

Dogged Approach

Senator Edward Kennedy enters the world of children's books with the help of his canine friend.

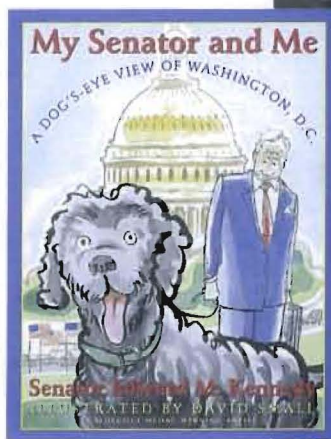
SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY is expanding his audience. With the release of his first children's book, *My Senator and Me: A Dog's Eye View of Washington, D.C.*, the infamous Democrat provides kids with a behind-the-scenes look at our nation's capital through the eyes of his Portuguese water dog, Splash. But before writing the book, Kennedy sought the opinion of a very important group of readers: his grandchildren. "I wanted the book to be one they would enjoy," he says. "They gave it good reviews."

Writing a children's book is something that Kennedy had been thinking about for a while. Education is one of the senator's top initiatives on Capitol Hill, and as a member of the Everybody Wins! program, Kennedy has been reading to students at a local elementary school for the past eight years. "It's a gratifying experience watching the youngsters improve their reading skills and gain confidence in their schoolwork," Kennedy says. "I noticed that the children love books about animals, and I thought it would be fun to create a book about the Senate."

For Kennedy, Splash was the perfect choice to narrate a day in his life and take kids inside the places where laws are made. "I have a very, very special relationship with Splash and our younger dog, Sunny," he explains. "Like so many other families, we are totally devoted to our dogs, and they are a part of all that we do."

Before Splash, Kennedy remembers his own first tour of the Capitol. "When I was a teenager, my brother Jack, a newly elected congressman at that time, showed me around Washington. I've never forgotten it," he says. "[Jack] said that I should take an interest in what goes on inside the buildings; I have the same wish for the young people in our country that my brother had for me."

Although Kennedy has no current plans to turn *My Senator and Me* into a series, he does have other books in the works. *America Back on Track* was released in May, and he is hard at work on an oral history project with the Miller Center at the University of Virginia. As for a memoir about his life and family, Kennedy says now's not the right time. "I have not begun to consider



a personal memoir," he says. "There's too much work remaining to be accomplished. I am currently seeking re-election in the Senate, and I hope that I will have another opportunity to serve."

If Kennedy is re-elected, one thing is guaranteed: Splash will be right beside him. But how does the pooch handle the pressure of being in one of Boston's most famous families? Kennedy says he remains cool. "Maybe it's those games of fetch between meetings," he says. "Maybe it's the treats after a press conference or his ability to squeeze a power nap into a day. He loves both Washington and the trips home to Massachusetts as much as I do." —R.B.

My Senator and Me: A Dog's Eye View of Washington (Scholastic Inc., \$16.99).