

# Young Joe Talks About His S.F. Job

By William Thomas

Joseph Kennedy III, 20 years old, six feet tall, and dressed casually in jeans and jacket, worried yesterday that the glamor of the family name would drive him from his new city job.

The job as community liaison assistant for Health Department director Dr. Francis Curry depends on his establishing good relations with the people of the Mission, Bayview, Potrero and Hunters Point districts.

"If every morning they pick up a newspaper and see Joe Kennedy," he said, "they are going to be distrustful."

"I don't blame them, they would think I was out for myself," the eldest son of the late Senator Robert Kennedy said.

## MEDIA

The problem of the mild-mannered young man was illustrated yesterday when he gave up an attempt to avoid news media and agreed to a press conference with Mayor Joseph Alioto—the largest gathering of journalists in the mayor's office in a long time.

Young Kennedy was obviously dismayed, and his earlier optimism that he could escape the limelight seemed to diminish: "All this publicity . . . I wanted to get out of that, stay out of that and get to know people."

"I'm 20 years old, I don't know what I am going to do."

The mayor interrupted: "He's going to stay on." Later the mayor asked,

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# KENNEDY

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"Give him a chance to do his job. I am proud of him."

## COMPLAINT

Kennedy had tried to go to work with a minimum of public attention, but Supervisor John Molinari complained on Tuesday that the job should have gone to a local youth rather than a rich interloper.

Such criticism, Alioto said, "causes San Francisco to look like a petty, parochial city."

Kennedy's \$690-a-month federally-financed job, which has a 90-day limit on it at present, gives him a small wooden desk tucked away in a corner of the health director's suite of offices.

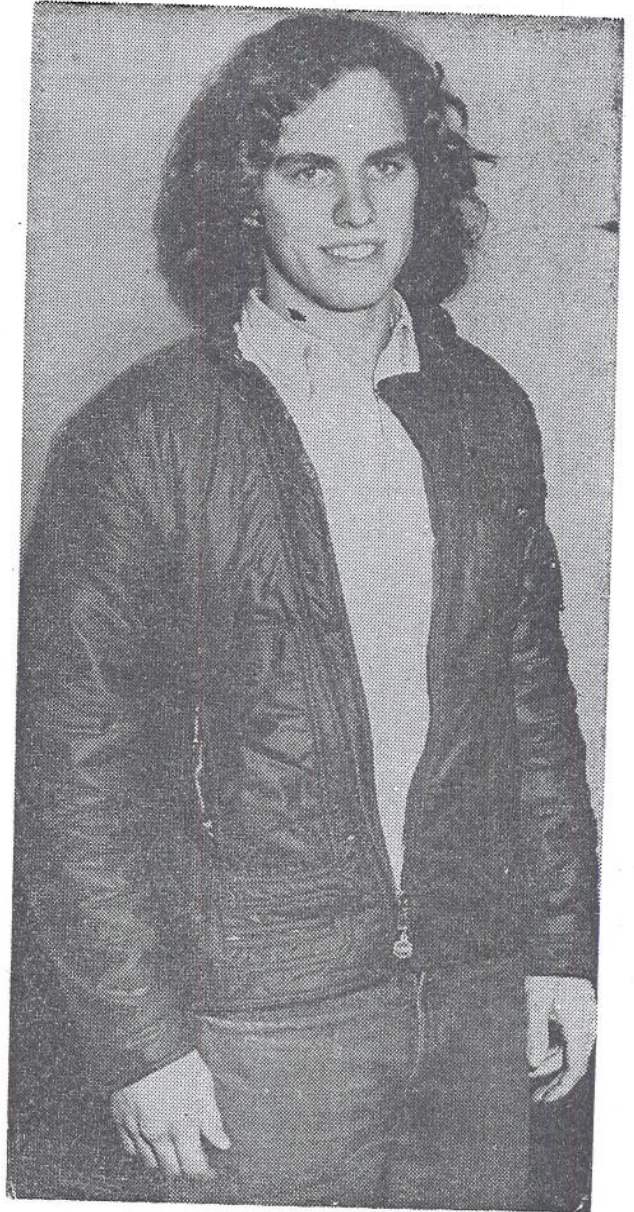
## COLLEGE

Before the middle of last month he had been attending the University of California at Berkeley, but he dropped out.

"I didn't think I ever could learn as much in school as out," he said.

He became frustrated by "sitting in a classroom trying to take in a lot of abstract theory and having to wait for four years to use it. I just felt I could get an education in the community—where people are down and out."

"I wanted to do some kind of work which is going to help poor people in the com-



20-YEAR-OLD JOSEPH KENNEDY  
'People can feel free to trust me'

munity."

#### FRIEND

Through a family friend, Kennedy said, he learned of the possibility of the job with Dr. Curry and after a two-hour interview, he was hired to go out in the poor communities as the health director's personal liaison.

Kennedy comes to work in casual clothes — his shoes are more suitable for the hiking trail than the executive office.

When asked for an opinion, he hesitates and then verbally tries to explore his feelings. During an hour-long interview, he expressed doubts about the "system" being workable, and hesitancy about being part of it as a government employee.

"Many people feel completely frustrated," Kennedy said, "that the system has sold them out. These people see experts every day. If you go down and talk to them, you see how much a guy with a Ph.D. has helped them."

#### RECOGNIZE

Anyone seeing him would recognize him as a Kennedy, although his face is not as sensitively fine as his father's, but more like that of his uncle, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts.

"I'm not unrealistic as to my last name—it has certain advantages and many disadvantages.

"People have learned at least — I hope — that they can trust the Kennedys. When I go into the community people can feel free to trust me.

"They know I can't be out

for power . . . I truly think that some of these people can come out and truly tell me what the hell is going on out there."

"What you are talking about is sensitivity — the crucial issue," he continued. "The people who live in the community are used to people coming down who aren't really interested in helping. It's incredible how quickly they pick these people out.

"I've never actually been in the situation they've been in, but as I go around the country I see many organizations completely stifled by the system.

"I hope maybe I can be a small voice."

#### TRIAL

Kennedy said that his job was still in the trial period. "Everybody's trying to get to know each other. The whole point of taking the job was to be a person in the community people could depend on and someone city officials can trust."

Kennedy, borrowing a match to light one his unfiltered Lucky Strikes, said his reception by community groups had been mixed. "Certain groups readily open up to someone, almost out of desperation . . . there really aren't that many people coming down."

But some organizations, Kennedy added, "feel that their communications are sufficient and they have no need for my job."

(At the press conference, Mayor Alioto said the leaders of the Mission Coalition Organization had volun-

teered that they wanted Kennedy to remain.)

"It is much easier," Kennedy observed, "to talk to someone like me than to someone one in a big office.

"I'll go out and help people who really need it . . . I have reservations about how much I really am going to be able to do. If I do a job he (Dr. Curry) might listen to suggestions I make."

Kennedy has been involved in community work before. He traveled to various community projects on behalf of the Robert Kennedy Memorial Foundation.

He also worked in Kenya for several months where he helped construct a school and an agricultural center. His first venture was in Somerville, Mass., where "with a friend I tried to do a redevelopment project to bring new business and redirect traffic.

"It was a total failure," he laughed ruefully.

#### HOME

Kennedy lives in Berkeley, but he is planning a move to San Francisco to be closer to the community he wants to serve.

The eldest son of the man who was assassinated the night he won the California presidential primary in 1968, grandson of Joseph Kennedy Sr., and nephew of Senator Kennedy, hopes to keep his job despite the unwanted publicity.

"If the people realize it's going to blow over, then I'm going to stay on.

"If not, I'm going to head out."

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