



**True Compass -  
Edward M Kennedy -  
A Memoir**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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Apparently Teddy Kennedy's published book arrived at his home the day that he died. It seems rather poignant that the memoir which chronicles his life of seventy-seven years would have such interesting timing. He had started the work in 2004 as an oral history project for the University of Virginia, but, after having been diagnosed with brain cancer followed by surgery and treatment, was spurred on to finish the book in the last year of his life.

Kennedy begins offers the read twenty-six chapters, the first of which begins on the day he was born. Four themes that seem to weave themselves through the pages include his love of the sea, the importance of family, devotion to God and desire to serve the public.

The tone and style of the book were not at all what I had expected. In fact, the author combines a "folksy" narrative with his previously-unspoken emotional reactions to personal and family tragedy. As the youngest child of nine, he experienced the deaths of all but one sibling. Two brothers were victims of assassin bullets. Another brother and sister were killed in war-related activities. Nephews died in accidents and drug-related incidents. Teddy made personal choices that brought grief to his own life and the lives of others.

Kennedy's twelve year old son had a leg amputation and his only daughter struggled with cancer. His marriage broke down and ended in divorce. Throughout the book are details about all of the problems experienced as well as the inappropriate ways that the author responded to them at times.

No matter how difficult things were, however, Teddy turned to the sea, his family, God and his work in the Senate to sustain him. He took on a father-like role for the children of his siblings after each died. He taught them to sail and bound them together with stories of history and of their ancestors.

Kennedy attributes much of his happiness in the past sixteen years to his second wife, Vickie, who brought into great love, companionship and humour into their marriage. He credits her with helping him to make better choices in the later part of his life.

I was surprised at how quickly I read the more than 500 pages of this memoir. It told in detail the tales that we had previously heard on news reports from a different perspective, always weaving current events with the personal activities of this extremely large family. It shares an extremely wide range of emotions that individuals and the entire clan experienced throughout times of joy and times of trouble. Relating these human factors seems to forge a bond or connection between author and reader.

Regardless of your political persuasion, I think you will enjoy this book. It encourages us to carry on in the face of adversity, value personal relationships and hold onto the hope that can only be found in a strong spiritual faith!