

Text of Tribute to Joseph Kennedy

Special to The New York Times

HYANNIS, Mass., Nov. 20—
Following is the text of a
tribute to Joseph P. Kennedy
written by the late Senator
Robert F. Kennedy and read
today at the white mass by
Senator Edward M. Kennedy:

I don't believe he is without faults. But when we were young, perhaps because of the strength of his character or the massiveness of his personality, they were unobserved or at least unimportant. When we grew a little older we realized he wasn't perfect; that he made mistakes, but by that time we realized everyone did. In many, many ways, to us he is something special.

It wasn't just that he was smarter than anyone else—although I thought he was. Time after time, while growing up, I remember listening to him talk with an important figure in business, the theater or politics and always observing that he was the dominant figure—that he knew more, that he expressed it better.

When I was with the Hoover Commission, he was serving as a member, and President Hoover told me, "Your father is the finest of the commissioners; he makes the greatest contribution."

Touched Heart of Problems

His judgment has not always been perfect, but somehow he almost always made sense. He seemed to be able to touch the heart of a problem and to look at things a little better and a little surer than anyone else.

If he was cleverer or wiser than others, he would be unusual. But then perhaps everyone's father is cleverer and wiser than anyone else. But what he meant to all of us went far beyond that.

He has called on the best that was in us. There was no such thing as half-trying. Whether it was running a race or catching a football, competing in school — we were to try. And we were to try harder than anyone else. We might not be the best, and none of us were, but we were to make the effort to be the best. "After you have done the best you can," he used to say, "the hell with it."

He has taken such an active interest in what we were doing. He was not a remote figure asking for periodic reports of our activities. When we played touch football or baseball, he sat on the front porch and watched. He left important discussions with Franklin Roosevelt regarding the Securities and Exchange Commission to go to Choate School in Connecticut because my brother Jack was in difficulty.

Attended Football Games

If we were racing a sailboat, he was there in his cruiser. One time we did badly. He felt it was because we were not paying attention. There was absolute silence at dinner that evening.

When I played football in

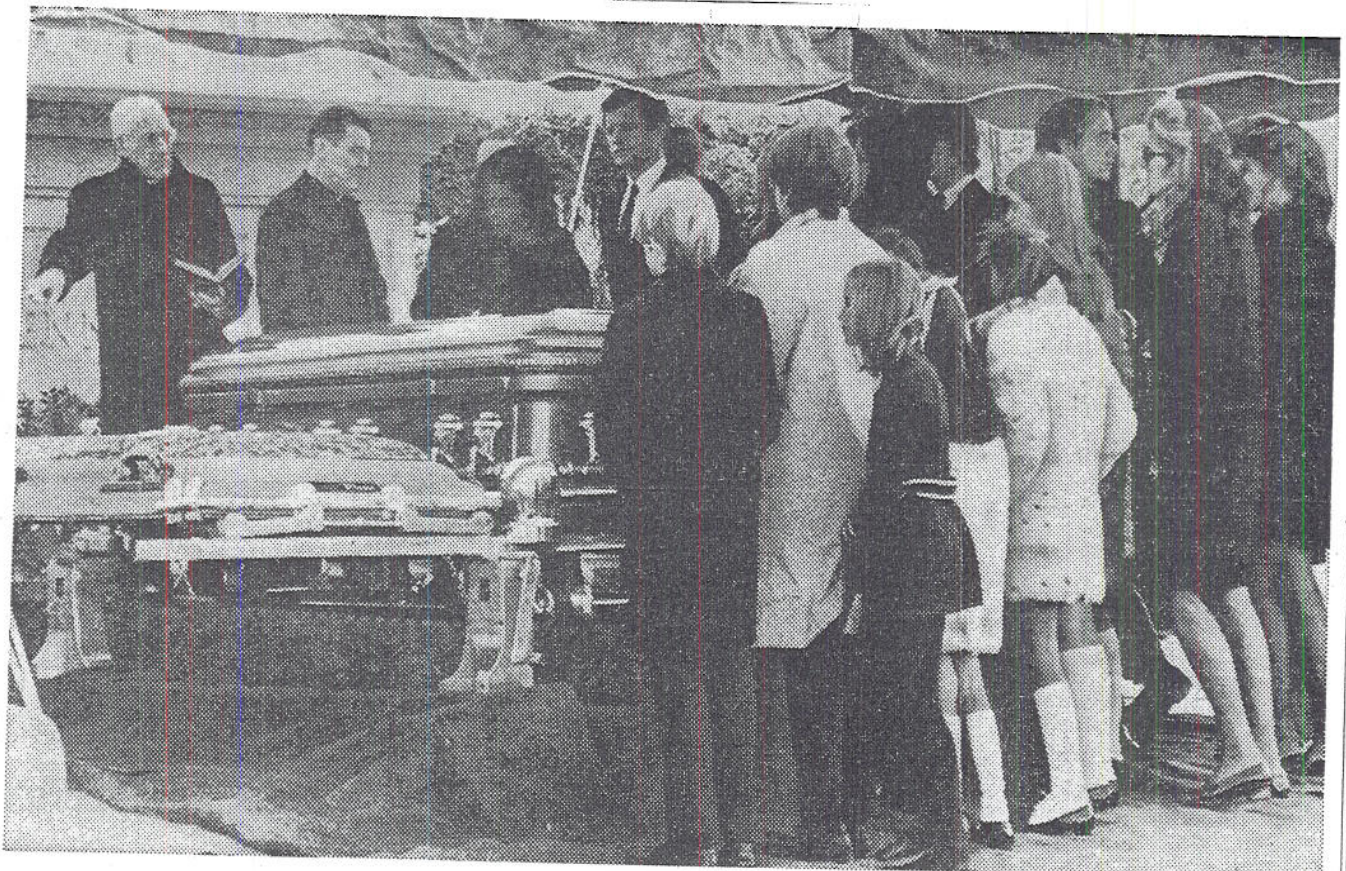
YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1969

Written by His Son Robert

C

39

and Read at Mass



Associated Press

AT BURIAL SERVICE: Richard Cardinal Cushing, left, directing members of the family of Joseph P. Kennedy to gather around his coffin at Holyhood Cemetery, Brookline, Mass. At far side of the coffin are Mrs. Kennedy and her only surviving son, Senator Edward M. Kennedy. To right

are daughters and grandchildren and Sargent Shriver, a son-in-law of the Kennedys. Behind the Cardinal is the gray granite tombstone with the single word "Kennedy." At left is cover of a vault to enclose the coffin. The cemetery is near the birthplace of President Kennedy.

high school, he was at the games; when I was questioning Jimmy Hoffa, he was following the hearings on television; when I wrote a book, he read the script.

But most importantly, he has been there when things went badly. Our opponents became his opponents, our problems his problems, although he was careful to make sure we understood that his enemies were not to become our enemies.

And he was there to help. In bad times it has been he, more than anyone else, who has seen the bright side. "Call up Dad, he will be cheerful," my older brother used to say.

The greater the disaster, the brighter he was, the more support he gave. I remember he even found something of comfort on how we handled the Bay of Pigs.

And so it has been this interesting combination — his demand that all his children strive for excellence—strive for it, perhaps not achieve it, but continuously strive for it, and—what made this demand tolerable and in fact enjoyable—the interest and support we felt we always had from him.

Of course, our mother was the stabilizing influence, performing all the functions that a mother can for her children. But his personality was so strong, his ideas so definite, his views and outlook so determined, that he dominated our home and our lives.

What it really all adds up to is love—not love as it is described with such facility in popular magazines, but the kind of love that is affection

and respect, order, encouragement and support.

A Source of Strength

He loved all of us — the boys in a very special way. Our awareness of this was an incalculable source of strength, and because real love is something unselfish and involves sacrifice and giving, we could not help but profit from it.

His feeling for us was not of the devouring kind, as is true in the case of many strong men. He did not visualize himself as a sun around which satellites would circle, or in the role of a puppet master. He wanted us, not himself, to be the focal points.

This man with such a strong personality, with definite views and a willingness to express them, consciously retreated to the background so that the spotlight would be on his sons.

After the nomination in Los Angeles, to which he had contributed more than anyone other than John Kennedy himself he quietly left the city, not waiting for the proud moment of the acceptance speech. He watched it on television in New York. And even the day after the election, when President Kennedy acknowledged his victory at the armory in Hyannis Port, my brother had to use all his powers of persuasion to get his father to accompany him.

It wasn't so much that he felt he was controversial and public expression of his views could perhaps adversely affect all of us. Rather, he was aware of the fact that as we

began our careers, we were known as Joe Kennedy's sons.

"Ambassador Kennedy's son has become a Navy pilot." "Joe Kennedy's son Jack is a Congressman." "Ambassador Kennedy's son Robert has become a newspaper columnist."

He knew if he insisted on remaining in the center of national affairs, we would continue to be known as his children. He would be the dominating figure, the personality, the spokesman for the family.

And in how many other families have the young been stultified? Again and again, young men with ability and talent have been kept from taking their places in the affairs of business or on the national stage because an older figure refused to make room and insisted on the glory and attention until the very end.

He decided, I believe consciously, this would not happen in our family. The most important thing to him was the advancement of his children.

His sole concern was to contribute to that advancement. After the end of World War II, he decided this aim could best be accomplished by doing what, for a strong figure, is probably the most difficult thing to do—to submerge his own personality. This is what he did.

I can say that, except for his influence and encouragement, my brother Jack might not have run for the Senate in 1952, there would have been much less likelihood

that he would have received the Presidential nomination in 1960, I would not have become Attorney General, and my brother Teddy would not have run for the Senate in 1962.

He wanted us to be independent in the full sense of the term. At an early age we were sent on trips of our own. We were given tasks of responsibility. We embarked on study programs under teachers or political leaders who held views quite different from his.

My brother Joe went to Spain in the civil war; Jack was given the assignment to help the survivors of the Athenia just prior to the beginning of World War II; I went to Czechoslovakia just after it was taken over by the Communists.

Studied Under Laski

Both my older brothers studied under Harold Laski of the London School of Economics, and Joe traveled to Moscow with him.

My father believed we could think and decide things for ourselves. There have been disagreements, sometimes vio-

lent, on politics, economics, the future of the country, the world. But he was stimulated.

If his sons had a different philosophy, were more optimistic about the future of life on this planet, then in a more mellow mood he would say, "If I were your age, I would hold these views also."

Beneath it all he has tried to engender a social conscience. There were wrongs which needed attention. There were people who were poor and who needed help; mentally ill who needed assistance. And we had a responsibility to them and to the country.

Through no virtues and

accomplishments of our own, we had been fortunate enough to be born in the United States under the most comfortable conditions. We, therefore, had a responsibility to others who were less well off.

Business, even his own operations, were so seldom discussed at home. Despite his rather extensive holdings, none of us was encouraged to go into business, even for the purpose of carrying them on after his retirement. He would rather have been happy with this, but he thought we should discharge our responsibilities and obli-

gations to others by entering government and politics.

His interest in life has been his children — not his business, not his accomplishments, not his friends, but his children. Any lasting contributions we might have made have been in a large part due to the effect he had on our lives.

I think of him now as Tennyson wrote of Ulysses in his old age in a poem the President liked so much:

*... that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic
parts,
Made weak by time and fate,
but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and
not to yield.*