
Rosemary Kennedy

By: Anne Johns

The Kennedy Family

Parents



Joseph
Kennedy



Rose
Fitzgerald

Nine Children



Joseph
Kennedy Jr.



John
Kennedy



Rosemary
Kennedy



Kathleen
Kennedy



Eunice
Kennedy



Patricia
Kennedy



Robert
Kennedy



Jean
Kennedy



Edward
Kennedy

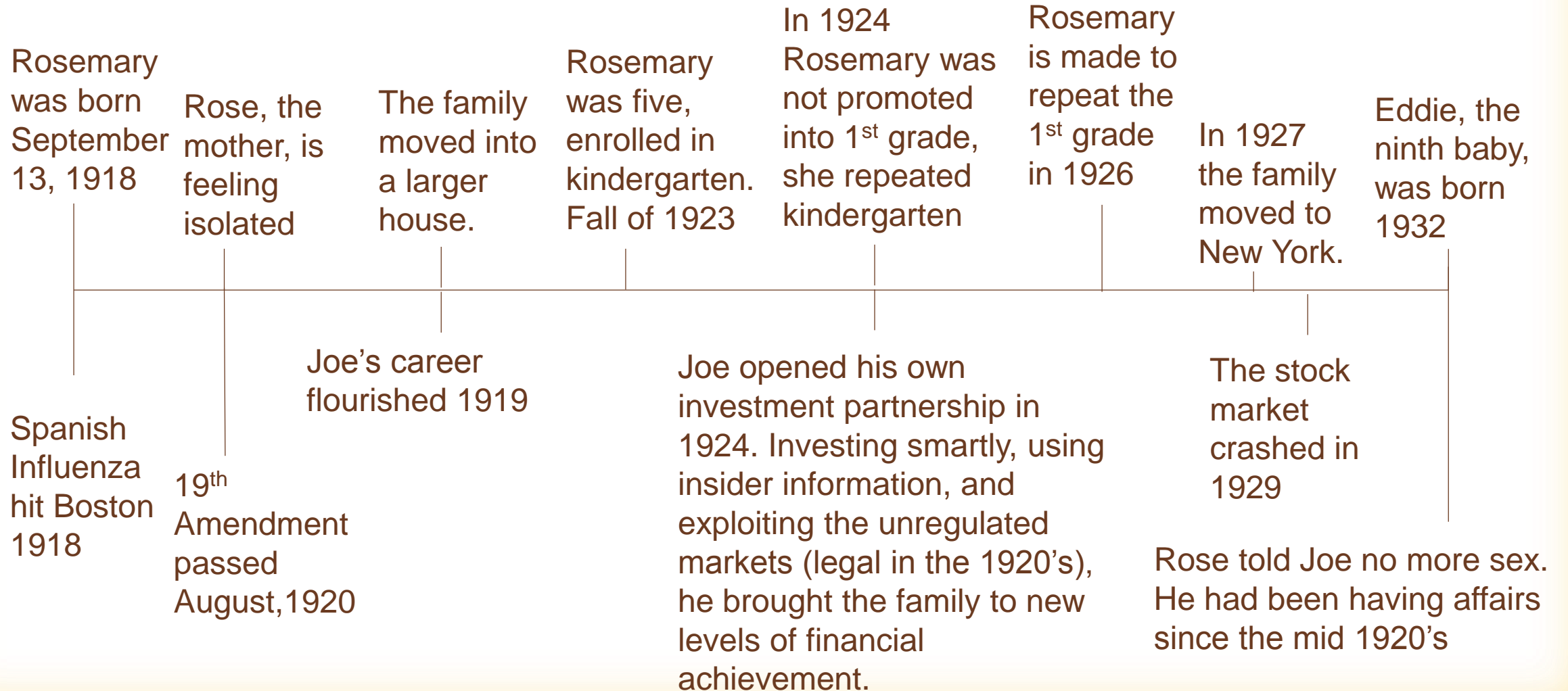


The Kennedy Family

The Home Birth

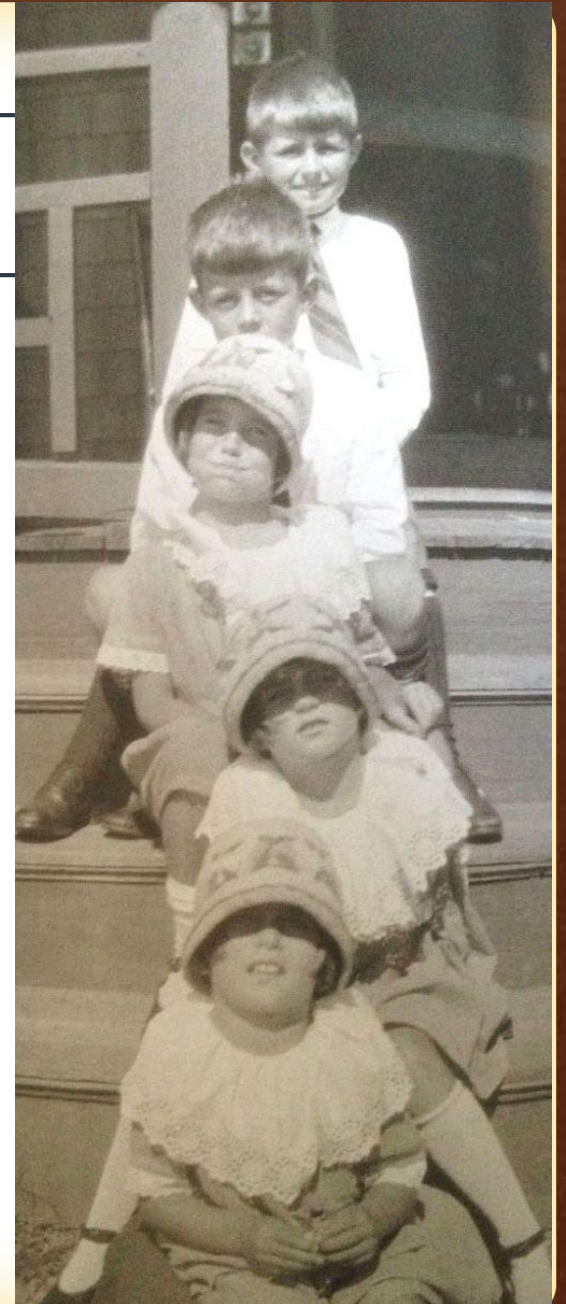
- In 1918 the Spanish Influenza hit Boston killing thousands.
- When Rose was in labor the doctor was late because of flu patients.
- The nurse could not birth any baby without a doctor present.
- With forceful contractions the baby began crowning, the nurse directed Rose to hold her legs tightly together to delay the baby.
- When this did not work, the nurse resorted to the dangerous practice of holding the baby's head and forcing it back into the birth canal.
- The doctor then arrived and Rosemary was born on September 13, 1918.

Early Timeline 1918 - 1932



Rosemary

- Rosemary was the first girl born to the family after two boys.
- She was described as a sweet, peaceful baby that cried less than the boys before her.
- Rose spent extra care, time, and effort caring for Rosemary.



Rosemary



- Kathleen (Kick) was born 18 months after Rosemary and Eunice just a year later in 1921.
- Kick and Eunice quickly surpassed Rosemary in intellectual and physical skills.

“When we have a number of children, we cannot
understand why they are all not alike”
- Rose

Rosemary's Disabilities

- Had a tendency to write right to left. (indication of dyslexia)
- Spelling was difficult.
- She struggled to form letters properly and could not write in a straight line without lined paper.
- Sentences were often incomplete and defective.
- At the age of ten, Rosemary could not row a dinghy.
- Could not cut meat on her dinner plate, her dinners were served pre-sliced.

In the Fall of 1923, Rosemary was five and enrolled in Kindergarten.

- The Kennedy's didn't know what to do and hoped the teachers could catch Rosemary up to her peers.
- Rose kept Rosemary in public school.
- Rosemary was made to repeat kindergarten and then first grade in fall of 1926.
- The family moved to Riverdale where Rosemary was enrolled in 2nd grade with her sister Kick. Other children Rosemary's age were in 4th grade.

Leaving School

- The new school did not provide the dramatic improvement in Rosemary's abilities her parents were hoping for.
- They pulled her out of school.
- Rose organized private lessons and tutors for Rosemary at home.
- Educating her at home left her without interaction with children outside the home.



Institutionalization

- With the gap between Rosemary and other girls her age ever widening, Rose and Joe reconsidered advice to place Rosemary in an institution.
- At the time there was little distinction between the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill.
- Institutions were warehouses for the insane, the disabled, and the addicted.
- Institutions were dark, dirty, disease and rodent infested, hopeless places that were little more than shelter. Abuse was rampant and medical care uncertain.

Private School

- Keeping Rosemary's disability a secret meant molding her into the likeness of the rest of the family.
- When Rosemary turned eleven, it was decided she would be sent to a private boarding school.
- Devereux School in Pennsylvania was a school that provided specialized and individualized lesson plans for a wide range of intellectually challenged students.
- Rosemary had a rough transition to Devereux in the fall of 1929.
- Her courses included spelling, math, grammar, reading comprehension, and hands-on developmentally appropriate work such as art, music, sewing, and drama.

Devereux

- Rosemary's first year at Devereux coincided with the great stock market crash of October 24, 1929.
- The Kennedy's took advantage of low prices, acquiring real estate, businesses, and other assets.
- Rosemary returned to Devereux in the fall of 1930.
- Rosemary reported home, "I am working-hard-Mother Because I Get 100 in Arithmetic-all-the-time. I am wonderful in spelling."



Turning Thirteen

- Rosemary turned thirteen in 1931 and returned to Devereux for a third year.
- Rose always worried about keeping her girls under control and away from boys; she particularly worried about Rosemary.
- There was a rising number of kidnapping-for-ransom cases.
- Rose worried Rosemary would wander off or someone would flatter or kidnap her.



If Rosemary had not grown up in such a wealthy family, what do you think would have happened to her?

Elmhurst, the Convent of the Sacred Heart

- The teachers at Devereux had assured Rose and Joe of Rosemary's social skills.
- In 1932, Rosemary was enrolled at a new school, Elmhurst, in Providence, Rhode Island.
- Rosemary spent two years at Elmhurst where her parents had clear expectations for her to progress academically.
- At age 15, Rosemary's penmanship, spelling, and grammar remained similar to that of a ten-year-old.



The Newton's Individualized Approach

- In the fall of 1934, Rosemary (16) was sent to a new school in Brookline.
- The school offered a rigorous but supportive environment, with individual attention and encouragement.
- In Brookline, Rosemary was close to family members and friends who checked in on her and kept her busy on weekends.
- Jack and Joe Jr. kept in touch with Rosemary.

Letter to her parents

- In letters to her parents, Rosemary always mentions her best friend at Brookline, Mary O'Keefe.
- She reports often of activities and any outings she goes on.
- Rosemary loved social events and was sure to describe what she wore to every event. She cherished pretty things and clothes.
- Her father always wrote back to her in a kind but challenging way, encouraging her to strive harder.



Unsure What was Best

- Just before the school started in the fall of 1936, Rosemary was denied readmission for a third year at the Newton's school.
- Rose found another program and enrolled Rosemary at Miss Hourigan's Residence School in Manhattan.
- Rose hired a college graduate, Amanda Rohde, to be both tutor and companion to Rosemary.

Summer 1937



- Rosemary attended a summer camp for the month of July.
- Rosemary and Eunice went on a European tour with the Moore's and governess Alice Cahill.

Another Turbulent Year

- Rosemary did not return to Hourigan's School.
- The Boston Globe reported that Rosemary was a graduate of the Sacred Heart Convent Academy.
- Rosemary then went to New York to live with the Moore's until Eunice could join them and sail for London, on April 20th, 1938.
- In anticipation of the rough transition for Rosemary the majority of the family was already settled in London before she arrived.

Presentation at Court



Rosemary (20) and Kick (19) were presented at court to Britain's King and Queen just two weeks after Rosemary arrived in England.

This event was a priority for the Kennedy's.

Debutant Summer 1938

- Rosemary was said to be stunning and more beautiful than her sister.
- A few weeks of practicing bows, handshakes, and dancing had paid off.. almost.
- Rosemary and Kick shared a coming of age and entrance into elite society party organized by their mother.



School Time Again

- Rosemary was enrolled at Scared Heart in Wadsworth, a borough of London. She transferred shortly after to the Convent of the Assumption School, in Kensington Square.
- Mother Isabel, the Mother Superior, who directed the school proved to be especially sympathetic to Rosemary and her needs.
- By the spring of 1939 it was reported that Rosemary was making remarkable progress.
- Rosemary was working toward a diploma she believed would qualify her to be a kindergarten schoolteacher.

Dr. Maria Montessori



- The Assumption school adopted the educational methods of Italian Physician and Educator Dr. Montessori.
- Rosemary flourished under the Assumption's individualized instruction, constant reinforcement, repetitious exercises, and emotional support.

War Approaching England

- France and England declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939.
- The Kennedy's decided their children were safer back in the States.
- Joe felt Rosemary should stay at school in London, where she was finally growing.
- At school Rosemary was constantly attended by one aide or teacher if not two.
- She was content and happy at school, but even there she would sometimes lose her temper and lash out at friends, teachers, and even younger students.

Quotes from Joe Kennedy

- Joe to Rose in a letter, “She (Rosemary) is contented completely to be teaching with Mother Isabel. She is happy, looks better than she ever did in her life,”.
- Same letter, “I’m not sure she isn’t better staying over here indefinitely with all of us making our regular trips and seeing her then.”
- Another starker statement, “She must never be at home for her sake as well as everyone else’s.”
- Joe found it necessary to begin sending Rosemary’s letters home in his legally protected diplomatic pouch of official government correspondence, because he feared her childlike penmanship and content of her letters may be leaked and embarrass the family.



Growth and Happiness

- Mother Isabel assured the Kennedy's that Rosemary was doing very well at Assumption.
- Rosemary was given greater responsibilities.
- She still struggled with her frustration and anger but Mother Isabel was always there to talk it out with her and Rosemary was growing in character the sisters assured Rose.



Return Home

- It was not meant to last though, as the Germans were advancing on Paris, Rosemary was made ready to leave.
- She received her end-of-year diploma from the sisters and then flew to America at the beginning of June with the Moore's.
- The separation from friends and the nuns was extremely difficult.
- The Germans marched into Paris on June 14th. Rosemary's haven in Britain was over.



Fitting in

- The transition to living at home was tough.
- Now a 22-year-old woman, Rosemary missed the practical educational and vocational program that had trained her to be a primary-school teacher's aide, where she felt supported and successful.
- Kick and Eunice bore some of the responsibility of helping Rosemary fit back in the social life of their friends.



Camp Fernwood

- Rosemary was sent to Camp Fernwood, in western Massachusetts as a 22 year old, in 1940.
- When Rose set it up for Rosemary to attend, she did not give the Sullivan sisters, who ran the camp, any indication Rosemary's disabilities.
- After three weeks, the Sullivan's had had enough and asked Rose to come and take Rosemary home.



Moving Around

- Rosemary suffered emotionally from the sudden removal from Camp Fernwood.
- The rest of the summer was spent at Ravenhill with the nuns and a few students swimming, walking, and studying, until classes began in the fall.
- Rosemary was transferred out of Ravenhill school shortly after starting and the reason is not known.
- In the third week of October, Rosemary was enrolled at Saint Gertrude's School of Arts and Crafts instead.

Emotional Change

- Rosemary remained at Saint Gertrude's through 1941. Not much is known about her time there.
- Joe, now home, looked for summer options for Rosemary and sought advice from Monsignor Casey at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York.
- Rosemary was re-enrolled at Saint Gertrude's in the fall of 1941, though that staff was unsure of the placement.
- Rose in her memoir, *Times to Remember*, said she and Joe were coming to the conclusion that Rosemary was suffering from something other than intellectual impairments; "a neurological disturbance," Rose would call it.



Decisions

- Joe now felt that Rosemary's behavior was becoming a disgrace to the Kennedy's political, financial, and social aspirations.
- It is likely Joe soon learned of the brain operation for the treatment of serious mental-health conditions, the pre-frontal lobotomy.
- Joe approached Rose about the operation as a potential "cure" for Rosemary's disabilities and increasingly unpredictable behavior.
- Sometime between Nov 10th, 1941 when Saint Gertrude's complained to Joe of continuing problems with Rosemary and November 28th, Rosemary was admitted to George Washington Hospital.



The Procedure

- Shortly after she arrived in the hospital, Rosemary would have been told she needed to have her hair shaved off.
- Rosemary would have been strapped to a table and given local anesthesia where two holes would be bored into her skull.
- During the procedure, Freeman asked Rosemary to sing a song, recite common verses, tell him stories about herself, and count.
- After the lobotomy, Rosemary was completely disabled.
- Years of emotional, physical, and intellectual development were erased by the procedure.

Rosemary Gone

- Rose wrote letters to her children.
- Joe's news about Rosemary was infrequent and vague and was directed specifically to Joe Jr., Jack, and Kick.
- There is no record of Rose visiting Rosemary for more than 20 years.
- Eunice seemed to suffer from the disappearance of Rosemary from the family.





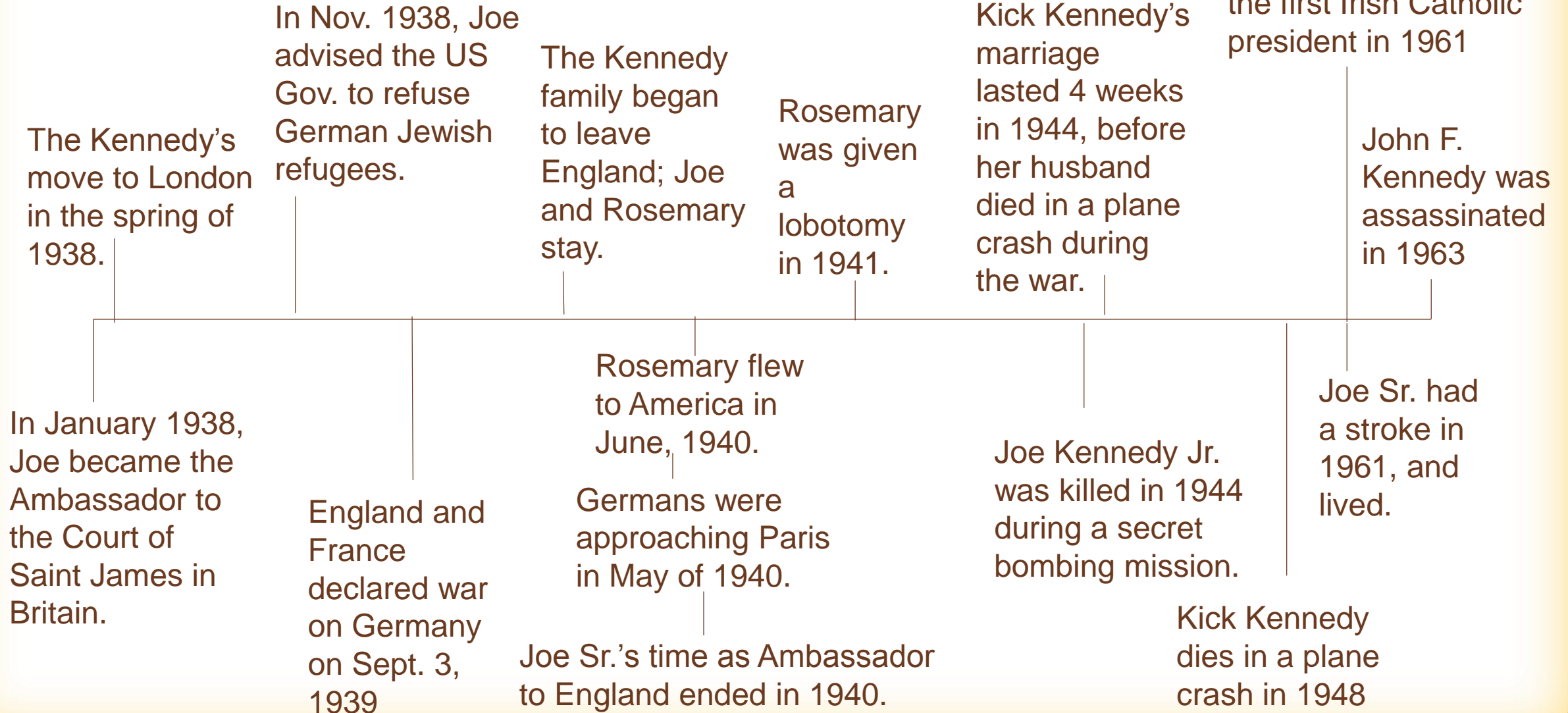
How do you feel the Kennedy's could have handled the situation differently?

A Place for Rosemary

- Rosemary remained at George Washington Hospital for a short time before being transferred to a psychiatric facility called Craig House.
- Craig House for seven years.
- From there she was moved to Saint Coletta in Wisconsin in the early summer of 1949.
- Rosemary had a home and two pets.
- By the late 1970's Rosemary made trips twice a year to her families' residence.



Timeline 1938 - 1963



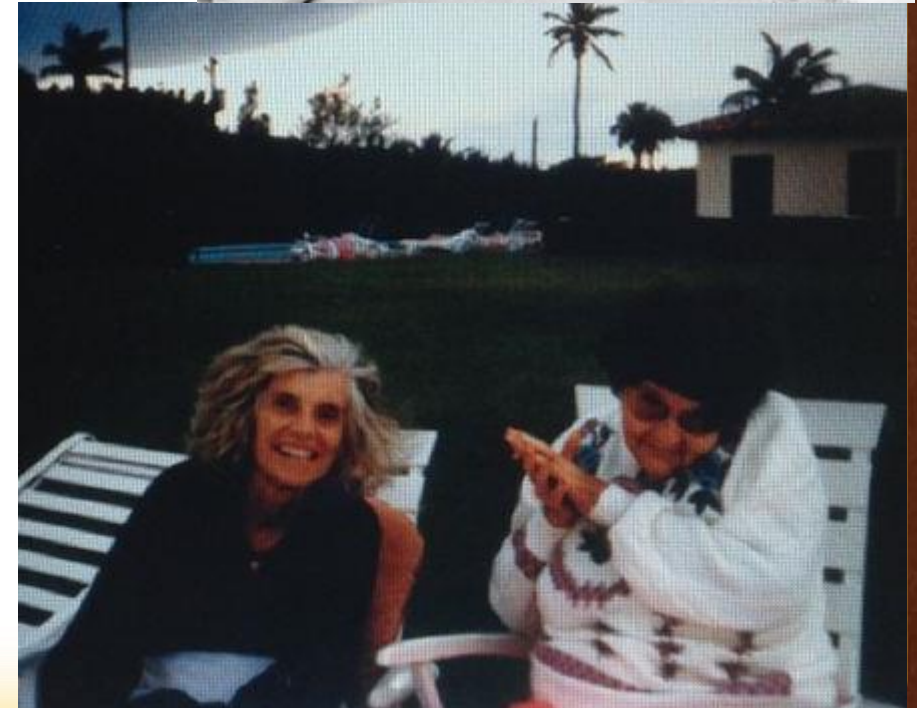
Rosemary



- Rosemary needed a wheelchair in her later years.
- Settled into a comfortable routine with a sense of happiness and peacefulness.
- Rosemary Kennedy died on January 7, 2005.

Eunice Kennedy

- In college, Eunice became interested in social work.
- She married Sargent Shriver in 1953.
- Eunice took over care of Rosemary after their father had a stroke.
- She visited Rosemary frequently.





The Special Olympics

- The first Special Olympics took place in Chicago on July, 1968, on Soldier Field.
- Offered Olympic-style summer games for 1,000 disabled young people.





Final Discussion

Have any of you been to the Special Olympics?

Been involved with any of their programs?

Do you have any questions for me about Rosemary?