

George N. Crocker

Ted Kennedy: Then, Now

ONE PREFERS not to impose on Sen. Kennedy in his moment of distress, but he has decided to impose longer on us. Remember, he is not just a name. He is a power. We have more than a right to probe the mentality of the majority whip of the Senate; we have a duty.

Suddenly there is something macabre about a passage in Ralph de Toledano's book "R.F.K.," published in 1967. He is describing the Kennedys at play, back in the giddy days when John was President:

"FOR A TIME, the most discussed aspect of the Kennedy family life was the practice of dunking the guests, fully dressed, in the swimming pool. At one evening party, Bobby pushed Pierre Salinger . . . into the pool. Salinger sank to the bottom, then slowly rose, his cigar still firmly clamped between his teeth. Sen. Kenneth Keating . . . was also pushed into the pool. During a black-tie dinner for brother-in-law Peter Lawford, while Lester Lanin's orchestra played and Harry Belafonte entertained, Ethel lost her balance and fell into the pool. Presidential assistant Arthur Schlesinger Jr., along with Mrs. Spencer Davis, was pushed in after Ethel. On still another occasion, in 50-degree weather, Ted Kennedy took a running dive into the pool and then shivered for the rest of the evening in a soaking wet dinner jacket."

We remember Barry Goldwater's remark, "When the Kennedys send out invitations for a formal dinner, they should read 'black tie and snorkel.'"

Pat Anderson, who was in the Justice Department under Bobby and wrote speeches for him, was appalled at the

Kennedy family's parties. In *Esquire* magazine, he later told of the poems prepared to exalt the Kennedys, adding:

"All the other party props — the posters and the funny games — had the same moral. I could not understand a man who would let his closest friends pay homage to him, or friends who would do such a thing, or people who needed props and poems to have a party. Perhaps it is pertinent to remember that F. Scott Fitzgerald is usually misquoted. He did not say the 'rich' are different from you and me; he said the 'very rich.' I have friends who are rich, but the Kennedys are very rich and perhaps that is the difference. I know no better explanation."

Different, indeed; but being "very rich" cannot explain Teddy's being expelled from Harvard for cheating. It was not for a furtive glance at a neighbor's paper. It was cheating by stooping to the ultimate fraud; he got a friend to impersonate him.

When Teddy ran for the Senate at age 30, it had to be brought out, and from his own lips:

"I was having difficulty in one course, a foreign language . . . I arranged for a fellow freshman friend to take the examination for me in that course."

DID THE ACT reveal a grave flaw in his character? No matter; this was not the Massachusetts of John Adams and Emerson. The people elected him. He was a Kennedy, the President's little brother.

Who will crack the mystery of those nine hours when the body of Mary Jo Kopechne lay in the cold water, unreported?