

A Quiet Probe of Kennedy's Story

Edgartown, Mass.

Investigators out of the Martha's Vineyard island area are working quietly to obtain statements from guests at the July 18 party that preceded Senator Edward M. Kennedy's auto accident.

It was learned that the prosecution in the case in which Kennedy pleaded guilty last Friday to leaving the scene of an accident is sensitive to criticism about the court procedure.

Mary Jo Kopechne, 28, died in the accident, which went unreported for more than eight hours.

The investigation, it was learned, is aimed at filling in some of the blanks in Kennedy's two public accounts of the night of the accident. Sources indicated those in charge of the prosecution sought help from personnel in other agencies to obtain statements off the island from persons who attended the party.

Attending the party were six young women who had worked on the 1968 presidential campaign of Senator

Robert F. Kennedy and six men, including Edward Kennedy; his cousin, Joseph Gargan, and an adviser, Paul Markham.

Kennedy has named only Gargan and Markham as having been informed of the accident when he walked back to the cottage where the party was held. He said they accompanied him to the accident site and tried to find Miss Kopechne. Neither has commented publicly.

By Kennedy's own account, he swam the channel from Chappaquidick and returned to his hotel on Martha's Vineyard about 2 a.m. co-owner of the hotel, Russell Peachey, says he saw the senator there about 2:25 and that Kennedy appeared fully clothed and not wet. He also said he saw Kennedy from 50 feet away and that his vision was hampered somewhat by bright lights in his eyes.

Associated Press

The Kennedy Tragedy And Its Consequences

THE TRAGIC AUTO ACCIDENT involving Senator Edward M. Kennedy may result in major political change for the Democratic party and possibly for the Nation. For it is a certainty that the future role of the last surviving Kennedy son was not yet fully defined nor all of his possibilities yet achieved.

There is cold irony in this disaster of chance, a mistaken road, a bridge notably unsafe and a sudden plunge into the darkness. For if the principals had not involved a Kennedy, but any lesser politician or businessman and a girl on his office staff, scant and transient attention would have been paid to it other than locally, and speculation of scandal would hardly have arisen. The conditions surrounding the Martha's Vineyard accident are, however, of great and, as yet unknown, consequence.

THE IMMEDIATE RESULT will be determined by the Senator himself after he assesses the result of his offer to the people of Massachusetts to resign if they indicate that they believe that he is unfit to represent them. Their judgment, if he seeks re-election, will be influenced by what they know and by what they believe of the events before and after the tragedy. It is apparent that a great many people retain doubt that there has been full and candid disclosure of these events.

It would be hasty, however, to speculate that a television broadcast, which left many questions unanswered, necessarily means that Senator Kennedy's career as a spokesman for the people of Massachusetts is terminated. Any higher aspirations, however, would now seem to be out of the question.