

# Questions Are Still Asked On Chappaquiddick Incident

By H. D. QUIGG

Edgartown, Mass. — (UPI) — Four years later, the little framed sign still hangs on the wall by the lobby desk of the Shiretown Inn: "Please do not ask us to answer questions concerning the Kennedy incident. Thank you. The Management."

The Shiretown Inn is a block from the 150-yard-wide strait that separates this resort island of Martha's Vineyard from what once was a rustic little hideaway island, named Chappaquiddick.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy was lodged at the inn on July 18, 1969, when he went to a cookout at a cottage on Chappaquiddick. He said that while driving one of the government girls who were guests back to her motel he took a wrong turn and drove his car off a ten-foot-wide wooden bridge.

He said he dived repeatedly in an effort to save the girl, but was unsuccessful. He returned to his hotel room here without immediately reporting the accident.

## Curiosity Lingers

From the inn he emerged about nine hours after the accident and reported it to the police. He said he tried in vain to rescue his passenger. Later a diver pulled from the car the lifeless body of Mary Joe Kopechne, 28.

*But 7/16/73 . . .*

"They want to see it with their own eyes . . . They've stopped tearing the bridge apart, thank God."

. . .

After four years, public curiosity lingers. Half the passengers on the Chappaquiddick ferry are visitors.

Patrolman Thomas Geddis, who works Main St. here, says he gets about 50 queries a day about where Kennedy went off the bridge.

Down on Dock St., there is almost always a long line of cars awaiting their turn for the ferry.

"There's still a lot of interest," said Jesse Oliver, acting police chief. "They want to see it with their own eyes. They've stopped tearing the bridge apart, thank God."

The line-up of cars at the little ferry to the island backs up so far that workers and repairmen don't want to go there because they're losing money in the delay. So their price goes up.

"Chappaquiddick was once a lovely island," said a clerk here. "People went over there and built for the seclusion of

it. Now half the traffic on the ferry is visitors. The place is made into a zoo at times. I'm sure it'll continue between now and 1976."

## 'What's All This'

Fred Chirgwin, who runs an inn across the street from the Shiretown, said:

"People are writing to nearby mainland papers saying in effect, 'What's all this about Watergate? How about Kennedy?'"

The Boston Globe reported in June from the Nevada Governors Conference that "there is no governor here" who thinks Watergate has not changed Kennedy's 1976 chances for the Democratic presidential nomination, at least to a degree. One commented:

"It would be a bitter, bitter, nasty campaign."

Some national columnists have reported getting mail calling for the same kind of public disclosure of Chappaquiddick as of Watergate.

Asked in Boston whether

there was any chance that the case would be reopened, Massachusetts Attorney General Robert H. Quinn replied:

"I would say none whatsoever."

The case was closed after a grand jury on April 7, 1970, reported it had no indictments.

The jury had called only four witnesses, none of them principals in the case.

## Lips Sealed 'Forever'

Superior Court Justice Wilfred J. Paquet told the jurors before they retired to secret session on April 6 that they must keep secret the goings-on in the jury room.

"I don't mean for a day," he said. "I mean forever. Your lips are sealed."

What concerns some of those former jurors now is not what happened in the deliberations room. It's what didn't happen.

"Before we went into session, we had wanted to call in Kennedy himself," one of them said recently. "Also, to see the (impounded) inquest transcript. We had talked about bringing in Kennedy and some of the girls (present at the cookout). It was very discouraging."

"It's a sad thing. I was really disgusted. We got shot down every time. If it had been anybody else but Kennedy, I'm sure he would have been interrogated and in jail that morning he reported to

the police. I honestly believe it was a lot of political pull and political power put on a lot of people.

"We had no cooperation. So we felt we might as well go home."

Kennedy had pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident. Judge James A. Boyle of District Court gave him a two-month suspended sentence, the minimum under the law, and placed him on probation for a year with his driver's license suspended.

#### Already Punished

"He has already been and will continue to be punished far beyond anything this court can impose," Boyle said then.

That night, on television, Kennedy said, "I was overcome — I am frank to say — by a jumble of emotion, grief, fear, doubt, torture, panic, confusion, exhaustion and shock."

On Oct. 30, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court granted a Kennedy lawyer's request for an entirely closed inquest, and a request that the transcript and Judge Boyle's conclusions on it be impounded.

This kept those two documents from the grand jury later.

Kennedy was the first witness before the inquest Jan. 5, 1970. There were 26 others.

#### Judge Doubted Story

The inquest documents were made public April 29. Judge Boyle said in his report that he didn't believe Kennedy's story that he intended to take Miss Kopechne to the Edgartown ferry. He said he believed that Kennedy intentionally turned into the bridge road and there was probable cause to believe that his negligent driving appeared to have contributed to her death.

In Washington, Kennedy said:

"In my personal view, the inference and ultimate findings of the judge's report are not justified."