

Cottage Party Wasn't 'Wild' One, One of 'Boiler Room' Girls Says

WASHINGTON — (CDN) — Despite the rumor and speculation, the party that preceded the fatal tragedy that befell Mary Jo Kopechne and clouded Sen. Edward Kennedy's career was not a wild one, said a girl who was there.

"At the most there were one or two drinks apiece," said Esther Newberg, one of the six "boiler room" girls who returned here from what was to have been the fourth happy reunion in a year of a group that worked in the presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy.

Miss Newberg, 26, is an administrative assistant at the Urban Institute, one of a number of social policy "think tanks" in Washington.

She recalled the events of the Friday night party at Chappaquiddick Island in substantially the same terms used earlier by Capitol aides to the 37 year old Senator.

Reminiscing

It was a "cookout" of steaks and drinking was not the thing, she said. There was reminiscing, as there always had been at the previous reunions of the "boiler room" crowd and some good natured give-and-take about Sen. Kennedy's yacht placing ninth in a field of 31 craft at the Edgartown regatta.

Kennedy was driving a car that plunged into eight feet of water after careening off a 10-foot-wide wooden bridge late last Friday night or early Saturday.

The Senator said he dived repeatedly in vain to rescue Miss Kopechne, then left the scene in a state of shock before reporting the accident to police nine hours later.

Miss Newberg had earlier been reported by the Worcester Gazette as saying she and four other girls at the party learned of Miss Kopechne's death about 8 or 8:30 a.m. Saturday from Jo-



GUESTS AT PARTY THAT PRECEDED FATAL RIDE
Esther Newberg, Paul F. Markham and Maryellen Lyons were at cookout

—UPI Photos

seph F. Gargan, Kennedy's cousin, who also attended the party.

Gargan told them, she said, as they were driving to the ferry that separates Chappaquiddick Island from Martha's Vineyard, where the girls were staying at a motel.

Midnight Ferry

They had stayed all night at the cottage and had not been aware of the tragedy, she said. Miss Kopechne had left the evening before in order to catch the midnight ferry — the last one operating — back to Martha's Vineyard.

Miss Susan Tannenbaum, 24, of Greensboro, N.C., who also was at the party, refused to talk about the party. She is appointments secretary for Rep. Allard K. Lowenstein (D-N.Y.).

The brunette Miss Tannenbaum did confirm, however, that the "boiler room" crowd—eight girls who kept track of the delegate count in Sen. Bobby Kennedy's campaign headquarters here last summer—was a "closely

knit" group, and shared a deeply felt camaraderie.

An aide to Sen. Kennedy here labeled as "not true" a statement in a newsmagazine that the Senator had "indulgent drinking" habits and engaged in "daredevil driving."

Unlike other senators and representatives, the Massachusetts Senator had not acquired a reputation on Capitol Hill for overimbibing.

Others Named

The other girls who attended the ill-fated party were Nance Lyons, a legislative aide to the Senator; her sister, Maryellen, an aide to state Sen. Beryl Cohen of Massachusetts, and Rosemary "Cricket" Keough, an assistant at the newly organized children's foundation here.

A former staff member of the Robert Kennedy political campaign said "the word has actually gone out that they (the girls) are not to talk to anybody."

He described the political campaign workers as "politically savvy—not mere secretaries."