

Robert de Roos



I HAVE just counted up and, if my figures are correct, there are about 190 million Americans in the United States and only 49 Kennedys, give or take a few in-laws.

I think this is a revealing statistic, clearly of as much interest to the 190 million as to the 49. There is comfort in the statistic because I have sometimes had the feeling the majority was outnumbered and I confess I am a little tired of the Kennedys, beginning with Joseph P. and extending to John John.

Oh, I know you will say the Kennedy boys were born to rule this country in a firm but kindly manner at no matter what personal cost and that they have been carefully prepared for the task by firm and kindly old Joseph P. and his Rose.

And, if I know you, you will want to persuade me that if well-trained, rich, aristocratic Boston-Irish children are to be denied the seat of power, this country must be in very sorry shape.

You will point out to me the fitness of Joseph's Plan: how the mantle has passed from son to son, from Joseph, dead in the war, to John F., dead in Dallas, to Robert F. — with Edward warming up in the wings should anything, God forbid, befall Robert F.

Well, sure, but I'd like to think the 190 million might be consulted from time to time.

And, it must be added, the Plan has taken a dreadful clobbering in the last few weeks. Robert F., who has assiduously created an image of himself as a man who does not make or tolerate mistakes, stands before us as a bumbler — as just another human being and not a very smart one at that.

The Infallible Mr. K Flunks a Crucial Test

I REMEMBER a talk I once had with the political editor of a Boston newspaper. "The Kennedys are through with anyone who is compromised in any way, whether it is his fault or not," he said. "If you are compromised, you are dead and, man, could they be vengeful. They are very hard guys."

Well, that is an experienced man's view. I do not have an opinion, but I have a memory.

I met Robert F. only once, when he was Attorney General of the United States. And, although the situation did not call for coldness, I have never met such a cold young man.

The world-famous swag of hair was in place on the forehead, the limp handshake was offered and all formalities were observed, but pervading the whole meeting were the cold, cold blue eyes of a very — unless I am much mistaken — arrogant young man.

To be fair to Robert F., the meeting occurred during that period when he was deciding Destiny meant him to be the junior Senator from New York and he had problems on his mind. Our meeting was brief and unimportant but I still recall the chill which descended on a warm Washington afternoon.

And now we see Robert F. compromised by his own hand. We see the cold and efficient young man making mistakes and compounding those mistakes. It is hard not to feel the flush of shock. Or a flash of pleasure.

OF COURSE, Jacqueline Kennedy must take a lot of the heat for ineptness and pique in handling the Manchester affair, but Bobby was in there, or should have been, all the way.

One of the most bizarre comments on the Manchester-Kennedy mishmash was made in a column recently by Clayton



Fritchey, who has served his term as apologist for various Democrats.

The burden of his song was that "history" will be better served by Mrs. Kennedy's revised memories than it would be by the memories themselves. That, having had time to think things over, she would be able to give history a clearer picture. It does not seem likely to me, but I do not say it is not so.

No, the burden of my song is that I do not think "history" is involved here. I do not think that anything that passed between President Johnson and Jacqueline Kennedy in those first hours of shock could have had any effect on the course of this country or any impingement on you or me.

What Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Johnson may have said and done at a time of overwhelming emotion is gossip — not history — unless it affected this country in a palpable way. There is no evidence that it did.

And to say the American people are entitled to know what went on is so much junk. They are no more entitled to know about those private matters than I am entitled to know what went on in your home last night. You may have a great need to tell me but it is not my right to know.

In Washington it has always been the smart thing to report the latest ripple in the sea of animosity which supposedly surges between the Kennedys and the Johnsons. I have heard my share of this talk and no one ever called it anything but gossip — certainly not history. Predictably, the talk always has a pro-Kennedy slant: it is hard not to side with the rich and beautiful.

THE ORIGINAL mistake made by Mrs. Kennedy and Robert F. was to entertain the idea of any book at all. If Mrs. Kennedy felt that she had to unburden herself, she should have been persuaded to talk to a tape recorder or a secretary for as long as the flow continued.

Then, on advice from brother-in-law Robert F. she should have sealed that material away in the archives of the John F. Kennedy Library with a little note saying it should not be unsealed until all participants were dead. There are many precedents for such action and that way history would have been served — if what Mrs. Kennedy had to say was indeed history.

At the least, having given in to an urge to see it all in print and having hired a writer, Robert F. and Mrs. Kennedy certainly should have read every page of the growing book with the greatest of care.

They did not; there is evidence neither of them read it. But at the last hour, they mounted their white horses and charged about waving blue pencils.

That might have served for Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy, a rich girl who has had her way since before she left her pram.

But it was a bad mistake for Robert F., the infallible man who would deliver the 190 million from evil and lead us to green pastures.

Signed: Lifelong Democrat.
