

# Woman Passenger Killed, Kennedy Unhurt in Crash

## Police Say Senator Wandered About in Shock After Car Plunged Off Bridge on Island Near Martha's Vineyard

Special to The New York Times

EDGARTOWN, Mass., July 19—A 29-year-old woman passenger was killed today when a car driven by Senator Edward M. Kennedy plunged off a bridge into a pond on a tiny offshore island near this community on Martha's Vineyard.

The Senator was said to have escaped injury.

The woman was identified as Mary Jo Kopechne of Summit, N. J., a former secretary to the Massachusetts Democrat's brother, the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

The police here said that Senator Edward Kennedy wandered around in apparent shock and did not report the accident to them for several hours.

Edgartown's fire chief, A.M. Silva, estimated the time of the accident at about 12:50 A.M. The accident was first reported to the police shortly after daybreak by the mother of a boy who sighted the car when he went fishing.

"I remember walking around for a period of time and then going back to my hotel room," Senator Kennedy was quoted as saying. "When I fully realized what had happened this morning, I immediately contacted the police."

It was another of a series of violent events that have hounded the Kennedy family ever since it came to prominence in American political life.

Senator Kennedy had come to Martha's Vineyard for weekend boat races with several friends and staff members.

According to Kennedy staff members in Washington, there had been a party on Chappaquiddick Island off Martha's Vineyard for David Hackett, a friend of Robert Kennedy. The Washington sources said that Edward Kennedy was driving Miss Kopechne to catch a ferry when the accident occurred.

The police released the fol-

Continued on Page 50, Column 4

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

lowing statement, which they said gave Senator Kennedy's account of the accident: \*\*

"On July 18, at approximately 11:15 P. M., I went over to Chappaquiddick. Later I was driving my car on Main Street, Chappaquiddick, to get the ferry back to Edgartown. I was unfamiliar with the road and turned right onto Dyke Road instead of bearing hard left on Main Street.

"After proceeding for approximately half a mile on Dyke Road, I descended a hill and came upon a narrow bridge. There was one passenger with me, Miss Mary (the Senator did not give the name at this point,) a former secretary of my brother, Senator Robert Kennedy.

### Car Turns Over and Sinks

"The car turned over and sank into the water, and landed with roof resting on the bottom. I attempted to open the door and the window of the car, but had no recollection of how I got out of the car.

"I came to the surface and repeatedly dove down to the car in an attempt to see if the passenger was still in the car. I was unsuccessful in the attempt."

"I was exhausted and in a state of shock. I recall walking back to where my friends were eating. There was a car parked in front of the cottage and I climbed into the back seat. I then asked someone to bring me back to Edgartown."

### Sights Overturned Auto

The statement released by the Edgartown police in Senator Kennedy's name does not make clear where the Senator and his party had been on Chappaquiddick Island.

The statement says that Senator Kennedy remembers "walking back to where my friends were eating" but apparently the rest of the group had gone by the time Senator Kennedy arrived, for the statement says he climbed into the back seat of a car and only later asked someone, unidentified, to take him back to Edgartown.

Word of the accident was telephoned to Police Chief

Dominick J. Arena early this morning by Mrs. Pierre Malm, who lives in a house near the scene of the accident.

Mrs. Malm's son spotted the overturned car, with one wheel out of the water, shortly after daylight when he left home to go fishing.

Late this morning, Senator Kennedy went to the Edgartown police station and told Chief Arena what had happened. After making his report, Mr. Kennedy left the police station, refusing to talk to reporters, and flew to the Kennedy family in Hyannis, Mass., on the mainland.

Scuba divers from the Edgartown Fire Department reached the Kennedy car about 8:25 A.M. and removed the body of Miss Kopechne.

John Farrar, one of the divers, said it took 25 minutes to extricate the body from the car, which was submerged in about eight feet of water beneath the bridge.

Mr. Farrar said that the body of Miss Kopechne was found

right side were severely dented, but the front and rear of the car were intact.

The bridge from which Senator Kennedy's black four-door Oldsmobile sedan plunged is a small wooden structure 10 feet 6 inches wide and 30 feet long. The bridge is known by residents of Edgartown and Chappaquiddick Island residents as the Dyke.

It is between Pocha and Cape Pogue Ponds on Chappaquiddick Island and replaced a dirt dike that once separated incoming ocean tides from the fresh water of the ponds.

The approach to the hump-backed bridge is unmarked and the bridge itself, which is approached by a dirt road, is difficult to see at night.

The dirt road approaching the bridge is narrow, with the entry to the bridge angling off to the left. There is no warning sign on the approach. The Kennedy auto went over the right side of the bridge into the water.

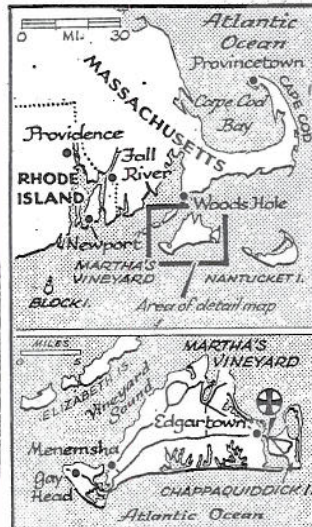
Police Chief Arena said he was convinced that "the accident is strictly accidental."

"As far as the circumstances surrounding it," he said, "there doesn't appear from the principal evidence to be any excessive speed there."

Miss Kopechne was registered at an Edgartown motel, the Dunes, a former naval station on Martha's Vineyard. There were reportedly five other women in her party, including Esther Newberg of Arlington, Va., and Rosemary Keogh of Washington.

An employe of the Dunes said the reservations had been made by John D. Crimmons of South Boston.

Chappaquiddick is a five-



The New York Times July 20, 1969 Where Kennedy car crashed

in the car's back with her face upward, toward the floor of the overturned vehicle.

### Vehicle Is Removed

Rescue workers from the Edgartown police and fire departments used chains, cables and power winches to haul the car from the pond.

Workers removed the auto from the water at about 10 A. M. and it was taken to an Edgartown garage, where the registration plates were removed.

Police Chief Arena said a purse belonging to Rosemary Keogh, Senator Kennedy's staff secretary, was found in the car, leading the authorities at first to believe that she was the woman found there.

### Window Found Open

The police said the window on the driver's side of the car was open, the windshield was smashed, both doors on the

mile-long island off the eastern tip of Martha's Vineyard, separated from that larger island by a narrow channel.

Senator Kennedy narrowly escaped death on June 19, 1964, when he was in a plane crash. He suffered serious back injuries in that accident.

Senator Kennedy's eldest brother, Joseph, was killed on Aug. 12, 1944, while he was a Navy pilot on combat duty in Europe. The Senator's brother, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963, and his brother, Robert, died on June 6, 1968, the day after he was shot by an assassin in Los Angeles. Senator Kennedy's sister, Kathleen, died in a plane crash in 1948 in France.

X NYTIMES 23 JUL XX OVER  
KSFEX # (ROOM 27) 27 JUL

(EMK's statement to the police)

This report/seems to have been corrected later, since the version carried by SF Examiner (this date) gives Miss Kopechne's name in full. Compare both for other differences.