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Kopecnes Question Chappaquiddick

The parents of Mary Jo Kopecne indicated in an article published by New Times magazine that they still have some questions about the auto mishap that took their daughter's life.

In what New Times describes as the first interview given by the Kopecnes to an American publication since the accident six years ago, the Kopecnes said they believe their daughter was sleeping in the back seat of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's (D-Mass.) car when it plunged off a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island.

Gwen Kopecne is quoted as saying she believes Kennedy "was still confused" about the mishap when he made his first statements and also was the victim of bad advice.

"He had poor advice, right from the time it happened. I think he got so involved in this lousy advice and then couldn't back out and tell the truth. He got deeper and deeper and deeper into it," she is quoted as saying in the magazine article published today.

(The Washington Post was unable to reach Kennedy or the Kopecnes yesterday.)

Kopecne, a 28-year-old for-

mer campaign worker for Kennedy's brother, Robert, had attended a party with some other persons on the small island adjoining Martha's Vineyard on the night of July 18, 1969.

Kennedy's sworn statement is that he was returning to his hotel and taking Kopecne to hers when he made a wrong turn and accidentally drove off the bridge. He said he managed to escape from the submerged car but was unable to rescue Kopecne.

The interviewer for New Times, Gerald Kelley, editor of a Martha's Vineyard weekly called the Grapevine, said the interview was conducted in July. He said the Kopecnes at the time were visiting the island and met him through John Farrar, the skin diver who pulled Kopecne's body from the car.

According to the magazine, the Kopecnes said they believed that their daughter had gone to sleep in the rear seat of the Kennedy car and "happened to be in the car when it took off."

Mrs. Kopecne was quoted as saying the couple holds a "bitter" feeling against Joseph

Gargan, a cousin of Kennedy, and Paul Markham, a former U.S. attorney, who were at the party and according to later accounts, went to the accident scene to try to rescue the woman.

"What hurts most," Joseph Kopecne is quoted as saying, "is to think that my daughter had to be left there all night. At least his (Kennedy's) two buddies could have telephoned. There was an outside possibility my kid could have been saved."

(Gargan and Markham could not be reached immediately for comment.)

Kopecne also said, accord-

ing to the magazine, that he and his wife rejected an autopsy of their daughter because "we were made to believe that the autopsy was primarily to find out if my daughter was pregnant."

"There were so many things happening. We were being hit from all sides—north, south, east and west," he is quoted as saying.

Mrs. Kopecne is quoted as saying she believes that other persons besides herself and her husband should be interviewed about Chappaquiddick but that "nobody's been under any pressure at all to answer questions."