



The Kennedys love affair with Victura

By Maralyn D. Hill

Author James W. Graham did a superb job when writing *Victura, The Kennedys, A Sailboat, and the Sea*. The exemplary insight it provides into Kennedy family dynamics in total is thorough, with massive quotes and footnotes in abundance. Its focus provides an understanding of several generations of the family.

It was a challenge numerous quotes or excerpts. The author's research was incredibly extensive.

To those of us who lived through much of the spotlight time, the Kennedy name brings a reaction ranging from love to hate. *Victura* provides a greater understanding to all.

Joseph and Rose Kennedy and their family journey started in Boston, but due to being Irish Catholic, social acceptance would never be achieved, no matter how astute of a businessman Joe was. He consequently moved his family to New York. They started vacationing on Cape Cod in 1925 and purchased a residence in 1927.

My own sailing experience is limited, but I've been exposed to many who have expressed the

teamwork that is required—tempers fly, language flares, and winning is the goal. A love of water, wind and elements radiate from those involved in this ultimate teamwork activity.

Joseph Kennedy, Sr. did not sail, but immediately encouraged Joe Jr. and John to do so. Bobby and the rest of the children, as they came along, were encouraged, but Joe Jr., John and also Eunice excelled. During the school year, Joe Jr. and John would exchange correspondence with their father about what type of boat they should acquire and their research was rewarded.

Victura, a 25-foot sloop, was purchased in 1932, and was the family favorite that was sailed the longest and raced the most. Winning at all costs was what mattered to Joe Sr.

To quote Graham, "By all accounts Joe Sr. was a demanding but demonstrably affectionate father. Moreover, he was deeply interested in his children. They deeply loved him in return, though a JFK biographer said their love had an 'element of fear' to it, 'not so much dread of his tongue lashings, although these were colorful and memorable, but rather fear of failing to measure up to his expectations.'"

Jack named *Victura*. As Graham quoted, "In 1960... Jack told a writer for *Sports Illustrated* that *Victura* was Latin for 'about to conquer.'"

Joe Jr. and Jack were among the top collegiate sailors in New England and Eunice was later considered equal. All the children were part of the sailing team, but they sailed to win.

As the children grew up and married, they ended up buying adjacent or nearby property, and their Hyannis Port homes became known as the Kennedy compound. Most got their own sailboats, but the *Victura* kept active until Ted's later years. Now, it is in the JFK library & Museum.

Victura did not hide the facts Joe Sr. was not known for his morals or that teaching religion was left to Rose. This division of responsibilities showed the strengths and weakness of the entire family. Joe Sr. and Rose had instilled in them from birth the importance of public service, since they had all the financial resources they needed. It also showed how the *Victura*, sea, and bonding as a family mattered. Sailing was glue that helped hold them all together. *Victura* was indeed a family love affair.