

Koepchnes Question Chappaquiddick

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The parents of Mary Jo Ko-
pechne indicated in an article
published by New Times mag-
azine that they still have some
questions about the auto
mishap that took their daugh-
ter's life.

In what New Times de-
scribes as the first interview
given by the Koepchnes to an
American publication since
the accident six years ago, the
Koepchnes said they believe
their daughter was sleeping in
the back seat of Sen. Edward
M. Kennedy's (DMass.) car
when it plunged off a bridge
on Chappaquiddick Island.

Gwen Koepchne is quoted
as saying she believes Ken-
nedy "was still confused"
about the mishap when he
made his first statements and
also was the victim of bad ad-
vice.

"He had poor advice, right
from the time it happened. I
think he got so involved in this
lousy advice and then couldn't
back out and tell the truth. He
got deeper and deeper and
deeper into it," she is quoted
as saying in the magazine arti-
cle published today.

(The Washington Post was
unable to reach Kennedy or
the Koepchnes yesterday.)

Koepchne, a 28-year-old for-

mer campaign worker for
Kennedy's brother, Robert,
had attended a party with
some other persons on the
small island adjoining Mar-
tha's Vineyard on the night of
July 18, 1969.

Kennedy's sworn statement
is that he was returning to his
hotel and taking Koepchne to
hers when he made a wrong
turn and accidentally drove
off the bridge. He said he
managed to escape from the
submerged car but was unable
to rescue Koepchne.

The interviewer for New
Times, Gerald Kelley, editor
of a Martha's Vineyard weekly
called the Grapevine, said the
interview was conducted in
July. He said the Koepchnes
at the time were visiting the
island and met him through
John Farrar, the skin diver
who pulled Koepchne's body
from the car.

According to the magazine,
the Koepchnes said they be-
lieved that their daughter had
gone to sleep in the rear seat
of the Kennedy car and
"happened to be in the car
when it took off."

Mrs. Koepchne was quoted
as saying the couple holds a
"bitter" feeling against Joseph

Gargan, a cousin of Kennedy,
and Paul Markham, a former
U.S. attorney, who were at
the party and according to
later accounts, went to the ac-
cident scene to try to rescue
the woman.

"What hurts most," Joseph
Koepchne is quoted as saying,
"is to think that my daughter
had to be left there all night.
At least his (Kennedy's) two
buddies could have tele-
phoned. There was an outside
possibility my kid could have
been saved."

(Gargan and Markham could
not be reached immediately
for comment.)

Koepchne also said, accord-

ing to the magazine, that he
and his wife rejected an au-
topsy of their daughter be-
cause "we were made to be-
lieve that the autopsy was pri-
marily to find out if my
daughter was pregnant."

"There were so many things
happening. We were being hit
from all sides—north, south,
east and west," he is quoted as
saying.

Mrs. Koepchne is quoted as
saying she believes that other
persons besides herself and
her husband should be inter-
viewed about Chappaquiddick
but that "nobody's been under
any pressure at all to answer
questions."