

All Sorts of Rumors About Ted Now

By James McCartney

WASHINGTON — (CDN) — In the mini-skirted world of sex and politics on Capitol Hill, experts on Teddy Kennedy are suddenly everywhere.

Tongues are wagging from morning to night, rumors flying.

In the aftermath of the tragic accident at Martha's Vineyard in which pretty 28 year old Mary Jo Kopechne was killed, all manner of tales are now emerging.

Teddy Kennedy — whose reputation here has been clean as a whistle — is suddenly rumored to have been a skirt-chaser.

Teddy Kennedy — who has never been known as much of a drinker — is now said,

by some at least, to have been hitting the bottle. All this is behind closed doors.

For on the Senate floor itself, on the record, the silence, where Kennedy is concerned, is overwhelming.

His friends and allies, for the most part, somehow can't think of anything to say.

What the truth may be about that night at Martha's Vineyard no outsider can be quite certain.

But it is probably true that the Kennedy myth, the Kennedy legend is playing a role here in reaction to the case and is probably playing a role across the country.

Whatever the truth, the myths and the legends are

rising up to haunt the youthful Massachusetts senator in his moment of travail.

For pretty young things have been part of the Kennedy scene in national politics for almost a decade.

And they have often been pretty young things with strong political leanings and one thing in common:

A virtual adoration for Kennedys, one and all.

Every other politician since 1960 — including Richard Nixon — has tried to copy the format by getting "leapers and jumpers" for himself.

But the fervor has rarely been there without a Kennedy to inspire it.

One Capitol Hill aide conducted an informal poll here

yesterday of secretaries in Senate offices.

He asked one after another:

"If you were at a party and Teddy Kennedy offered you a ride home, would you go?"

The unanimous response, he reported, was a kind of a sigh and a whispered "yes."

Said the Senate aide:

"I guess he hasn't lost any of his charm."

One senator who has worked closely with Kennedy since he became No. 2 Democrat in the Senate hierarchy says that he has never known Kennedy to have drunk too much.

It can be stated as simple fact that Kennedy's reputation where liquor and women

are concerned has been clean in the Senate.

In addition, those who have worked with him believe he has done a creditable job as majority whip.

They say he does his homework, knows legislation and has been serious about the job.

His aides and staff members laugh at the idea that he may have been drinking too much.

They use the words "preposterous" or "ridiculous" if asked about it.

They paint a picture of a senator who has lived quietly and tried to do a good job.

But they are aware that he has some explaining to do about the accident — and say they think some sort of statement is forthcoming.