

# Kennedy, Back in Senate, Firm on '72

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WASHINGTON, July 31 — Senator Edward M. Kennedy resumed his Senate duties today and confirmed that he would not run for President in 1972.

He also made it clear that he would not discuss further the details of the July 18 automobile accident that clouded his career.

"I tried to the very best of my ability, in the reports that have been made, to give the facts of the incident," he said in a brief encounter with reporters outside the Senate chamber. "I wouldn't have any further comment."

Mr. Kennedy stepped out of a friend's car and into a crush of camera-snapping tourists and newsmen as he returned to the Capitol this morning.

The newsmen fired questions as they trotted behind him up the steps to the Senate. They wanted to know whether his statement yesterday from Boston meant what it seemed to mean—that he would not run for President in 1972.

## 'That's Right'

"That's right," Mr. Kennedy replied, striding rapidly on toward the Senate chamber. "I intend to fill out my Senate term if re-elected."

At least twice more during the day, he was asked to confirm that he really had no intention of seeking the Presidency in 1972. He replied emphatically each time that he would not run.

Once, he indicated that he had not been inclined to run even before the death of Mary Jo Kopechne, the 28-year-old Washington secretary who left a party with him and drowned when the Senator's car plunged into a tidal pool on Chappaquiddick Island, Mass.

Talking in a low voice in a corridor outside the Senate chamber, Mr. Kennedy said, "I think the statement confirms—and the events of the recent past make definite—what was already an inclination of mine."

Earlier, in the rush outside, Mr. Kennedy had put a little edge in his voice as he answered still another insistent

question from a reporter who apparently wished to leave no doubt as to his intentions in 1972.

## 'As Clear as I Can'

"No," he replied. "I thought I made that just as clear as I can make it."

The Senate welcomed back its whip in the quiet, personal way that might have been expected from that institution.

It took no official note of his return, as it had taken none of his absence. But all through the day, Democrats and Republicans dropped by his desk at the front of the chamber, shook his hand and spoke brief words of welcome.

Frequently a colleague patted his shoulder, and each time Mr. Kennedy's lips formed the words "Thank you."

Senator Edmund S. Muskie, the Maine Democrat who now seems to be a leading contender for the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1972, spent several minutes in earnest and apparently friendly conversation with him.

Sitting in the chair of Senator Mike Mansfield, the majority leader, Mr. Muskie leaned close to Mr. Kennedy as they talked, and as he left he squeezed the younger man's arm.

Mr. Kennedy rode to the Capitol in an automobile driven by Claude Hooten, a Harvard roommate.

Once inside, he waited in an anteroom, looking over news dispatches, until Senator Mansfield arrived to begin his daily talk with reporters. Then he walked into the chamber and joined the majority leader.

"Come in, Ted," Mr. Mansfield said. "You're right back where you belong now."

Mr. Mansfield and the reporters discussed the surtax and Mr. Kennedy answered one question on the subject. He said he believed the proposed six-month extension opened the opportunity for tax reform and enabled both sides to act responsibly.

As the gathering ended and the Senate prepared to convene, Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen, the minority leader,

walked across the floor and shook Mr. Kennedy's hand.

Theodore C. Sorensen, the former aide to President Kennedy and a friend of both younger Kennedy brothers, said in a television interview tonight that Edward Kennedy recognized the damage to his Presidential prospects from the accident.

"He recognizes that his prospects were damaged, if not destroyed," Mr. Sorensen said on the Columbia Broadcasting System's Walter Cronkite show.

Asked if he could explain why Mr. Kennedy had failed to go for help to try to save Miss Kopechne's life, Mr. Sorensen said he could not. He added, "He would agree with you that he should have gotten help that night. Of course, he should have."

He noted that Mr. Kennedy himself had described his conduct that night as inexplicable.

Mr. Sorensen was asked why Mr. Kennedy had left his hotel at Edgartown and returned to Chappaquiddick Island to telephone his lawyer the next morning.

Mr. Sorensen said the only telephone in Mr. Kennedy's hotel was in the lobby, with no privacy.

"One does not call his lawyer on such a phone," he said.

After the accident, Mr. Kennedy was accompanied to the scene by two friends, Joseph Gargan, his cousin, and Paul Markham, a former United States Attorney at Boston.

Mr. Kennedy has related that they joined in trying to save Miss Kopechne, then drove Mr. Kennedy to the nearby ferry slip and, on learning that the ferry was not running, watched as Mr. Kennedy plunged into the channel and swam about 250 yards to the main part of Martha's Vineyard, nearly drowning again on the way.

Mr. Sorensen was asked why the two men had not stopped Mr. Kennedy from swimming the channel. He said it was his impression that there was nothing they could do to stop him.