

# Ethel Kennedy's 'Miracle'

## Husband Was Her Career

New York

Until those early morning hours Wednesday, when her world was plunged into darkness by the shot that killed her husband, Ethel Skakel Kennedy was basically a happy and contented person.

For her there were no nagging ambitions, no unfulfilled career. Being Senator Robert F. Kennedy's wife and the mother of his 10 children was her career. She was doing the only thing she wanted to do.

As a close friend says, "Ethel never could get over the idea that she was married to Bobby. She still thought it was a miracle."

### AWE

Ethel Kennedy had a sense of awe and worship for her own husband that most people reserve for respected strangers. On campaign platforms, she listened to his words as though she had never heard him speak before.

Being with her husband encompassed a lot of things. When he served as counsel to the Senate Rackets Committee, it meant showing up for nearly every hearing.

This year, it meant campaigning while pregnant with the 11th child she is expecting late this year and being

pushed and shoved and reaching out to shake hands. It meant keeping things light and gay in her McLean, Va. home, making it a retreat for her husband from the daily battles of politics. And it meant attacking anyone who attacked her husband.

She feels strongly on the subject of loyalty. A friend says, "I remember one time she got mad at something Chet Huntley said on TV and she called him up right there and then and bawled him out on the phone. She was constantly getting mad at criti-

cal things people said and wrote about Bobby."

But through all this devotion, Ethel Kennedy's own personality comes through. She has no facade and people use such adjectives as gay, warm, friendly and unassuming when speaking of her.

Mrs. Kennedy pats people, touches and hugs them, touches children's hair, her compassion is real. While touring a children's hospital once during a campaign, she saw a small girl in a bed burst into tears. Mrs. Kennedy first implored, then demanded, that a photographer

who was taking pictures leave the room.

A few years ago when she saw a starving horse tied up in a chicken coop near her estate, Mrs. Kennedy took it home and the owner later accused her of what amounted to horse stealing. She testified that the horse was "just a bag of bones," was acquitted, and the man was convicted of cruelty to animals.

### SPIRIT

Mrs. Kennedy, who was 40 in April, has a zestful spirit that some friends feel surpasses her physical strength, despite her expertise at skiing and tennis. Close friends, who say she had a difficult time with her last two pregnancies, worry more than ever about her now.

Mrs. Kennedy has survived crushing sorrows—not only in



AP Wirephoto

SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY, ETHEL AND JOSEPH KENNEDY III  
They left St. Patrick's Cathedral after escorting the casket

the Kennedy family but in her own—with amazing resiliency. She leans heavily on her religion and, seldom misses daily Mass.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Skakel, were killed in a private plane crash in 1935 and 11 years later her brother, George Jr., was killed in another plane crash.

Nothing in her childhood, insulated by wealth, prepared her for the tragedies to come. Born in Chicago, Mrs. Kennedy grew up in Greenwich, Conn. Her father owned Great Lakes Carbon Corporation and Mrs. Kennedy, the sixth of seven children, graduated from Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart the year she married Robert Kennedy, 1950.

Her roommate was his sister, Jane, now Mrs. Stephen Smith.

Mrs. Scott Carpenter, the wife of the former astronaut said, "The most philosophical Ethel ever got with me was one day this spring, when she suddenly said, "We're placed on earth and somehow given a sense of responsibility to give life and love and to help others."