

SFXaminer

16 Oct 72

Joan Kennedy Denies

By Eleanor Roberts
Special to The Examiner

BOSTON — She looked like a fairy princess in a long white chiffon nightie covered by a matching lace-trimmed peignor. Her straight golden hair gleamed in the lamplight. It was noon. The day was

dark and rainy. And Joan Kennedy looking much younger than her 36 years, sat across from me on the divan of her Copley Plaza hotel suite talking with rare and unusual candor about her marriage to Ted in an exclusive interview.

Neither the malicious gos-

sip about her marriage "going on the rocks" nor the incredibly long list of Kennedy tragedies has left its mark on Joan. She has unwavering faith in Ted.

"I am more in love with him than ever," she said. "And we will be married 14 years on November 28.

"Yes I am bored to tears with gossip about Ted and his so-called illicit romances. But it really doesn't hurt me. I have learned over the years in politics that 98 percent of it is false or distorted.

"The rumors come and go and they do not affect the

Marriage on Rocks

relationship between Ted and me. I simply go in and ask him about them and that's all."

Joan who is still as delicate as Dresden china, shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

"I have something going for me with Ted that no one

realizes. We are very close. We actually share our private and public lives more than other couples.

"Ted often calls and asks me to have a sandwich with him at his office if he's going to be late or not home for supper.

"He's a three - briefcase

man, but he doesn't pull them out until after the three children are off to bed. Then we light a fire in the den in our McLean, Virginia, home and Ted goes to work. So do I, reading news notes from the children's

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school and keeping up with the national symphony plans."

"Ted usually tries out his speeches on me," she said.

While Joan is no longer the naive, enchanted young Mrs. Edward Moore Kennedy I campaigned with when Ted broke his back in a near-fatal plane accident in 1964, she levels with you.

She was candid and kept her cool about a disagreeable subject — the gossip about Ted's romantic involvement as the fan magazine put it, with wealthy, jet-setter Amanda Burden, ex-wife of millionaire Carter Burden and daughter of Bill Paley, CBS chairman of the board.

"It so happens he's a very attractive young Senator," she said with a smile. "Why do you think I married him? I have good taste. I didn't want just any plain, dull, uninteresting, unattractive man.

"I suppose he will always be a magnet for women. But I am confident that our mar-



BORED TO TEARS WITH GOSSIP ABOUT TED
Joan Kennedy says rumors don't affect relationship

riage is strong and that we are very close.

"It is irritating to hear people say, 'Isn't it sad, her husband isn't with her' but doctors, lawyers, businessmen work long hours, travel, and have irregular schedules.

"I had a college roommate whose husband is always on the road. My sister's husband is a lawyer and it is much more difficult for her to discuss his interests — since they are in gas and oil and highly specialized — than it is for Ted and me to talk politics.

"I can share so much of Ted's work. With Ted, I can be part of his life. When he co-chaired the ITT hearings, he called me because he knew I'd find them fascinating. And in 20 minutes I was there.

Thoughtful

"He is marvelous — thoughtful and eager for me to share and understand his work and goals. 'He'd say, 'Take a look at this. Here's what I'm going to say about the health bill.'"

She looked pleased and proud. And she didn't sound as though she was selling me a golden myth.

Like so many celebrities she complained about the blatant scandalous headlines on movie magazine covers featuring full-page color photos of her with no story to substantiate them inside.

"But the bad impression is left," Joan said. "That is why I want to make my point."

Usually the gossip reaches her, although she has disciplined herself to tune out.

"Then I go to a few close friends and ask them to tell me the truth about what is being said about me or Ted. Not to spare me.

"I heard that a lot of people thought I had had too much to drink when I arrived at the recent Art for McGovern Exhibit in Boston two hours late because we were unavoidably detained.

Primed

"Certainly, I looked haggard. I felt like a zombie after a grueling 14-hour day. And there are times when neither Elizabeth Arden nor Estee Lauder will help. The

truth is, I had nothing to drink. I was just beat."

When the word "campaign" pops up it follows that the first question is how do you feel about Ted running for President in 1976?

"Ask me in 1975," Joan shot back. She was primed for that one.

"Pure nonsense," said Joan. "When something like that persists I simply go to Ted and ask him. I won't brood about it silently. Yes, of course I know Amanda. Not intimately, but we've met at parties at Jean Smith's (Ted's sister) in New York.

"Amanda was supposed to be aboard a yacht with Ted and Senator Tunney in Maine. Gossip columnists said another woman was along, too. But the two women turned out to be my sisters-in-law, Pat and Jean.

"No, I didn't really get a laugh out of the irony of it all," Joan admitted.

She is astonishingly honest about Ted's tremendous appeal for women.

Joan's visits to an eminent psychiatrist have helped her so much that she sees him only occasionally now.

"I didn't go between May and September because I was at Hyannis Port all summer," she said. "As you know, a good psychiatrist does not merely give you advice.

"He gets you to face your fears and suggests alternative ways of coping with problems. There were just several things that I had to think out.

"I realized after seeing him that I shouldn't just try to sweep them under the rug. In my life I can't put blinders on or pretend people aren't saying things about me.

"But now I can hear unpleasant news and not let it upset my day. None of the gossip about Ted's so-called romances with other women has shaken my love for him a bit.

"Now, I hope that clears up that point once and for all. There are too many really important, worthwhile things in life to spend any emotional energy on the gist from the rumor mill."

Chappaquiddick crept into the conversation. What with

the tragic drowning last week of three young boys and their grandfather on a fishing trip.

'Never Haunted Me'

"It was an unfortunate tragedy, but it never haunted me," said Joan of the death by drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne.

"Ted continues to keep in touch with Mary Jo's parents now and then. But Chappaquiddick comes up less and less. Put in perspective, it was only one of several tragedies.

"No one ever wants to hear about two people in love, though," she added somewhat wistfully. "They'd rather hear about hanky-panky."

Unlike many wives of high government officials, Joan does not believe politics raises havoc with a marriage.

"I think a political marriage can be the closest. Now, hear me out. I want to tell you that Ted and I are closer than many of my friends and their husbands because we share the same interests.

"I have made it a point to become knowledgeable about politics. I know every piece of legislation Ted is interested in, every bill. I am aware of the functions of the government so we can talk intelligently together."

Joan disclosed that she lacks the energy of the Kennedy women because she has anemia.

"It's not pernicious, thank God," she said. "But it is serious enough to require blood tests regularly. I take the prescribed medicine and ignore the prescribed nap. Dull, dull, I spend the hour taking a tennis lesson which is not only more therapeutic but more exhilarating.

"But I do admire Eunice Shriver's indefatigable energy. Ethel's unflagging vigor and my mother-in-law's incredible stamina."

Getting back to Ted, Joan says:

"Look, I am still worried that some kook will assassinate Ted — wipe out the last of the Kennedy brothers.

"But I have to live with it. It is accentuated naturally in an election year like this, especially after the attempt on Governor Wallace's life. I know the only way to get rid



Amanda Burden is one of the women that gossip writers have tried to link to Ted. This photo was taken in 1966.



Shown in a family photo are, from left to right, daughter Kara, 12; Joan; son Edward Jr., 10; Senator Edward Kennedy, and son Patrick, 4. Joan

of this fear is for Ted to leave public life. That is out.

What He Does Best

"He wants to continue and I want him to. It's what he does best, it's what he loves. And I believe he's doing a lot of good, making a great contribution.

"I have to be philosophical about this. I keep reminding myself one can get killed crossing the street, in a plane or die of an illness. The 42 year old husband of a close friend of mine just died of cancer."

We brought up the subject of clothes and fashions and Joan responded:

"I find there are other things more important than fashion in life," she said. "If the Oscar de La Renta dress is three years old, so what? And a pants suit with trench coat and suit skirt — not custom design but off the rack — is practically my uniform these days."

Talk about music to Joan, a talented pianist, and her face lights up.

"Ted is glad I have my music, it is not his thing at all. But he wants me to have an interest of my own.

"What's he's really delighted about is Kara's musical talent. She is a very good pianist and I think he gives me credit for that. We have a mother - daughter thing together and he's proud."

Joan divides the people she knows into a small nucleus of close friends with whom she can let her hair down and 101 fascinating acquaintances for whom she feels strong affection.

Arthur Fiedler is one, "I feel very special toward him," said Joan. "He has conducted me so often in 'Peter and the Wolf' and in such a professional, disciplined way that I felt it was a compliment to me as a musician."

Genius

Leonard Bernstein is a musical genius whom Joan admires greatly. "He will be lecturing at Harvard and I'm going to make a point of attending as many seminars as I can," she said.

After election day, Joan will get down to serious practice on the piano.

"I am working on a Mozart concerto when I can. Then I will learn music that can be played as an accompaniment to a violinist.

"I've had some very enticing invitations to play," she said, "but I can't really talk about them because they have not yet been formalized."

Joan Kennedy is very much her own woman, these days. She has acquired a measure of inner peace. She is expressing her individuality in her own way, through her special talents. She no longer worries about "keeping up with the Kennedys" as she did 10 years ago when we first met.

She has come through a baptism of fire — the vicious, eroding gossip; the rebellion expressed in extreme fashion; the experience of Chappaquiddick.

She has risen above it with courage and fortitude. "And I am fed up with people who refer to me as poor Joan," she said.

Joan, despite what people would like to think, is a mature, happy woman.