

THE NEW YORK TIMES,

Judge in Kopechne Case

Wilfred J. Paquet

ABOUT 10 years ago, Judge Wilfred J. Paquet of the Massachusetts Superior Court sentenced two convicted bookies to 10 years in jail. Two weeks later he ordered them released and explained that he had decided the sentences were too severe. "I am big enough to admit I made a mistake," he said.

Man in the News The District Attorney in the case sought to nullify Judge Paquet's action, and the issue was finally resolved in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. A Boston lawyer named Edward B. Hanify, arguing in behalf of Judge Paquet, said that the judge's "honor and integrity have won the respect of his colleagues on the bench, members of the bar and the general community." Judge Paquet was upheld.

Mr. Hanify and Judge Paquet will meet again today in Edgartown, Mass., where a special grand jury session investigating what has become known as the Kopechne case opens its proceedings. Mr. Hanify is representing Senator Edward M. Kennedy; Judge Paquet is presiding over the hearings.

Death of a Secretary

The subject of the special grand jury session is the death last July of Mary Jo Kopechne, a 28-year-old Washington secretary and former Kennedy staffer. Miss Kopechne died when a car driven by Senator Kennedy plunged off a low bridge into a tidal pond on Chappaquiddick Island, off Martha's Vineyard. Mr. Kennedy, who was able to escape from the car, later pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident and was given a two-month suspended jail sentence and one year's probation.

Judge Paquet, who is 67 years old, is a tall, husky man with receding reddish-brown hair. He is said by one

lawyer to be "a good judge" in the sense of being a competent legal craftsman. The same lawyer added that "you have to be on your toes" in his courtroom; another put it differently: "He runs a tight courtroom—there's no kidding with him."

The judge is a Democrat. He is no longer politically active, but those who regard him as a less than distinguished jurist point to his long association with the Democratic Governor who appointed him in 1951, the late Paul A. Dever.

Judge Paquet and Mr. Dever met when they were both students at Boston University Law School in 1921. During World War II, Judge Paquet served as a legal officer in the Secretary of the Navy's office, with Mr. Dever his immediate superior. After the war, Judge Paquet helped run Mr. Dever's political campaigns and was naval aide to the Governor.

Wilfred J. Paquet — pronounced pah-KETT — was born in Milford, Mass., about 30 miles from Boston, on Aug. 18, 1902, one of six children of a French-Canadian father and an Irish mother.

The other children, he says, looked "like Frenchmen," after their father; "I am the only one who looks Irish, after my mother. I was the first person without an Irish name to be elected to the Clover Club." The club is a Boston fraternal society.

Law and Insurance

He was graduated from Milford High School in 1920, and went to work for a year as a boxmaker in Framingham, Mass. He saved his money and enrolled at Boston University in the fall of 1921. He worked his way through law school with two part-time jobs. After his graduation in 1924, he went to work as a trial lawyer for the Boston firm of Stoneman and Hill.

One of his first cases involved the American Auto-



Associated Press

"Runs a tight courtroom"

mobile Insurance Company, which then offered him a position. Until his appointment to the bench, he combined a private legal practice with his career with that company. He became vice president and manager of the company's Boston office. He was also a member of the Democratic State Committee and of a panel assigned to study the state's judicial system.

When he became a judge he said, "I'll have one job instead of two. This will give me more time for my outside interests." These include golfing and membership in the Elks and the Knights of Columbus. A Roman Catholic, he is described by one friend as a "quite religious" man who often stops briefly at a church before his courtroom day begins.

He married the former Margaret Horan of Boston, who had been his secretary at the insurance company in 1953. They have no children. They live in the Jamaica Plain section of Boston, an old Irish area, and have a summer place in South Yarmouth on Cape Cod.

Judge Paquet's courtroom manner is marked by occasional flashes of both anger and humor. The judge is also described as quick tempered, and there is a sign on his desk as a reminder to himself. It reads simply: "Patience."