

Parents of Mary Jo Kopechne Are 'Unimpressed' by Blood Claims

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. (AP) —Counsel for Mary Jo Kopechne's parents said today "we will continue to challenge in court all efforts by Massachusetts to exhume her body for an autopsy."

Attorney Joseph Flanagan said the parents are "unim-

pressed" by allegations that there was blood in Mary Jo's nose and mouth and on her clothing when her body was removed from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's submerged car last July 19.

Dist. Atty. Edmund Dinis of New Bedford, Mass., in an

amended petition requesting an autopsy, said his investigators learned about the blood after the 28-year-old secretary was buried in Larksville, Pa.

FLANAGAN SAID Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kopechne of Berkeley Heights, N. J., fighting the autopsy request since it was made in mid-August, "don't feel Dinis has come up with anything indicating foul play, criminal conduct on the part of anyone, or a different verdict of death."

An associate medical examiner in Massachusetts listed death as asphyxiation from immersion, or drowning.

Police Chief Dominick J. Arena of Edgartown, Mass., said he saw no blood when the body was removed from a pond on Chappaquiddick Island.

"Because there is no proof of foul play or criminal conduct, especially these elements, the parents don't want her body disturbed," Flanagan said in a telephone interview.

HE SAID HE has two legal options: He can again ask Common Pleas Judge Bernard C. Brominski—who has set Sept. 29 for a hearing on Dinis' autopsy petition — to dismiss it, or he can demand

that Dinis prove his allegations in court.

"We haven't decided on how we shall proceed but we are going to challenge the amended petition all the way," Flanagan said.

Dinis, in his amendment mailed to the court yesterday, said the presence of blood in the nose and mouth, and traces of it on Mary Jo's white shirt "may or may not be consistent with death by drowning."

Flanagan said the petition "is only a set of allegations which have to be proved at a hearing and it is Mr. Dinis' burden to present evidence to show that his averments are true."

ARENA, WHO was present when a skin diver recovered the body, said: "When she was in my arms, waiting to put her on the boat, I saw no indication of blood."

Dr. Donald R. Mills, medical examiner for the district, who certified the cause of death as drowning, declined to comment on the Dinis statement.

The district attorney made his assertion in an amendment to a petition in the Common Pleas Court of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., where he is seeking exhumation of Miss Kopechne's body for an autopsy.

See KENNEDY—Page 4

Continued from Front Page
Judge Bernard C. Brominski set a hearing on the petition for Sept. 29.

An attorney for the 28-year-old secretary's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kopechne, who oppose exhumation, said Dinis would have to "present evidence to show that his averments are true."