

Father of the Kennedys

Joseph Patrick Kennedy will go down in history primarily as the father of a distinguished and powerful family. Solely as a public official it is doubtful that he would rate more than a footnote, and that not more than half favorable.

A remarkably good and effective chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, he helped draft strict regulations that would have encumbered him in the days when he was amassing a fortune through stock speculation and free-wheeling manipulations in the motion picture, liquor and real estate business. As chairman of the Maritime Commission, he likewise served with a distinction that confounded his liberal critics. Unfortunately, in the dark days preceding World War II, President Roosevelt rewarded Mr. Kennedy for a loyalty that enraged his former fellow-economic royalists by naming him as Ambassador to

the Court of St. James's. His pleas for appeasing Hitler, his repeated advice that Great Britain was finished, were appallingly wrong both diplomatically and historically.

With his public career at an end and his fortune made many times over, Joseph P. Kennedy concentrated his full attention on being, in the words of a historian, "one of the most remarkable parents in American history." He inculcated in his sons a passion for public affairs—business was a forbidden topic in the family circle—a devotion to each other, and a competitive spirit that had no use for defeat or even for "moral victories."

The result was a family of spectacularly successful political leaders who owed the elder Kennedy much of their zest, some of their tactics, and happily little of their political philosophy.