

## Kennedy's Campaign

Filmmaker Rory Kennedy, Robert and Ethel's youngest, aims her camera lens at Appalachia's poverty

**T**o most of the world, she is the Kennedy whose Hyannis Port wedding was hastily postponed when her cousin John Kennedy Jr.'s plane went missing last July.

But Rory Kennedy is determined to be known not for her family's tragedies but for her own accomplishments as a filmmaker. Still, for her latest project, a documentary about Appalachia called *American Hollow*, Kennedy found inspiration in her father Robert's pilgrimage there to focus attention on poverty in America more than 30 years ago.

"Appalachia was an area my father was very interested in," says Kennedy, who bears a striking resemblance to the senator, who was assassinated six months before her birth in 1968. "I was very moved by his experience there."

Rory Kennedy traveled to the region to make *American Hollow*, which concerns a year in the life of an extended family in one of the poorest and most isolated parts of eastern Kentucky. Appalachia, a picturesque, rural country, has long been exploited and exploited by politicians eager to bank in the photo opportunities provided by down-but-not-out coal miners and open-faced children in faded clothes. Kennedy says she hopes her film, which airs on HBO on November 29, will be a catalyst for "getting the issues raised in the film into the editorial pages and into the public discourse."

And she's not shy about using her pseudo-royal Kennedy status and week-long her Washington connections. "I'm

trying to tie the film to some anti-poverty legislation that's being proposed," she says. Asked who is spearheading the anti-poverty bill, she laughs and responds, "Teddy," referring, of course, to her uncle Edward M. Kennedy, the venerable Massachusetts senator.

Not surprisingly, Edward Kennedy is a fan. "Rory's documentary gives an extraordinary voice to the voiceless," he says. "Rarely have the faces of poverty in our land been so vividly shown."

Kennedy, whose previous films have dealt with AIDS in Africa and women substance abusers, says she doesn't need an elected office to pursue her agenda. She views the camera as her weapon and plans to take *American Hollow* straight to the Capitol Hill battleground with a special screening for Congress.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER LIVINGSTON



Rory Kennedy