

DREW PEARSON

Kennedy Stalling Probe Into Death

WASHINGTON — It now looks as if it will take a grand jury investigation to find out what really happened the night that Sen. Ted Kennedy and Mary Jo Kopechne plunged into Poucha Pond.

The tight little circle around Kennedy has shown no inclination, as of this writing, to cooperate with Massachusetts District Attorney Edmund Dinis. He may be unable to get all the answers he seeks, therefore, at the Sept. 3 inquest.

If he is dissatisfied with the responses, he can call a grand jury which has broader powers to compel answers. Those who know Dinis say he won't rest until he has explored every lead and questioned every witness. This will include the senator himself.

Dinis can subpoena the people, for instance, who received the controversial telephone calls charged to Kennedy's credit card on the night of the accident and ask them to identify the caller under oath.

A Kennedy aide has branded the report of the 17 calls "preposterous," adding: "At least half a dozen people have access to the senator's credit card. . . but I doubt that any of them made any calls that night." A number of newspapers have also been skeptical about the calls.

This column can report categorically, however, that



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calls were placed from Martha's Vineyard shortly after the accident and charged to Kennedy's credit card. Ex-White House aide Ted Sorensen and Attorney Burke Marshall were called, although Marshall wasn't reached until late the following morning.

A 21-minute call to the Kennedy compound at Hyannis Port was also completed. The mysterious call to an "unlisted-unpublished" Boston number, referred to in the newspapers, was actually a call from Martha's Vineyard to Kennedy's unlisted number in Boston.

These calls uphold my story that Kennedy wasn't stumbling around in confusion but was busy trying to extricate himself after the tragedy.

WHATEVER Sorensen may have counseled on the phone, he evidently expected the senator to report the accident at once to the police. For when Sorensen arrived on the scene, he chewed out Joe Gargan and Paul Markham for not calling the police. Instead, the two joined Kennedy in attempting to cover up his responsibility for the accident.

The senator was depressed and incommunicative after his advisers gathered around him. For a week, he brooded over the tragedy. Twice, he broke down and wept. He couldn't keep back the tears, for instance, when he learned that his paralyzed father had been told about the accident. Old Joe Kennedy took the news hard.

Ex-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara strongly advised that Kennedy go before the TV cameras at once with a full explanation. Other intimates, including Sorensen, were worried that the emotional strain might be too much for the senator. The eventual statement was drafted by David Burke, the senator's administrative assistant,

and Milton Gwartzman, a Washington attorney, under Sorensen's direction.

What is amazing is that such high-powered advisers would produce a statement so full of loopholes. If Kennedy had told the full truth no matter how painful, the public probably would have forgiven him. For they would have been asked to balance one terrible night against a seven-year record of dedicated public service.

Note: Through all his ordeal, the greatest comfort to Kennedy has been the attitude of his fellow senators. His Democratic colleagues, to the last man, have come up to him privately and asked how they could help. Several Republican senators have also expressed their solicitude. This is a mark of Kennedy's personal popularity in the senate. Unlike his two brothers, Ted has always been deferential to his seniors and has attended to the dreary senate routine that his brothers shunned.

SOUTH Korean President Chung Hee Park's California conference with President Nixon coincides with intelligence reports of renewed belligerence in North Korea.

Kim Il Sun, the moon-faced North Korean dictator, seems to be spoiling for trouble. In private, he has been threatening to renew the Korean War.

Kim is sending infiltrators into South Korea with instructions to agitate against a third term for President Park. Documents have been captured which instruct Communist agents to stir up dissension and organize demonstrations against Park.

No doubt Kim would like to get rid of the tough, taciturn, title South Korean leader who has brought military and economic stability to South Korea. Park has set a personal example of austerity to encourage his people to sacrifice.

Their sacrifices are now

paying off in the form of an economic boom that U.S. advisers would have thought impossible a few years ago. He

has also whipped the South Korean army into one of the finest in Asia.

President Nixon would like nothing better than to see the South Koreans remain in Vietnam to bolster the South Vietnamese while U.S. troops begin their withdrawal. Nor is he eager to see the bantam South Korean president retire at this crucial time.

Kopechne's Win Hearing Delay

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. (AP) — Mary Jo Kopechne's parents have won a delay in a court move by Dist. Atty. Edmund Dinis of New Bedford, Mass., to have her body exhumed for an autopsy.

Dinis had hoped for a final ruling in time for the scheduled Sept. 3 opening of an inquest into the accident a month ago in which the pretty, blonde secretary, 28, drowned after a car driven by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., plunged off a bridge.

Instead of hearing the petition itself next Monday as planned, Judge Bernard C. Brominski of Common Pleas Court has decided to set aside that day for arguments for its dismissal.

After a 40-minute conference yesterday with Dinis and lawyers for Mary Jo's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kopechne, the judge said:

"The hearing scheduled for Monday is temporarily postponed. Instead, we will hear arguments at that time on the motions presented to the court."