

'Ethel Was His Lifeline'

By BETTY BEALE

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WASHINGTON — The hearts of all Americans go out to Ethel Kennedy and her children.

Theirs was a gay family life. Their mutual interests were multiple and their joint participation so full.

Ethel, the beautifully coordinated and capable sportswoman, even shared her husband's love of such masculine pursuits as touch football, outdoor camping, and riding the rapids.

They could do all these things together and ski together, swim together, and laugh together. Even if she had not been the active outdoor woman, if the Senator had wanted her to do these things, she would have done them. As one of her closest friends said:

"Ethel adored him. No matter what Bobby wanted or did, it was all right with her. More than anything in the world, he was the main stream in her life."

She was jubilant when he first told her he was running for President. She had all the faith in the world in him and not only wanted him to run but felt he had to.

"She thought the same way about the poor as he did and about the issues that Bobby talked about," continued the friend.

"I can't think of a single time when she disagreed with him."

"And Ethel was Bobby's lifeline. He always got her opinion on things. Every time he wrote a page in a book, he would read it to her."

Wasn't she worried at all about the dangers of exposure after his brother's tragic experience? "She never talked about the dangers. She was so optimistic. She has always had an outgoing, gay facade."

What will happen to her now?

"She is incredible in tragedy. She holds up because of her religion. Just a year ago her sister-in-law choked to death. Two years ago her brother, George Skakel, was killed with Dean Markham. She is deeply religious. Sometimes she goes to church every day. She will have her religion to fall back on."

She will need it now.