

JACK ANDERSON

Boiler Room Girls
Kennedy Loyalists

WASHINGTON — The most tantalizing figures in the Chappaquiddick incident are the five "boiler room" girls, all fierce Kennedy loyalists, who have kept a tight lip on what really happened the night Sen. Ted Kennedy and Mary Jo Kopechne hurtled off Dyke Bridge into the dark waters below.

After painstaking investigation, however, this column has now unraveled some of the mysteries the girls are helping to hide:

Mystery No. 1—What were the Senator and Mary Jo doing on Dyke Road at the midnight hour? This column has established that three of the "boiler room" crew, including Mary Jo, had crossed Dyke Bridge earlier in the day to go swimming. Thus Mary Jo must have known that the road led to a secluded beach. Kennedy was also completely familiar with the area. Conclusion: The couple was heading for a look at or a dip in the ocean.

Mystery No. 2—What happened to Mary Jo's purse? Rosemary Keough's purse, not Mary Jo's, was found in the death car. This column has now learned that Rosemary and an unidentified man had driven off in the black Oldsmobile ahead of Kennedy and Mary Jo, that Rosemary had left her purse behind in the car.

After the accident, the authorities searched in vain for Mary Jo's missing purse in the salvaged automobile, on the bottom of Poucha Pond, and inside the vacation cottage. The attendant, Foster Sylvia, told authorities that he found no telltale evidence in the cottage after the Kennedy party left.

"Everything was shipshape," he said. "I don't even know if the beds were used really, they were so well made."

Conclusion: Mary Jo did not take her purse along on the midnight drive because,



JACK ANDERSON

contrary to the senator's statement, she intended to return to the cottage. To prevent Kennedy from being caught in a lie, someone apparently removed the purse from the cottage the next morning.

Mystery No. 3—What really went on at the famous Chappaquiddick cookout? Kennedy handyman Jack Crimmins, using plain white paper with his own south Boston address, reserved rooms at the Dunes for the "boiler room" girls. About the same time, the senator's cousin, Joe Gargan, rented the Chappaquiddick cottage, explaining he wanted it for himself, his wife and another couple.

Despite these suspicious arrangements, this column has determined that the pairing of six men, five of them married, and six single girls at the cook-out was partly a coincidence. Other people, including at least two married couples, had been invited. There was drinking at the party, but no one appeared to be drunk. Before the accident, the revelers began drifting off in twos and threes for midnight drives and strolls.

From the few remarks the girls have dropped in their private circles, it is clear they don't intend to say anything that would contradict the senator's story. They belong to a special breed that no politician can be without—bright, efficient, dedicated, hard-working and close-mouthed.

They are tough in the deceptive manner of moss-covered hickory, and they possess the singular ability to witness the dirt of backroom politics and smother it under a blanket of idealism.

To make sure they don't talk out of turn, the girls are receiving expert guidance on what not to say from their lawyer, Paul J. Redmond, who was an assistant to for-

mer U.S. Attorney Paul Markham. This is the same Markham who was one of the male guests at the cook-out and the senator's confidant after the accident.

The girls didn't even give Mary Jo's mother much more information about the tragic weekend than she could have read in the newspapers. They told her only that they had gone shopping, then sailing, then to the Chappaquiddick cottage for the cook-out.

They assured her that there had been little drinking, that Mary Jo had asked to be taken home, that Senator Kennedy had offered to drive her back. In essence, they told Mary Jo's mother no more than what the senator had stated on television.

The disappointed Mrs. Kopechne, however, doesn't believe the girls are leveling.

"I guess," she told a representative of this column sadly, "those girls just aren't going to talk. It would ease the heartache so much if they would give us some answers. But they talk as if they just don't know any more than what the senator has said."

Yet the girls have been fiercely defensive about Mary Jo in all their private remarks. They have staunchly upheld the saintly virtues of their late friend. Thus has evolved the Mary Jo complex. She has become a symbol. Her reputation is their reputation. Her survival as a "good girl" is their survival as "good girls."

Meanwhile, the girls need no instructions from their attorney on how to keep their mouths shut. They have withstood pushy reporters, tasteless questions, Kleig lights and jangling telephones. Out of the experience, they have developed a passionate hatred for the press.

This has also served as justification for refusing to talk. Distrust of the press has become an excuse for the big cover-up.

Certainly the facts, as pieced together by this column, are known to the five "boiler room" girls. They have chosen to confine their public comments to saying something nice about Mary Jo. They have painted her in angelic hues and left the rest to the public imagination.

With a Kennedy lawyer to coach them, it is doubtful that they will add any more light at the inquest.

(reference?)

* John P. Driscoll, Ross Richards and Henry Carr. (?)
See NYTimes, 29 Jul 69, Lelyveld, Washington.