

**'We'll Never Forget'  
Kennedy's 'Hate Mail'**

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**T**HERE'S a fascination in reading other people's mail, ungentlemanly as the practice may be. That is particularly the case when the mail is addressed to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

No surreptitious break-in and no covert copying was required to bring the Senator's correspondence to light. The practices of the Kennedy office — unlike those of the White House — do not require a reporter to be a junior Jack Anderson to get a peek.

One asked this week about the mail reaction to Kennedy's celebrated July 4 visit to Gov. George Wallace in Alabama. In response, the reporter was handed three plump file folders, containing all of the first week's correspondence on the trip.

**Pro and Con**

By rough count, there were about two dozen letters and telegrams applauding Kennedy's salute to Wallace and-or the strong attack on the police state tactics of Watergate, which constituted the heart of his heavily publicized address.

There were almost exactly as many letters protesting the liberal senator's "kowtowing" to the segregationist governor or rebutting his criticisms of the Nixon men.

And then there were about 125 letters — five times the number in either the "pro" or "con" file — which were labeled, quite properly: "Alabama visit — hate mail."

These were typified by the terse message from a Cranford, N.J., woman: "Lest we forget. July 19th. Chappaquiddick. Just heard your speech from Alabama. Do I need to say more?"

A Kennedy aide said: "We've gotten so we just expect it. Any time he gets on the front pages or the television news shows, they write. There's nothing to do about it, so we just ignore it."

**Implied Threat**

But it cannot be ignored. One of the "hate" letters, carrying an implied threat, was turned over to law enforcement officials, who now must have a lengthy list of those who have warned Kennedy they may take personal vengeance for the death of

*By David S. Broder*

Mary Jo Kopechne in the senator's car on Chappaquiddick island, four years ago.

And the Democratic party cannot ignore this mail either, for it dramatizes the hidden issue in Kennedy's possible presidential candidacy in the most vivid way. It is an issue that stirs more people than the polite discussions of the merits and drawbacks of the Kennedy-Wallace meeting that are the stuff of newspaper editorials and a small fraction of the senator's own mail.

That rational debate is quite interesting. A Potsdam, N.Y., voter writes: "As a Kennedy Democrat, I have looked with hope to the Democratic party ... the sight of Edward Ken-

ready to vomit up the whole thing." An Orlando, Fla., woman adds: "I am sure neither of your brothers would have thought of such a thing."

But a Buffalo woman says: "It is truly inspiring ... in the face of Watergate to see you at the podium with a man whose political philosophy is so different from yours, and declare loudly the right of every American to believe as he chooses without fear."

And a prominent black civil rights leader wires: "A statesman must put the disjointed pieces of the nation into a pattern as a mother does a quilt ... the courage to do this is necessary. Congratulations."

**'Despicable Creature'**

That is the stuff of normal political debate, with deep convictions being expressed in the natural eloquence of people's own language. But the mass of the mail is of a different character, rabid, full of intimations of violence.

"If you aren't the most contemptible and most despicable creature alive," an Albany man exclaims. "Your recent trip to Alabama to see Gov. Wallace tops just about everything you have done, except Mary Jo's death."

An Edina, Minn., woman: "How dare you? For shame. We'll never forget ..." A Los Angeles man, on a postcard addressed to "Sanctimonious Teddy, the hero of Chappaquiddick: I thought Gov. Wallace had more character than to be seen on the same platform with you."

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**'When he gets on the front pages, they write ...'**

nedy sharing the stand with George Wallace ... has pretty well killed that hope."

**'I Am Sick'**

But a Flint, Mich., man says: "I was very pleased to note the unity effort within the party, as I feel it can lead to good results in 1976. As I have voted for a Wallace (George) and a Kennedy (John), it was especially gratifying ..."

A Carbondale, Ill., man: "Good heavens. Have you gone crazy, presenting Wallace an Americanism award? I am sick. If it takes this kind of a compromise in politics, I'm



*AP Wirephoto*

**WALLACE AND KENNEDY IN ALABAMA**