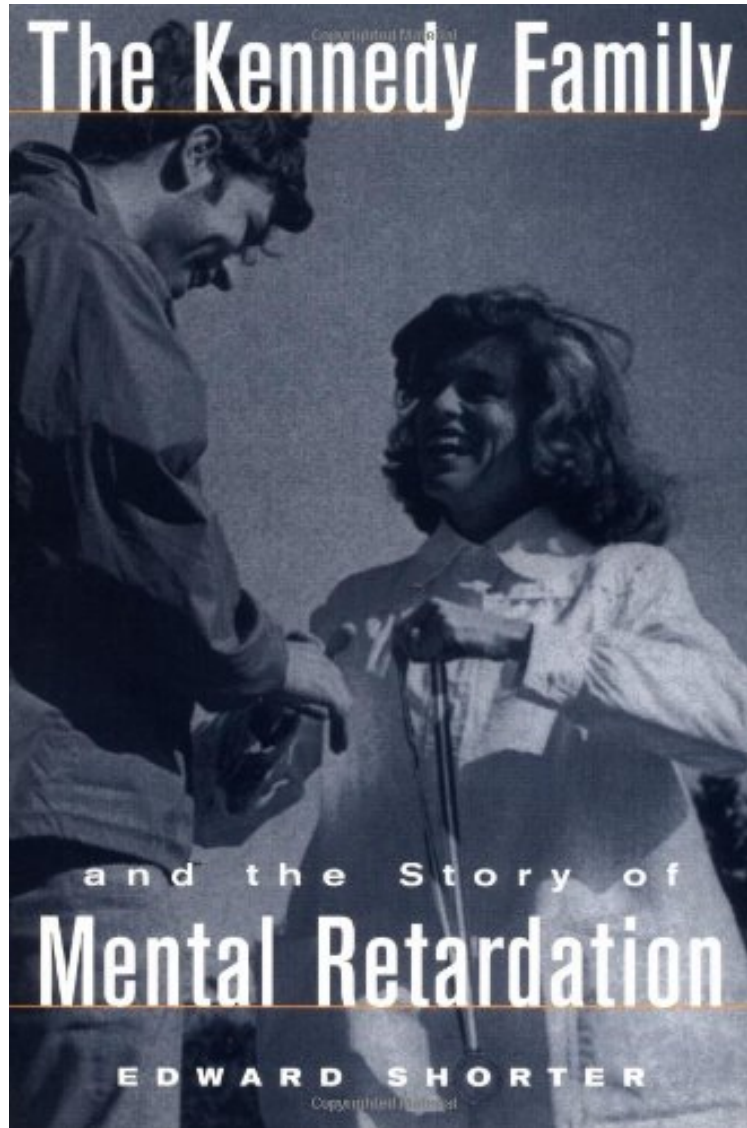


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The Kennedy Family

Edward Shorter

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Edward Shorter : The Kennedy Family before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Kennedy Family:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. How the Kennedy's personal issue became a political movementBy Robin OrlovskiThis book examines why and how the Kennedys became involved with Mental Retardation and eventually all disability right issues. Because myself and many other Americans have benefited from the civil rights laws of the last thirty years, it is eye opening to remember a world had once existed without those laws. People with

disabilities were so scorned by society that 'erasing' their presence or locking them up at home was previously considered the most loving option. Partially from their own history with Rosemary, the Kennedys felt obligated to use their reputation and change these public mores. This same book also notes how the independent living movement eventually surpassed Eunice Kennedy Shriver's Special Olympic work as the most visible manifestation of people with disabilities. Although their visibility was made possible through the family's previous community organizing, people with disabilities themselves subsequently sought a greater role in a movement dedicated to their rights. However enlightened for the time, Special Olympics are today considered by some people to instead reinforce 'poster child' stereotypes of people with disabilities. Recent Special Olympic materials are mindful of the shift, now stressing participant empowerment and dignity. Mental retardation references were revised with the term 'intellectual disabilities'. This is not a particularly involved read, but it is interesting for people interested in the Kennedy family and/or disability rights. Because it is supposed to focus on the family's contributions to this policy area, the scope is much smaller than other disability history books. At the same time, this book does not pretend this family had all the answers with disability rights issues, and acknowledged they were as influenced by other activists as the activists were influenced by them. 15 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Enlightened? By N.. Martin What Joe Kennedy did was to take a reportedly shy and mildly retarded woman (or so they claimed) and obliterate her humanity with a lobotomy. The reason is reported to be that she was considered an embarrassment and a potential roadblock to Kennedy political ambitions. It was a "failed" lobotomy, the reports frequently say. What would constitute a successful lobotomy? The Kennedys have spent the subsequent decades promoting psychiatric tortures and coercive mistreatments of millions of other Americans who have ended up in the clutches of the "mental health community." In short, their "philanthropy" is one of support for violence and torture. For this they are feted as humanitarians by apologists such as this author.

According to Edward Shorter, just forty years ago the institutions housing people with mental retardation (MR) had become a national scandal. The mentally retarded who lived at home were largely isolated and a source of family shame. Although some social stigma still attaches to the people with developmental disabilities (a range of conditions including what until recently was called mental retardation), they now actively participate in our society and are entitled by law to educational, social, and medical services. The immense improvement in their daily lives and life chances came about in no small part because affected families mobilized for change but also because the Kennedy family made mental retardation its single great cause. Long a generous benefactor of MR-related organizations, Joseph P. Kennedy made MR the special charitable interest of the family foundation he set up in the 1950s. Although he gave all of his children official roles, he involved his daughter Eunice in performing its actual work -- identifying appropriate recipients of awards and organizing the foundation's activities. With unique access to family and foundation papers, Shorter brings to light the Kennedy family's strong commitment to public service, showing that Rose and Joe taught their children by precept and example that their wealth and status obligated them to perform good works. Their parents expected each of them to apply their considerable energies to making a difference. Eunice Kennedy Shriver took up that charge and focused her organizational and rhetorical talent on putting MR on the federal policy agenda. As a sister of the President of the United States, she had access to the most powerful people in the country and drew their attention to the desperate situation of families affected by mental retardation. Her efforts made an enormous difference, resulting in unprecedented public attention to MR and new approaches to coordinating medical and social services. Along with her husband, R. Sargent Shriver, she made the Special Olympics an international, annual event in order to encourage people with mental retardation to develop their skills and discover the joy of achievement. She emerges from these pages as a remarkable and dedicated advocate for people with developmental disabilities. Shorter's account of mental retardation presents an unfamiliar view of the Kennedy family and adds a significant chapter to the history of disability in this country.

"...provides insight into a time when society began to question the orthodoxy of the notion that persons with retardation could not learn and had to be institutionalized. ...Shorter reminds us that, at least in the case of mental retardation policy, the legacy of the [Kennedys] remains solid and enduring."-ISIS "Shorter has given us an excellent, critical study of the impact of the Kennedy family on the care of the retarded. It is an important scholarly contribution to the historical literature on mental retardation."-Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences "Marshaling an impressive array of organizational records and archival sources, including Kennedy family records never before seen by historians, Edward Shorter presents the intriguing story of how one family truly made a difference in the struggle to educate Americans and redirect our research agenda regarding Mental Retardation. "A lively, wonderfully engaging account of the momentous contributions of Eunice Kennedy Shriver to the Mental Retardation movement, the book is also a deserved tribute to the families of the mentally retarded. Moreover, Shorter details the chilling history of how the treatment and perception of the mentally retarded only recently evolved from the barbarisms to commonly practiced in prior decades. Shorter's unique professional perspective adds cachet to the deft sensitivity with which he tells this compelling story. A fascinating study, it will resonate with many audiences."-James W. Hilty, Professor of

History, Temple University, and author of *Robert Kennedy: Brother Protector* (Temple) "A unique and compulsively readable book by a distinguished social historian and historian of medicine. Through his access to the records of the Kennedy Foundation, Shorter illuminates the Kennedy Family's philanthropic interests in a way that no one has done before, despite all that has been written on nearly all aspects of the Kennedys. And he tells us a great deal about America's public and private responses to mental retardation. This book deserves the attention of political historians, historians of disability, philanthropy and medicine, and the general public alike. It represents a singular and quite impressive achievement." -Edward Berkowitz, Chair, Department of History, George Washington University, and author of *Disabled Policy: America's Programs for the Handicapped* From the Publisher An account of mental retardation through the eyes of the Kennedy Family From the Inside Flap "A unique and compulsively readable book by a distinguished social historian and historian of medicine. Through his access to the records of the Kennedy Foundation, Shorter illuminates the Kennedy Family's philanthropic interests in a way that no one has done before, despite all that has been written on nearly all aspects of the Kennedys. And he tells us a great deal about America's public and private responses to mental retardation. This book deserves the attention of political historians, historians of disability, philanthropy and medicine, and the general public alike. It represents a singular and quite impressive achievement." Edward Berkowitz, Chair, Department of History, George Washington University, and author of *Disabled Policy: America's Programs for the Handicapped* "Marshaling an impressive array of organizational records and archival sources, including Kennedy family records never before seen by historians, Edward Shorter presents the intriguing story of how one family truly made a difference in the struggle to educate Americans and redirect our research agenda regarding Mental Retardation. "A Lively, wonderfully engaging account of the momentous contributions of Eunice Kennedy Shriver to the Mental Retardation movement, the book is also a deserved tribute to the families of the mentally retarded. Moreover, Shorter details the chilling history of how the treatment and perception of the mentally retarded only recently evolved from the barbarisms to commonly practiced in prior decades. Shorter's unique professional perspective adds cachet to the deft sensitivity with which he tells this compelling story. A fascinating study, it will resonate with many audiences." James W. Hilty, Professor of History, Temple University, and author of *Robert Kennedy, Brother Protector* (Temple)