

The Bitter Kopechne Questions

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Washington

**Pent-up bitterness
against Senator Edward
Kennedy is erupting in
the Kopechne family.**

Mary Jo's parents were emotionally shaken by Judge James Boyle's findings of falsehood and negligent driving by the Massachusetts Senator in whose car their daughter died last July.

According to Mrs. Kopechne's sister, Mrs. George Matthews, the bereaved couple first read the inquest report in their lawyer's office in Wilkes Barre, Pa.

A trembling Joseph Kopechne tried to calm his wife Gwen, sobbing uncontrollably.

"I think my sister is finally waking up," Mrs. Matthews said. "My God, maybe the child could have been saved."

CONTRADICTION

These reporters find a hitherto unnoticed contradiction in the inquest record which could give their claim a boost.

The testimony of the mortician who handled Mary Jo's body suggests suffocation rather than drowning as the cause of death. If the pretty young aide did indeed suffocate, she probably remained alive longer than has been assumed.

Mrs. Matthews said a recent effort by Kennedy to meet with the Kopechnes was rebuffed and contact now is limited to their lawyers.

The sister predicted Kopechne will not be working much longer. She said the couple plan "a long trip the first of June."

Meanwhile, a \$1 paperback version of the inquest transcript is selling briskly. It gives for the first time the atmosphere of the highly publicized cottage party attended by six single girls and six married men on the tragic weekend.

DIVER

Scuba diver John Farrar, who brought up Mary Jo's body from Poucha pond on remote Chappaquiddick Island, told these reporters "she was alive easily an hour" in the submerged car.

Kennedy and two friends could not possibly cope with the inky blackness and heavy tide, Farrar said.

The reference was to Jo-

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seph Gargan and Paul Markham who said they returned to the car with the senator for rescue attempts.

"Why didn't they try to save a life by getting help?" Farrar asked. "The only answer you can come out with is Kennedy didn't want anybody around until he had time to formulate his story."

UNTRUE

Farrar, who was reached in Edgartown, termed Judge Boyle's statement that no air remained in the car "completely untrue. Two of us in the fire department saw air emanating but were not allowed to testify on that aspect."

After Farrar retrieved the corpse, County Medical Examiner Donald R. Mills and mortician Eugene Frieh examined it together while the diver stood by.

The girl drowned, Mills testified later, because she was "completely filled with water."

Frieh's testimony conflicts. He said the examination produced "some water" but "mostly foam."

Farrar's observations corroborated Frieh's. Farrar said the mortician later told him that drowned bodies release large quantities of water during embalming. In this instance the remains did

not and, according to Farrar, Frieh said, "The girl suffocated."

WATER

Reached by telephone, Frieh confirmed he had obtained "only a half cup of water." He would say no more, however, "Because I am not going to run afoul of certain people."

When Mills was called he stuck to his diagnosis of drowning, but admitted the car may have contained air.

Farrar said he realized, when diving for the body, that he would be the only witness and carefully noted the dead girl's position in the car.

"My God, it hit me right in the face like a sledgehammer," he said. "This girl had struggled for air. She was in what we call a 'consciously assumed' position. She didn't float there. She put herself in that position and held herself there to achieve air. Maybe she thought somebody would come rescue her."

Farrar claims it would take "a long time to die in your own air void. Gene Frieh told me she died before her face was immersed in water."

DRANK

The inquest report reveals that guests at the cottage ate, drank, sang, danced, and wandered out of doors for extended periods up to the wee morning hours.

That may be why no one paid much attention to the quiet departure of Kennedy and Mary Jo. They were headed for the beach, the Judge concluded, although Mary Jo's bathing suit, testimony developed, was back in her hotel room.

On hand at the party were three half gallons of vodka, four fifths of Scotch, two bottles of rum, and two cases of canned beer. Testimony did not reveal clearly how much remained the next morning.

The five surviving girls continue to keep mum on the case.

Four are back at their jobs in Washington and Boston.

Esther Newberg, the most argumentative witness at the inquest, has sublet her apartment and moved to New York to work for gubernatorial hopeful Arthur Goldberg.

Mrs. Paul F. Markham, wife of a party guest, termed it "ridiculous" to believe the innuendoes circulating about the cookout. "They have these political get-togethers all the time," she said.