngest of the idols, Ted (Edward), has kicked himself in the teeth.

By far, the most damaging aspect of the Chappaquiddick Chapter still is the almost incredible ineptness of Ted's actions and statements after the accident that snuffed out the life of Mary Jo Kopechne. It will serve no useful purpose to rehash in detail what happened that night when, so it is reported, five married men entertained five unmarried girls of the secretary echelon at a steak cook-out in a lonely rented beach cottage on an island which is a spin-off from Martha's Vineyard, which in turn is a near satellite at the southwestern elbow of Cape Cod.

Sen. Kennedy's first statement to the police (10 hours after the accident) had it that he was driving Miss Kopechne away from the party in haste to catch the last ferry to Edgartown; but instead of turning west the main and only blacktop road, he made a

sharp right angle turn south onto a dirt road, at whose end a careful driver can make his way slowly over a 10-foot plank bridge without guard railings to a barren sandspit which forms the outer barrier to interconnected Poncha Pond and Cape Poge Bay. Driving onto this road at midnight and at moderate highway speed the car promptly overturned into the tide channel. Sen. Kennedy struggled free. Miss Kopechne didn't.

After Mary Jo's funeral, which he and his wife attended, he read over a TV network from the library of his father's home, a statement prepared during the preceding five days with the help of, or at least in the presence of, a group of friends and professionals numbering among others, Robert McNamara and Theodore Sorensen, as published in the current (Aug. 1) issue of Time magazine.

The final version was glossily perfect; too much so, in fact. Its closing touch was an emotion-shaken and faintly bucolic bit, asking the public at large to let him know by letter or telegram whether or not he should resign his seat in the Senate forthwith. This touch of homespun pathos must have been meant to serve as a diversionary tactic. No question of his Senate seat had been raised. The discussion concerned whether or not he had ruled himself out as a potential Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1972. Any schoolboy could have predicted that the answer to his shall-I-resign query would be an overwhelming "No," which thus could have been mistaken for overwhelming support in favor of his remaining the leading presidential possibility.

Judging his television statement dispassionately, there are gaps in it large enough to accommodate a Superbowl game, with parking space to spare. Even if all the gaps can be explained, Sen. Kennedy seems to have destroyed his priceless public image, and is busily stamping on the fragments with his newly revealed feet of clay.