

THE LAST KENNEDY
(Originally published September 1969)

Regardless of what is brought out at the inquest, or whether a detailed, truthful account of that eventful night on Chappaquiddick is ever made public, Senator Ted Kennedy again failed miserably to demonstrate any of the qualities that one should expect of a presidential candidate.

His evasive and contradictory explanations of what happened were enough to strain even the credulous Kennedy-worshippers. By his own admission, his behavior on leaving the scene of the accident (not to mention a drowned, or drowning woman) was “indefensible.” His description of his state of jumbled emotions, “. . . fear, doubt torture, pain, confusion, exhaustion and shock,” in reaction to an emergency, do not inspire confidence in either his stability or capability. Nor did his illogical and “impulsive” action of swimming a 250-yard, tidal current channel in darkness speak well for his judgment.

The long silence between his initial statement and his rehearsed, melodramatic appeal for sympathy on national television, indicates only that all concern was centered entirely on the Kennedy political future. In this interval, it is a fact that every expensive brain of the Kennedy political organization assembled in seclusion at Hyannis Port, where they had every opportunity to come up with a plausible explanation. That they were only able to concoct a degrading, sub-story scenario for Teddy to read, makes one question the caliber and integrity of these would-be-again presidential advisors.

Indeed, the brazen efforts of this group of calculating intellectualists is one of the most disturbing aspects of the whole affair. Using Ted, another cardboard image and the last current prospect to bear the magic name, this assembly of shrewd, determined and ambitious manipulators (McNamara, Gailbreath, O’Donnell, Goodwin and the S.S.S. & S. tonic-boys) hopes to regain the position of power and privilege it once enjoyed under the first of its creations, brother Jack. The public did not vote these men into service under Jack Kennedy—they were all appointees—and the public would not tolerate them again if given the chance.

But in regard to Ted, perhaps the inadvertent remark of mother-matriarch, Mrs. Rose Kennedy, (“How you cope is the important thing, not the events themselves.”), will be enough to judge him by. On morality, propriety, integrity, judgment, leadership, and in many more ways, including ingenuity, the Senator plainly failed to cope.