



# The Kennedys at War: 1937-1945

*Edward J. Jr Renehan*

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## **The Kennedys at War: 1937-1945** Edward J. Jr Renehan

A dramatic, fascinating—and revisionist—narrative detailing how America's first family was changed utterly during World War II. First-rate history grounded in scholarship and brought to life by a critically acclaimed author.

From breathless hagiographies to scandal-mongering exposés, no family has generated more bestselling books than the Kennedys. None of them, however, has focused on the watershed period of World War II, when the course of the family and its individual members changed utterly. Now, in an engaging narrative grounded in impeccable scholarship, Edward J. Renehan, Jr., provides a dramatic portrait of years marked by family tensions, heartbreaks, and heroics. It was during this time that tragedy began to haunt the family—Joe Jr.'s death, the untimely widowhood of Kathleen (a.k.a. "Kick"), Rosemary's lobotomy. But it was also the time in which John F. Kennedy rose above the strictures of the clan and became his own man.

In the late 1930s, the Kennedys settled in London, where Joseph Kennedy, Sr., was serving as ambassador. A virulent anti-Semite and isolationist, Kennedy relentlessly and ruthlessly fought to keep America out of the war in Europe. His behavior as patriarch in many ways mirrored his public style. Though he was devoted to the family, he was also manipulative and autocratic. In re-creating the intense and tension-filled interactions among the family, Renehan offers riveting, often revisionist views of Joseph Sr.; heir apparent Joe Jr.; Kick, the beautiful socialite; and Jack, the complex charmer. He demonstrates that Joe Jr., although much like his father in opinion and character, was driven to volunteer for a deadly mission in large part because of his fury at Jack's seemingly easy successes. Renehan also delves into why Kick, a good Catholic girl, chose to abandon her religion for the chance to enter the fairytale world of the British aristocracy, only to suffer a horrendous tragedy.

It is Renehan's reassessment of Jack, however, that is particularly striking. In subtly breaking away from his domineering father over the issue of World War II, Renehan argues, Jack began to forge the character that would eventually take him to the Oval Office. Going behind the familiar (and accurate) image of JFK as a reckless playboy, Renehan shows us a young man of great intelligence, moral courage, and truly astonishing physical bravery.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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