

PUBLIC FORGIVING IN KENNEDY POLL

But His Account of Mishap
Also Draws Skepticism

Americans are taking a forgiving view of Senator Edward M. Kennedy after his automobile accident July 18, the Louis Harris polling organization reports in today's issue of Time magazine.

Time reported, however, a "high degree of skepticism about Mr. Kennedy's explanation of the accident and his behavior afterward, and about the incident's bearing on his Presidential aptitude."

Interviewers in 100 communities across the country asked 1,609 persons between last Monday and Wednesday if they agreed or disagreed with a series of opinions about the Senator.

"Neither Time nor the Louis Harris organization could quote the exact wording of the questions yesterday, but Michael Edison, vice president of the polling organization, gave the gist of the questions and the recorded response.

Sixty-eight per cent agreed that it would be unfair to be critical of Mr. Kennedy's reaction after the accident "because the same thing could have happened to anybody."

Queries Seen Unanswered

By a plurality of 44 to 36 per cent, those interviewed agreed that a number of questions about the incident remained unanswered.

Fifty-one per cent agreed that there was "still no adequate explanation of what he was doing at the party or with the girl who was killed."

Forty per cent agreed with a statement that the Massachusetts Senator had "panicked in a crisis and showed that he could not be given high public trust, such as being President." Forty-five per cent disagreed, and 15 per cent were unsure.

A Gallup Poll reported yesterday that Senator Kennedy's popularity had fallen sharply since the accident, in which Mary Jo Kopechne was killed, but that his standing as a potential Presidential candidate was unchanged.

Interviews with 1,419 persons in 300 communities before and after the accident showed that generally favorable opinions of the Senator outweighed negative feelings by 3 to 1, while extreme feelings of favor and disfavor changed sharply.

Time also reported today that Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy, the Senator's mother, had "not given up her hopes for her surviving son's political future."

"I'm sure Ted will rise above all this," she said.

G.O.P. Seeks Candidate

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3 (AP) —Republicans are seeking a candidate to oppose Senator Kennedy next year. They concede that their man will lose but hope they can force the Democratic crowd-drawer to stick close to Massachusetts.

If the strategy works, it could deprive Democrats of a valuable campaigner in their battle to hold control of the Senate.

"That, frankly, is our hope," said one man involved in Republican campaign planning. "We don't think that anybody is going to beat the young man in Massachusetts."

Republicans do believe, however, that they can cut into Mr. Kennedy's Massachusetts margin—a plurality of more than 1.1 million votes in his latest Senate campaign.

That expectation is based largely on Mr. Kennedy's automobile accident July 18 and his plea of guilty to leaving the scene of the crash in which a young secretary drowned.

Speculation about a Republican challenger has centered on a House member and two Administration officials. They are Representative F. Bradford Morse, Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe and Under Secretary of State Elliott Richardson.

Twenty-five Democratic seats are at stake in the elections in 1970, and in many of those races visits from Mr. Kennedy, for fund-raising or for some political cheerleading, would help Democratic contenders.

Celler Is Critical

Representative Emanuel Celler, Democrat of Brooklyn, said yesterday that he believes that Mr. Kennedy's behavior after his car accident, knocked him out of the contention for the Presidency.

"I think the nation itself has come to realize he is not a shining white knight," Mr. Celler said in a television interview on WCBS.

He was also critical of Mr. Kennedy's "cunning" television statement about the accident on Chappaquiddick Island, Mass.

"There are so many gaps here that it causes us to lose considerable confidence in Teddy Kennedy," he said.

Mr. Kennedy announced last week he would seek re-election in 1970 but would not be a Presidential candidate in 1972.

For Active Kennedy

To the Editor:

In response to Senator Kennedy's nationwide broadcast July 25 I should like to add my name to the list of those who support the wish that he remain active in the governmental arena and most emphatically urge him to return to the Senate.

His explanation I fully accept. He manifests true qualities of leadership, integrity, imaginative resourcefulness and confidence. We look forward to the achievements of his political future—one that brings hope and one in which we can all share great pride.

He should not be crucified for the rest of his life for the recent deeply tragic accident. His country—our great nation—can with its compassion and understanding best be served by his zealous work in the Senate immediately.

G. W. WALTER
New York, July 26, 1969