

Does the President Have a Right to Privacy?

By LESTER DAVID

Prying eyes have driven the Kennedys out of Hyannis Port; ugly publicity has made the First Lady dread the day Caroline learns to read; it's a situation that makes thoughtful Americans wonder



The Kennedys—on a Florida holiday—didn't know a telephoto lens was trained on them.

During a trip to Italy, Mrs. Kennedy and Caroline seldom escaped that country's aggressive cameramen.

A NEW fieldstone-and-wood house stands in a lonely, hilly region of Virginia, miles from any sizable settlement. The family who will use the one-story, seven-bedroom home as a week-end retreat chose the spot with care.

It had to be close enough to the husband's job; it had to provide the kind of recreation his wife preferred—but most of all, the place had to offer the occupants a maximum of privacy.

The new family in the neighborhood, of course, are the John F. Kennedys, and their house atop Rattlesnake Mountain meets their three specifications. It's less than 45 miles from Washington, it's in the middle of Jackie Kennedy's beloved fox-hunting country, and it permits them a few blessed moments out of the goldfish bowl in which they live virtually every moment of every day.

This is not the first time the President has sought seclusion for himself and his family. Last year they abandoned their home at Hyannis Port, Mass., as a summer White House because even a new stockade fence didn't protect them from prying eyes. Their moving into tenor Morton Downey's house on a tourist-free island off the mainland was a sacrifice for the President, who prefers to be close to his brothers and parents—but he had no choice.

Certainly such developments should make thoughtful Americans ask: are we invading the privacy of the President and his family too much? Have we exceeded the bounds of good taste in our eagerness to know as much as we can about him? Are we actually hindering him by forcing him to live constantly in the blinding spotlight of publicity?

Lack of privacy is a fact of life every President had to face, but Mr. Kennedy and his family are being subjected to unprecedented public attention. There is an insatiable demand to

see them, hear them, know all about their every doing. The prying eye of the television camera follows them wherever it can. Magazine articles "reveal" so-called sensational facts about the First Lady, her children, and her background. The Kennedys are lampooned via tv, records, coloring books, and parlor games.

Matters have progressed to the point where many observers are shocked and dismayed. As one high official told me: "The intrusion into their private lives is almost intolerable."

And things are not about to improve. Such an astute observer of the political scene as James A. Farley, former postmaster general in Franklin D. Roosevelt's cabinet, told me: "The situation is bound to worsen for the President as time goes on. The spotlight will shine even more brightly, and Mr. Kennedy's successor in the White House will find himself with even less privacy, if that is conceivable."

Where He Goes, He's the Show

The Presidential family has had little personal privacy since 1960. Recently, for example, Mr. Kennedy went to New York for a weekend with his family. When he attended the theater, he was the show. When he went to a restaurant, what he and the First Lady ate was duly recorded—as was the news that the President was a \$10 tipper.

On Sunday morning, Mr. Kennedy decided to take a stroll in Central Park with his five-year-old daughter Caroline and her young cousin. As soon as he stepped from the apartment house where he was staying, crowds bore down on him. The President took one look and retreated into the building with the children. "Why are we going back, Daddy?" Caroline wanted to know.

The President's reply was not heard, but he could have been thinking of the time last summer when he was mobbed by bikini-clad bathers at Santa Monica, Calif. While visiting his brother-in-law, movie actor Peter Lawford, the Presi-

dent decided to go for a swim in the Pacific. He strode through the gate of the Lawford home and onto a public beach—where hundreds of bathers nearly piled on top of him. Mr. Kennedy swam for 15 minutes, then emerged to be mobbed once more.

How does the President feel about all this? He accepts and enjoys much of it. Indeed, he often gives his Secret Service bodyguards scary moments when he strides into crowds to shake hands and swap greetings. However, the Kennedy temper can flash occasionally.

Once, while he was staying at Hyannis Port, a bunch of neighborhood youngsters gathered noisily near the grounds. Dawn was barely breaking, and the President wanted to relax before taking off for Vienna that day for a crucial meeting with Premier Khrushchev. When the babble became unendurable, Kennedy flung open his bedroom window, leaned out, and bellowed: "Hey, out there! Knock it off!" The kids did.

Jacqueline Kennedy is far more concerned than her husband about the effects of a goldfish-bowl existence upon Caroline and John, Jr. She talks wistfully about not being able to take Caroline to such places as the circus, because the public attention would disrupt the show. Her main goal is to provide her children with "normal and private" lives in the all-important formative years, but she finds it hard going.

No Togetherness for Caroline

Speaking of Caroline, she said, "Someday she will have to go to school, and if she is in the papers all the time, that will affect her classmates, and they will treat her differently."

In his book, *Portrait of a President*, William Manchester makes a remarkable, and somehow very sad, point. "Most mothers," he asserts, "look forward to the day their first child will be able to read. This mother dreads it, for hers will be reading about herself." That time is coming

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Points of View on Presidential Privacy

ANDREW HATCHER, White House press aide:

"The public should be informed about the activities of the President, and it's my job to provide this information. Of course, I can always say 'no comment' when questions from the press reach the point of saturation, and this point is reached at times. We should understand, however, that when a man runs for public office, he accepts these hazards of intrusion upon his privacy."

WILLIAM BENTON, former U. S. Senator from Connecticut:

"The President does indeed need privacy—and a lot more of it. In England it is possible for the Queen to notify the press that her activities are to be private when she is off on a venture that does not involve official duties. Can't we develop a tradition of this kind, in which the press and tv would respect such wishes of the President or his wife?"

SEN. BIRCH E. BAYH, JR. (D.—Indiana):

"Anyone who runs for public office gives up a certain degree of personal privacy, but I feel we are pushing this to the maximum in the case of President Kennedy. In fact, we may even have reached the maximum. Of course, it's difficult to exercise restraint. We don't mob the President intentionally, but we do like to associate ourselves with him and to be near him. I know I do. But we tend to forget that, by so doing, we may be causing him and his family a real hardship."

JAMES C. HAGERTY, former press secretary to President Eisenhower, now an American Broadcasting Company vice president:

"I believe a President is entitled to some privacy and that his family is entitled to much more, particularly the children. He should be able to 'get away from it all' for brief periods of relaxation—in a fish stream as President Hoover loved to do, or in a boat as Presidents Roosevelt and Truman did, or on the golf course as President Eisenhower did. These precious few hours of relaxation are vitally important to a Chief Executive and afford him an opportunity to refresh himself with a change of pace from his awesome duties. But the job of the Presidency is not conducive to very much privacy."

REP. ROBERT TAFT, JR. (R.—Ohio):

"The President is certainly entitled to privacy as it relates to family matters, and I hope that we recognize this need. Up to now, it is rather apparent that we have not been recognizing this need as well as we might."

JAMES A. FARLEY, former postmaster general and Democratic National Committee chairman:

"President Kennedy likes people and loves to show his appreciation to them for electing him to the country's highest office. But the job is enormously taxing, and we should not make excessive and unnecessary demands upon him. We should permit him the time and the opportunity to unwind from the strains in private."



A welcome-home embrace is shared by President Kennedy, the First Lady—and a host of photographers.

Police keep the crowd back as the Kennedys leave a church in Hyannis Port where they attended Mass.

