

Kiss-and-Tell Stuff



Andrew Tully

IT IS always safe — and usually profitable — to smear a dead man. According to her literary agent, Judith Campbell Exner's memoirs of her "romance" with President John Kennedy could bring her as much as \$2-million, worldwide.

Well, this is a free country, which is why the agent, Scott Meredith, can hold a news conference and distribute a 10-page outline of Mrs. Exner's soon-to-be-written remembrance of things past. Only Mrs. Exner, the former gangster's moll, knows how much truth — if any — will be found between hardcovers. But it seems a sure bet that the death benefits paid her will be substantial.

Anyway, the outline promises some hot stuff and that's what brings in the dough. Among other things, Mrs. Exner will recall that Kennedy once told her his marriage was in poor shape and that only Kennedy family intervention prevented his wife from divorcing him.

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MRS. EXNER'S work — to employ a euphemism — also will take a whack at the living. Her outline, written by her agent, says that on several occasions Kennedy "expressed to her his doubts that (his brother) Ted would act responsibly enough to fulfill what he (John Kennedy) saw as the destiny for all the Kennedy brothers — the presidency."

I concede that public morality is at a low ebb, but this does seem a bit much. One need not be a Kennedy

idolator to cry foul. Mrs. Exner, a product of the *demimonde* fringe of the Los Angeles-Hollywood show biz community, has it too good. It is her word against — whose? In such situations, the only effective defense is that put up by the accused, and John Kennedy is dead.

We are asked to take Mrs. Exner's word that she had an adulterous relationship with Kennedy. To me her word is not quite good enough, not yet anyway. Does she have witnesses to her alleged romps with a President? Affidavits? Sworn depositions? Tapes of conversations with Kennedy or his friends?

I say the woman's word is not quite good enough.

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IF MRS. EXNER'S story about her "love" affair with a President is true, and can be verified, Kennedy was indiscreet to the point of malfeasance of duty. But, of course, that is another story, which perhaps requires further, dogged investigation to get at the truth.

However, all that is irrelevant to this essay. Even if Mrs. Exner's "reminiscences" about her relationship with John Kennedy is gospel, her book-to-be is a sleazy, not to say vicious, piece of business. Not only because she is selling kiss-and-tell stuff of a particularly odorous nature about a President of the United States, but because there is no way to accord a dead man due process.