

# REDCATCHER



## MCNAMARA'S BRAND

No one should be surprised, then, that McNamara chose to write the story of his life, it should have turned out to be a disaster by every literary measure: mendacious, sentimental, shameless in its exculpation, oily in its tone, a book so badly written that no one should ever really want to buy it. And of course it has been a rousing best seller. How does one explain a life thus charmed? His good looks? They may indeed have dazzled back in the days when no one minded goofy wire rims and the stink of Brylcream. His sensitivity? It's true he cried often, and still does -- the one time I met him, at a think- tank luncheon, he teared up over the Cuban Missile Crisis -- and in the pre-Alan Alda Sixties a man's capacity to cry could still disarm unwary companions. But none of this is sufficient. Washington's inverted culture, where failure propels a man ever upward, bespeaks a kind of masochism. Of source, the actual pain is dispersed to the country at large. But for the professional failure Washington remains a safe harbor. Within weeks of the publication of the book, McNamara had been called "evil," a "liar," and a "hypocrite." Out in the heartland, a few Vietnam vets even sued him. Here in Washington (Post) Katherine Graham threw him a book party. Everyone who's anybody was there. Andrew Ferguson