
Betty Beale: Washington

The new Joan Kennedy

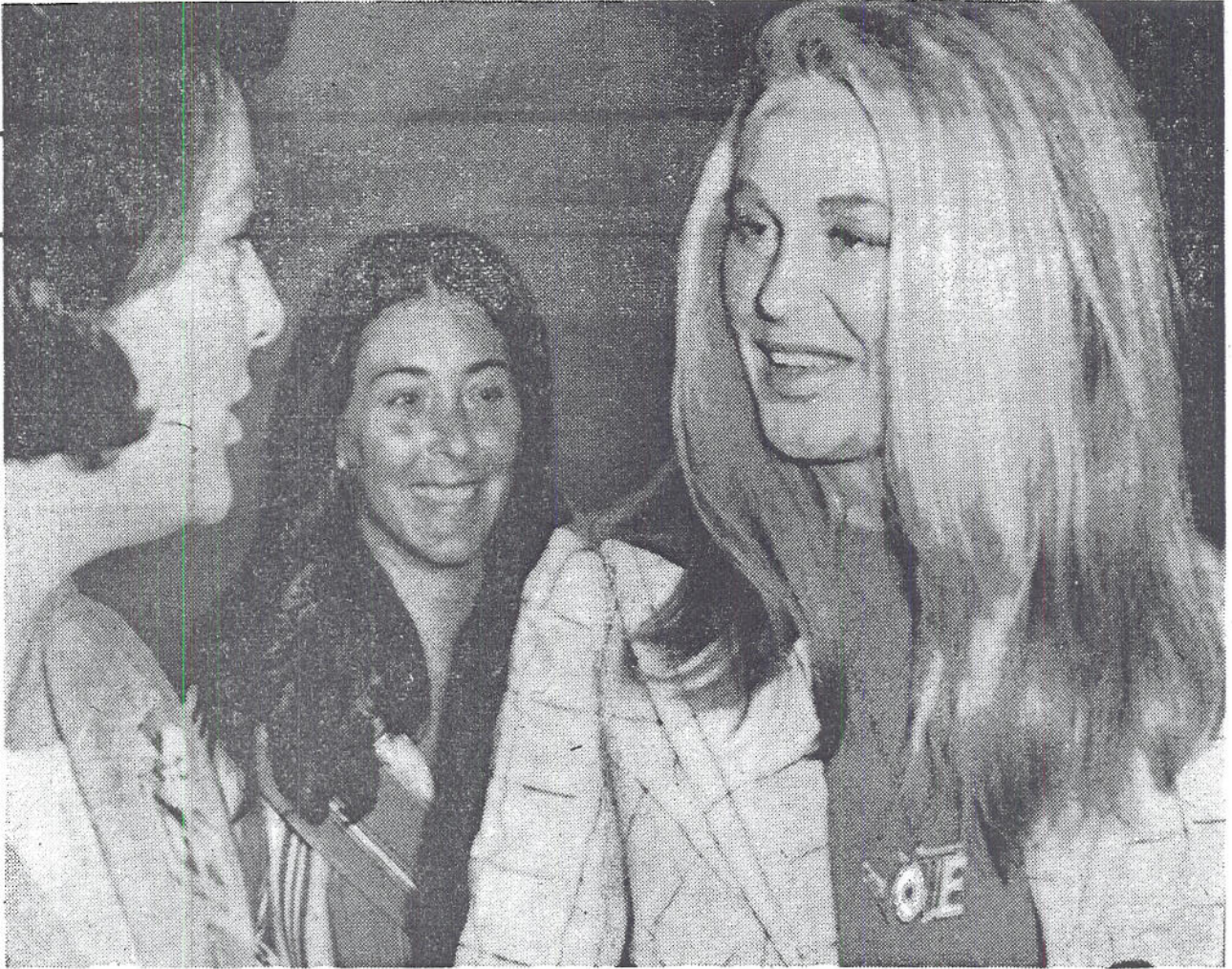
WASHINGTON — If Sen. Edward Kennedy gets into the next presidential race — and his wife will not say he won't — the country will see a different Joan Kennedy than it has up to now.

"You don't know me," said the beautiful blonde, who no longer seems to wear the overdone hairdos or mod clothes she went in for in the past. "I am interested in national and international affairs. I am interested in all the things my husband is involved in."

She sits in as a devil's advocate, she said, on the briefing sessions such as the Senator had with his aides in his home before his recent appearance on "Face the Nation." All the young aides are so bright, so expert in their fields, and they probably regard her, she implied, as a dumb blonde. But they haven't had much practical political experience, said Joan, who is no political novice today.

When they finished hashing over potential "Face the Nation" questions and answers, Mrs. Kennedy said she told them, "I am Mrs. John Q. Public and if these answers are not clear to me — and I hear these topics discussed all the time — they're not going to be clear to the average American housewife."

It's hard to imagine how the wife of a candidate could be a more glamorous asset than Joan Kennedy.



NEW DEDICATION marks Joan Kennedy's role in husband Ted's political career. Here she is, right, with admirers during a telethon for the Democratic party.

She has beauty of face and figure and she has chic. But with all her eye-appealing facade, she has a more approachable, more agreeable manner than any other member, male or female, of the Kennedy clan. There's nothing remotely arrogant about Joan. She has a retiring modesty and the good humor to not take herself too seriously. When she talks to someone she looks smiling and interested and she looks directly at the person.

The background Joan has created in their McLean, Va., house for her children and the man, who, it is generally believed, can have the Democratic nomination if he wants it, is a combination of elegance, warmth and comfort. Her taste is such the posh decorating magazine *Architectural Design* recently carried color photographs of the interior.

"For years," she said, "I have been going to Parke-Bernet auctions, buying antiques and putting them away until we got our house." She decorated it herself but Keith Irvine, whom Jackie Onassis told her about, ran around getting the things she wanted. "He wasn't well known then," she said, adding that now he has a big reputation.

Sen. and Mrs. Kennedy are rarely glimpsed on the Washington social scene, but people always assume that glamorous people are busy doing glamorous things. Nothing could be further from the truth.

according to the Senator's wife who made one of her rare appearances at Alice Roosevelt Longworth's 90th birthday party. She came alone because the Senator was out of town as he frequently is.

"We lead such a quiet life. We entertain about one night a month and we go out about one night a month. I have finally gotten Teddy to come home from the office by 7 so we can have dinner with the children." They have been doing this, she said, since before young Teddy's operation.

Teddy Jr. is now having chemo-therapy treatment to prevent the spread of cancer. And they have discovered that she is the only person around him who has cancer antibodies in her blood, in case the doctors decide to try this method to combat the disease. She hasn't a clue as to where she got the antibodies.

Standing in Mrs. Longworth's living room — tall, straight, smiling — in navy-blue crepe pajamas that hung in graceful flowing lines, a soft bow at the high neck, Joan Kennedy looked 27 rather than her 37 years. But there seemed to be a mature peace and poise about her that the country will get to know if and when her husband runs for President.

When you reach the privileged age of 90 in a privileged life, you dare to do what others tremble at



Ambassador David Bruce

the thought of. Thus Alice Longworth didn't hesitate to have President and Mrs. Nixon at the same party with the columnists who cut him up in little pieces daily.

"You had all the President's enemies," said a guest. "I know," said Mrs. Longworth, who was loving every minute of it. "He was amused." The beleaguered Nixon is so grateful for a kind word these days, he thanked me for printing complimentary remarks Ambassador Timothee Ahoua made about him and, said the President, "I wrote the Ivory Coast ambassador and thanked him."

The minute the President left the party, someone presented Mrs. L. with a poster of a coyly smiling Nixon looking as if he had just stepped out of the bath and holding a towel across him marked "Watergate Hotel." It was hardly the thing that would have brought a smile to the presidential face, and she would not have shown it to him, said Alice, if she had received it earlier.

Ambassador to China and Mrs. David Bruce, home for his consultations, said they didn't know how long they would be here. Looking at Henry Kissinger, David said, "I can't get anything out of that wandering minstrel I work for."

Having read the transcripts of White House tapes, Sen. Hugh Scott stuck to his guns that the President is in the clear. "Time will prove me right when these things come out." Among the 20 or so ambassadors who had spoken to him on behalf of Nixon, "one man from a Communist country said to me recently that 'I pray to my Communist gods that your President will soon be out of his trouble.' That's a funny line but that's what he said."

One birthday gift was the cover of Life magazine of April 12, 1937, showing a picture on the back cover of Alice Longworth looking very chic and 35-ish, not 53, smoking a cigarette and saying, "They're a light smoke, kind to the throat, Lucky Strikes." The rapier-witted Mrs. L., still animated after nine decades, obviously didn't write the ad copy.