



One of the most effective weapons in the Kennedy clan's popularity arsenal

An Evening with the President's Mother

BY BOB CURRAN

*Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy
The Mother of the President
of the United States
Will give a Lecture and Slides of her
Experiences in London, Paris, Vienna
and the White House - Refreshments
at Our Lady of the Cape Hall - Brewster
Saturday, July 20, 1963 - 8:00 P.M.
Donation \$2.00*

WHEN Henry Cabot Lodge lost his Massachusetts Senatorial seat to young Jack Kennedy in 1952, he explained his defeat succinctly: "It was those darned tea parties!"

The "darned tea parties" were for women only—the same women who had always been ignored by campaigning politicians—and they were formally called "A reception in honor of Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., and her son, Congressman John F. Kennedy." At the receptions, there were short talks, much tea sipping, and a chance to shake hands with Mrs. Kennedy and JFK.

If JFK is re-elected President in 1964, you may hear his defeated opponent lament: "It was those darned home-movie shows or travel-slide shows—or whatever you want to call them!"

The "whatever you want to call them" in question have no formal name, and that's only right since they are informal affairs. But if someone were to call the performance, "An Evening with Rose Kennedy," no one could argue.

I recently attended one of them in Brewster, Mass. (see invitation reproduced above).

What my invitation didn't say was that the commentary accompanying the slides would be some of the most entertaining talk ever heard in the world of home movies and home slides.

A typical "evening" starts with a few words from the organizing chairwoman. Then Mrs.

Kennedy comes to the podium while murmurs of "Look how young and pretty she looks" run through the audience. The reaction is understandable. Rose Kennedy is a handsome, beautifully groomed, aristocratic-looking woman. The key features of her face are the Katharine Hepburn-like high cheekbones that also can be found in varying degrees in all her children. Fairly short (not more than five feet, three inches) and slim, she still looks very much like the Rose Kennedy who, after the birth of her ninth child, was greeted at a White House function by a wolf whistle from Franklin Roosevelt's son-in-law, John Boettiger.

"An Evening with Rose Kennedy" begins with a few remarks about what she is going to do; then she starts doing it. The lights dim, a slide goes on the screen, and the comments begin. From the sampling that follows, you will discover that Mrs. Kennedy is definitely her own woman. Her sentiments about several of the people who appear on the screen wouldn't be shared by her sons—not out loud anyway.

On the screen: JFK, Jackie, Charles de Gaulle, Madame de Gaulle. "Mr. de Gaulle is a rare patriot. He has such devotion to duty and has done so much for his country. Mrs. de Gaulle is so charming . . . she shares my interest in mentally retarded children. She is so self-effacing. French women don't make speeches, and

she was quite surprised when I told her what the ladies do over here."

On the screen: Joseph Kennedy, Rose Kennedy, and Neville Chamberlain. "There's Mr. Chamberlain with his famous umbrella. His position was never understood in this country. He did what he thought was best and what had to be done at the time. My husband understood this and always liked him . . ."

On the screen: a platoon of Kennedys flanked by the Swiss Guards who police the Vatican. "When Pope Pius XII, who was then Cardinal Pacelli, came to America in 1935 or '36, my husband was asked to meet him and escort him around. This was understandable as my husband was one of the few Catholics in a prominent position in the Roosevelt Administration. . . . I remember so well a fine talk the Cardinal had with President Roosevelt. There were only 12 people around the table at the time, and that's the right number to produce such fine conversation—especially if the women keep quiet . . ."

"In this picture, we are all at Rome for the coronation of Pope Pius XII. Joe, Jr., is missing; he was in Spain at the time.

"He was, as you may know, the one we expected to go into politics, and he was already laying the groundwork . . ."

"The children under 12 were allowed to wear

is 70-year-old Rose Kennedy—whose quietly refined "travel-slide shows" knock 'em dead



Rose Kennedy, King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, and Joe Kennedy.



General de Gaulle greets Jacqueline Kennedy and the President.

white to the ceremony; all others wore black. Teddy was the first American boy to receive his first Holy Communion from the Pope, and I thought that with such a start he would become a priest or maybe a bishop. But then one night he met a beautiful blonde—and that was the end of that."

On the screen: the head table at a royal dinner in London when Joseph Kennedy was U. S. ambassador to Great Britain. "Royalty always wears light-colored clothing at these affairs so that they stand out and can be seen more easily. Queen Elizabeth always wore her hats off her face so her subjects could see her. . . ."

"Notice the elaborate dress all around. The man at the far right is the Lord Mayor of London. My father was mayor of Boston—and he never had an ermine cape!"

On the screen: a close-up of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at the dinner. "When dining with the Queen, the ladies all wear tiaras. But, while they're beautiful, they're uncomfortable. The more valuable the tiara is, the heavier it is. . . ."

"The Queen was a wonderful woman. One time we went upstairs after dinner and she asked me if I always saw the kids off to school in the morning. I told her that I got up for the first six, but when seven, eight, and nine came along, I

thought, 'this can go on forever'—and I rolled over and went to sleep! . . ."

On the screen: 10 Downing St. "This does not look like a very distinguished place, but so many important events have taken place here. The first time the President saw it, when we first came to England, he said, 'Oh, Mother, is that really 10 Downing Street?' and he was so excited . . ."

On the screen: the Ladies' Guest Room in the White House. "This is done in rose silk. There's a plaque on the wall that says, 'Queen Elizabeth stayed here in 1939.'"

On the screen: Lincoln Room in the White House. "This is the men's guest room. Notice the extra-long bed and the circular table. It was a conference room until Jackson's time. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed here in 1863. There is a framed copy of the Gettysburg Address on one wall.

"There is no plaque saying 'Rose Kennedy slept here.'"

At times during her talk, Mrs. Kennedy will be reminded of something that is not on a slide and will talk about that. One time she added this advice about raising teen-agers:

"I know many of you mothers are appalled by the drinking that's going on among teen-agers.

Please, please tell them that to be sophisticated, to show that you've been places, you don't have to drink. The girl that does will lose her figure, face, and looks. Mr. Kennedy never drank before making an important business decision. We were very fortunate in our family. My husband promised each of our children \$1,000 if they did not smoke or drink until they were 21. The oldest boys, Joe, Jr., and Jack went through with it, and the girls followed." [Editors' note: Jack later gave his \$1,000 back. His reason: "I drank some beer."]

Talking about this later, Mrs. Kennedy told me, "I don't like to lecture like that, but I do wish young people would learn you can be sophisticated without following the crowd. Two of my three sons married girls who don't drink."

At the end of the "evening"—which lasts 90 minutes or so—Rose Kennedy announces that the show is over, the lights go on, and the applause is enough to make any political opponent of the Kennedys reach for the aspirin bottle.

But there's more to come. Mrs. Kennedy then steps down from the stage, and members of the audience line up to shake the hand that "rocked the cradle of the future President" and say things like, "Now I know where the President got his sense of humor."

When Mrs. Kennedy's "shows" began getting publicity recently, many people assumed it was another maneuver of the Kennedy political

(Continued on page 13)