

## KENNEDY REPORTS SPEED AT 20 M.P.H.

Lawyers File Official Form  
on Car Crash at Bridge

By JOSEPH LELYVELD

Special to The New York Times

EDGARTOWN, Mass., July 24 —Senator Edward M. Kennedy was driving his car at 20 miles an hour when it plunged off a wooden bridge last Friday night, according to an accident report filed today with the authorities here by the Senator's lawyers.

The report—an official form of the state's Bureau of Motor Vehicles—was signed by Mr. Kennedy and carried yesterday's date.

The Senator remained in seclusion across the bay at his Hyannisport residence. The group of friends and advisers who had gathered with him there was joined today by Robert S. McNamara, the former Defense Secretary, who is president of the World Bank.

The police appeared to find Mr. Kennedy's speed estimate credible enough, although there had been speculation that he must have been driving much faster than 20 miles an hour at the time of the accident, in which a young Washington secretary, Mary Jo Kopechne, was drowned.

### Studies Cited

The police pointed to studies showing that a car traveling 20 miles an hour could not be braked to a halt in less than 47 feet.

In the three-quarters of a second it takes an alert driver even to get his foot on the brake, a car traveling at that speed will already have covered 22 feet, the studies showed.

The wooden bridge is 81 feet long and veers slightly to the left of the dirt road. Senator Kennedy drove straight ahead, going over the side at a point at which his right front wheel was only 18 feet from the start of the bridge. Police measurements showed that his car hit the water 32 feet and 7 inches from the start of the bridge.

Thus, the police reasoned, if the car was traveling 20 miles an hour, the Senator would not have had a chance to brake it before it fell into the salt water pond.

The accident report filed today repeated Mr. Kennedy's

contention that the accident took place at 11:15 P.M. This was the time given by the Senator in a statement to the police last Saturday morning.

Mr. Kennedy's version conflicts with that of the only witness who is believed to have seen the Senator driving the car. The witness, Christopher Look Jr., a Dukes County deputy sheriff, said he saw the black Oldsmobile turn down the dirt road leading to the bridge more than an hour after the time mentioned by the Senator.

The police, relying on Mr. Look's testimony, estimated the day after the accident that it occurred at 12:50 A.M.

Two copies of the accident report were handed to Chief Dominick J. Arena by two of Mr. Kennedy's attorneys, Robert G. Clark Jr. and Robert G.

Clark 3d of Brockton, who flew here today.

Sources involved in the preparation of the case against Senator Kennedy on a charge of leaving the scene of an accident said the earlier time strengthened their contention that he had had ample opportunity to report the accident.

The Senator has said he was in a state of shock. According to his statements, at least 10 hours elapsed between the accident and his appearance at the police station to report it.

The time of the accident may have little bearing on the charge of leaving the scene but could be relevant to other aspects of the case.

Mr. Kennedy's statement said he had been taking Miss Kopechne to the ferry that crosses the narrow channel between Chappaquiddick Island, where

## Tragedy and Mystery

Precisely because the mind cries out against such concentrated misfortune as the Kennedy family has suffered, one hopes that Senator Edward M. Kennedy will hesitate no longer to clear up the details of the tragic accident at Chappaquiddick. It is in no sense a prejudgment to note that his story of the sad episode that cost the life of Mary Jo Kopechne leaves serious gaps which the local authorities have seemed less than eager to close.

The police chief of Edgartown and county officials might understandably be awed at having to deal with their United States Senator, a political power in the state and a potential candidate for the Presidency, but it was no favor either to Senator Kennedy or the public for them to have allowed that awe to inhibit their official conduct, as it seems to have done. Too many questions remain unanswered—and as yet unasked.

In consequence, a sad accident has generated a spate of ugly speculations, political and personal, which the Senator by now must surely regret. It is perfectly possible that, suffering from shock, he would have behaved illogically following the tragic accident, but that would not warrant the numerous discrepancies and gaps in his story the next morning, nor even the failure to inform the police the night before, especially when he had the presence of mind at the time, as he states, to dive repeatedly into the pond in an effort to save his companion.

There is much that needs explaining. A man of less prestige in the country might be content to deal solely with the misdemeanor charge of having left the scene of an accident. But Senator Kennedy owes more than that to himself and to his loyal followers.

the accident occurred, and Martha's Vineyard. But the ferry, known as the "On Time," normally stops running between 12 and 12:30.

If Mr. Look is correct, the Senator was already too late for the last ferry. Mr. Look himself had returned from Edgartown not by the ferry but by a motor launch from the yacht club, having left his car near the landing on Chappaquiddick Island.

Meantime, Chief Arena and the County Prosecutor, Walter Steele, came under fire from the District Attorney in New Bedford, Edmund L. Dinis. Mr. Dinis said they had "bypassed" him in their investigation and charged: "For some reason they are not desirous to get me into the case at all."

Mr. Dinis's area of responsibility includes Dukes, Nantucket and Barnstable Counties. Until today, he had shown no eagerness to take an active role in the Kennedy case. The District Attorney is a former Democratic member of the Massachusetts legislature.

Officials here have said that he could have taken charge of the investigation at any time simply by announcing his intention to do so.

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