

Ted Held Out of '72 Race But Mansfield Backs Story

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield says he thinks Edward M. Kennedy will pass any attempt for the presidency in 1972, but not because of the auto accident in which a woman riding in the Massachusetts senator's car was killed.

Mansfield had told colleagues for some time before the weekend accident that Kennedy, the Senate's No. 2 Democratic leader, would delay any bid for the White House until 1976 or beyond.

Doubts about Kennedy's political future were sounded after his car plunged off a bridge in Chappaquiddick Island, Mass., and the passenger, Mary Jo Kopechne, drowned.

Kennedy did not report the accident to police for nine hours, saying he suffered from shock and exhaustion.

'Dazed, Shocked'

Mansfield said he supposes some people will say Kennedy's political prospects have been damaged by leaving the scene of the accident "but I do not agree."

"Even politicians are human and this could happen to anybody," Mansfield said. "His statement that he dived into the water several times supports his report that he was dazed and shocked."

"He has been going around with a back brace for several years since he was almost killed in an airplane accident. It would have been directly against his doctor's orders to dive into the water. This could have contributed to his exhaustion and shock.

"It is quite understandable that Kennedy could have been stunned and might not have known what he was doing for several hours after the accident and the physical strain of having dived several times in search of the car."

'A Disaster'

Other political observers didn't take the same view of the accident's effect on Kennedy's career.

"It's a disaster" for Kennedy's presidential aspirations, said one of the highest political advisers of the AFL-CIO — traditionally strong supporter of Democratic presidential candidates.

Approximately 100 officials of the AFL-CIO's political arm, the Committee on Political Education, opened a major meeting at Piney Point, Md., to discuss state by state congressional races next year, including Kennedy's expected bid for re-election.

The consensus appeared to be Kennedy could win re-election to the Senate despite the auto accident, but was virtually ruled out of the presidential race in 1972.

Top Agent To Probe Ted Crash

EDGARTOWN (Mass.) — (CDN) — A top state police detective has been assigned to investigate a long list of unanswered questions in the mystery surrounding the death of a young secretary in a car driven by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

Lt. George Killen has the duty of ferreting out details of the period between the time either late Friday or early Saturday that Kennedy's car plunged into a pond carrying 28 year old Mary Jo Kopechne to her death, and the time — some nine hours later — when Kennedy finally reported the accident.

Those nine hours are probably the most important in Kennedy's political life.