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3 Women Remember 2 Cars at Kennedy Cookout

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 1 — Three of the young women who went to an ill-fated cookout with Senator Edward M. Kennedy and his friends say they saw only two cars at the cottage on Chappaquiddick Island that night.

The question of the number of cars used by the party has been raised in efforts to resolve an apparent conflict over the time sequence of the events that preceded and followed the accident in which Mary Jo Kopechne, a young Washington secretary, drowned.

Witness Saw Car Halted

In his initial statement of the police and in an accident report he filed five days later, Senator Kennedy declared that the accident occurred soon after 11:15 o'clock on the night of Friday, July 18. In his televised accounting to the voters of Massachusetts a week ago, he said only that he and Miss Kopechne left the party "around 11:15."

But a witness, a Dukes County deputy sheriff named Christopher Look Jr., says that at about 12:45 A.M. Saturday, July 19, he saw a car he believes was the black Oldsmobile that Mr. Kennedy drove off a narrow wooden bridge at the end of a dirt road.

According to Mr. Look, the

car he saw had halted at an intersection where a dirt road diverges at a 90-degree angle from the surfaced road down which the car had gone. The car, Mr. Look told the police in Edgartown, turned down the dirt road.

His testimony led them to fix the time of the accident at about 12:50 A.M.

In his televised accounting, Mr. Kennedy said for the first time that he and two companions—Paul Markham, a former United States attorney, and Joseph F. Gargan, a cousin — had returned to the scene of the accident and had attempted again to rescue Miss Kopechne. His narrative appeared to indicate that the return trip had taken place at about the time Mr. Look saw the car at the intersection.

Confusion Doubted

This raised the possibility that Mr. Look had actually seen the Senator and his two companions on their way back to the bridge.

But Mr. Look is sure the car he saw in his headlights was black.

The only car other than the black Oldsmobile that the young women recall having seen was a white Valiant Mr. Gargan had rented earlier in the day at Martha's Vineyard. It would have been the only

car available to the Senator and his friends after the black Oldsmobile went into the water.

An aide to Senator Kennedy agreed today that there was little or no possibility that Mr. Look could have confused the two cars.

The deputy sheriff told the police that the car he saw had an L in the license number. The black Oldsmobile's license number was L782207. The white Valiant's license plate was Y98-476.

Although there remains the possibility that Mr. Look saw another black car unrelated to the Kennedy party, no one has come forward to say he was driving such a car at that hour. And the Senator's aide agreed that this was probably unlikely.

The three young women asked that their names not be used so they would be spared any heightening of the intense publicity to which they have been exposed since the accident.

They said they had yet to be approached by any authorities to give statements on the case.

No Knowledge of Island

The Senator's aide said he believed this to be true also of the two other women and five men, in addition to Mr. Kennedy, who were at the party.

He also said that, as far as he knew, the Senator had never driven on Chappaquiddick Island before the night of the accident and may never even have set foot on it until then.

If Mr. Look is right about the time of the accident, Senator Kennedy had no more than

one hour and 40 minutes to struggle free of the car, dive to rescue Miss Kopechne, walk back 1.2 miles to the cottage, return to the bridge with his friends for more diving, drive to the ferry landing, swim the channel from Chappaquiddick to Martha's Vineyard, return to his hotel room in Edgartown and change his clothes.

The Senator was seen by one of the owners of the hotel, the Shiretown Inn, at 2:25 A.M. dressed in a pair of slacks and a jacket.

Mr. Look is emphatic about the time of his movements. He told the police he left the Edgartown Yacht Club, where he worked that night as a guard, at 12:25 and had already kicked off his shoes at home on Chappaquiddick Island when he noticed the time as two minutes before 1 o'clock.

The young women said there was nothing unusual about the appearance of Mr. Gargan and Mr. Markham when they returned to the cottage. They were unsure of the time of the return. The young women said that they had not seen Mr. Kennedy return to the cottage and that they did not know how the Senator had attracted the attention of Mr. Markham and Mr. Gargan.

Senator Kennedy's aide pointed out one error in a chronological account of the events before and after the accident that appeared in The New York Times Sunday. He said the Senator flew to Martha's Vineyard from Washington July 18 and was not aboard his yacht, the Victura, when she sailed to the island from Hyannis Port.

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