

Ted Kennedy 'expose' looks for a new taker

THE author of a book claimed to contain damaging new information on Ted Kennedy's role in the accident that took the life of Mary Jo Kopechne says he has pulled his 1200-page manuscript back from Random House, charging that the editor assigned to the project was not up to the task.

But the publishing firm says it terminated the contract after raising "extensive editorial questions" about the manuscript.

Random House, you'll recall, had major editorial problems earlier this year with *Poor Little Rich Girl: The Life and Legend of Barbara Hutton*, and took it out of distribution after factual errors were discovered.

In light of that fiasco, Leo Damore says, RH is running scared over his "explosive" book. RH denies any similarities between the two cases.

Damore, who says his book will "mark the end of the Kennedy era in American politics,"

told PAGE SIX it was acquired for Random House by v.p./editorial director Jason Epstein and executive v.p. Tony Schulte.

Damore, whose previous books include *Cape Cod Years of John F. Kennedy*, says he has copious notes and tape recordings which point to a cover-up in the inquest into Mary Jo's death.

He says he assumed Epstein would be his editor, but was told this year that Peter Osnos, who joined Random House in January, would be on the case. "My eyebrows were raised," Damore told us. "I said to myself: 'Who is this guy? Where did they find him?'"

Osnos, says RH, was found at the *Washington Post*, where he "had 20 years experience. He was a bureau chief in Saigon, Moscow and London, and national and foreign editor."

Damore says that during his second meeting with Osnos "I could tell he hadn't even

finished reading the book."

"Jason Epstein and Peter Osnos worked closely on the manuscript," countered the RH spokesman. "Peter read the entire manuscript several times and worked on it for many hours . . . The manuscript would have had to have been greatly shortened and rewritten before editing could have begun."

But, says Random House, Damore insisted "the manuscript be accepted and paid for as is." So they nixed it.

Damore says he knew the book had to be cut, but he wasn't given proper editorial guidance.

Damore's agent, Luciane Goldberg, says: "If they want to split hairs, they did terminate the contract, but we'd asked them to reject it if they weren't going to give us the editorial support they'd promised."

Where does the book go from here? Damore: "I've got a waiting list of other publishers."

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