

## Kennedy Labels as 'Indefensible' His Conduct at Chappaquiddick

BOSTON, Oct. 26 (UPI) — Senator Edward M. Kennedy said in a copyright interview in The Boston Globe's Sunday issue that his conduct immediately after the 1969 incident at Chappaquiddick Island in which a woman passenger in his car drowned was "irrational and indefensible and inexcusable and inexplicable."

However, in the interview, the first that Senator Kennedy has given to the press about the incident of July 18, 1969, he denied that either he or his had been under the influence of alcohol. The Senator also denied that he was driving to the beach with her instead of to the ferry back to the mainland.

The woman, Mary Jo Kopechne, died when the car that Senator Kennedy was driving went off a narrow bridge and plunged into the water. The accident came after a party that the Senator and several aides including Miss Kopechne attended.

The Senator, a Massachusetts Democrat, recently withdrew from consideration for President in 1976, saying as he did so that the Chappaquiddick incident had no bearing on his decision. He later acknowledged, however, that Miss Kopechne's death would undoubtedly have become a point of sharp questioning had he chosen to run for the Presidency.

In the interview with The Globe, Senator Kennedy acknowledged that he had been wrong when, in reporting the accident to the police, he failed to inform them that two of his friends had tried to rescue Miss Kopechne but failed.

However, he said that an inquest judge was "erroneous

and mistaken" in characterizing his driving of the car as probably "criminal."

The Senator gave to The Globe a copy of a study made for him in 1969 by the Arthur D. Little Company, which concluded that "braking only" would not have prevented a car going 20 miles an hour from going off the bridge, and that Senator Kennedy's headlights could have illuminated the bridge no sooner than three seconds prior to the accident.

Senator Kennedy also denied in the interview reports that he had asked a cousin who was at the party, Joseph Gargan, to take the blame for the accident. And he denied that he left the party at a later hour than he has testified and that the rescue efforts of Mr. Gargan and another companion, Paul Markham, were made the following morning rather than moments after the accident.

Senator Kennedy, who did not report the accident to the police until the following morning, said Mr. Gargan and Mr. Markham should not be faulted for not having reported it because he had told them he would do it.

However, he told The Globe, he almost drowned while swimming across the 500-foot channel from Chappaquiddick Island to Edgartown and was "absolutely exhausted" when he reached the other shore.

Senator Kennedy repeated earlier denials that the party of Kennedy workers had been a "married man's night out." He said that his wife, Joan, had intended to be present at the party but "because of illness related to her pregnancy, she was unable to be there, really at the last moment."