



The Ted Kennedy Crash

Girl Dies; He Faces Arrest

Examiner News Services

EDGARTOWN, Martha's Vineyard (Mass.) — A car driven by Sen. Edward Kennedy plunged off a narrow wooden bridge early yesterday, killing a pretty blonde secretary riding with him.

The accident went unreported for about eight hours. Police Chief Domenic Arena said last night that he will file a formal charge against the senator tomorrow in District Court charging him with leaving the scene of an accident. Kennedy would have 24 hours in which to answer the charge.

Under Massachusetts law, a manslaughter charge is



MARY JO KOPECHNE



SEN. EDWARD KENNEDY

mandatory in cases where someone leaves the scene of an accident in which there has been a fatality and negligence is proved.

Kennedy, 38, Senate Democratic whip and regarded as

a potential presidential candidate in 1972, was not hurt.

He reported he dived repeatedly into about 10 feet of water to try to rescue Miss Mary Jo Kopechne, 29, of Washington, who once

worked as a secretary for his brother, the late Sen. Robert Kennedy.

The accident, according to police, happened between

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CHIEF JAMES ARENA
In Kennedy Case

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midnight and 1 a.m. yesterday, and Kennedy did not report it until 9 a.m., half an hour after two young fishermen reported finding the car.

Arena said he believed the mishap was "strictly accidental" and there was "no sign of negligence, speed, things like that."

Arena himself tried to find the body after the car was found but before Kennedy reported it. Arena said the current was so strong there that he had to give up and call on scuba divers who made the grim find.

Kennedy was unharmed but said he was in a state of shock for several hours before reporting the accident to police.

"I have no recollection of how I got out of the car," Kennedy said.

A medical examiner ruled Miss Kopechne drowned.

The bridge is an isolated area approached by a narrow dirt road. Kennedy gave police this written statement regarding the accident:

"The car turned over and sank in the water and landed with the roof resting on the bottom. I attempted to open the door and window of the car but I have no recollection of how I got out of the car.

'Dove Down'

"I came to the surface and repeatedly dove down to see if the passenger was still in it. I was unsuccessful in the attempt.

"I was exhausted and in state of shock and I recall that I was able to get back to some friends who had a car

parked in front of a cottage. I asked someone to bring me back to Edgartown.

"I remember walking around for a period of time and when I suddenly realized what happened I immediately called the police."

Kennedy went to Edgartown for the Edgartown Yacht Club regatta Friday and sailed the family yacht, Ventura, to a ninth-place finish.

Kennedy's press secretary, Richard Drayne, said that Friday night he went by car ferry to Chappaquiddick Island to drop in on a gathering of former Robert Kennedy campaign workers to thank them. Among them was Miss Kopechne.

He told police he offered her a ride in his car to the island ferry landing for the trip back to Edgartown when the accident happened.

Arena said that Kennedy requested that his statement not be released until he had time to review it with counsel.

The chief said that he went ahead and released it at 3 p.m. although he had not heard from the senator because of "pressure" from the press.

The chief said he did not know who took the senator back to his hotel, the Shiretown Inn, in Edgartown or how they got there. The police chief said he did not get the names of the friends.

The last ferry between Chappaquiddick Island and the Vineyard leaves at 1 a.m. Ferry officials said Kennedy was not on it and that he was not on it the last few previous trips.

A ferry worker claimed that Kennedy took the ferry from the Vineyard back to

Chappaquiddick Island yesterday morning.

He said that the senator went into a small building near the ferry landing and stayed for some time, then took the ferry back to the Vineyard. The worker said that the building contains a telephone.

Mrs. Joseph Kopechne of Berkeley Heights, N.J., mother of the victim, said, that as far as her daughter was concerned, "the Kennedys could do no wrong.

The medical examiner said that he saw Miss Kopechne's

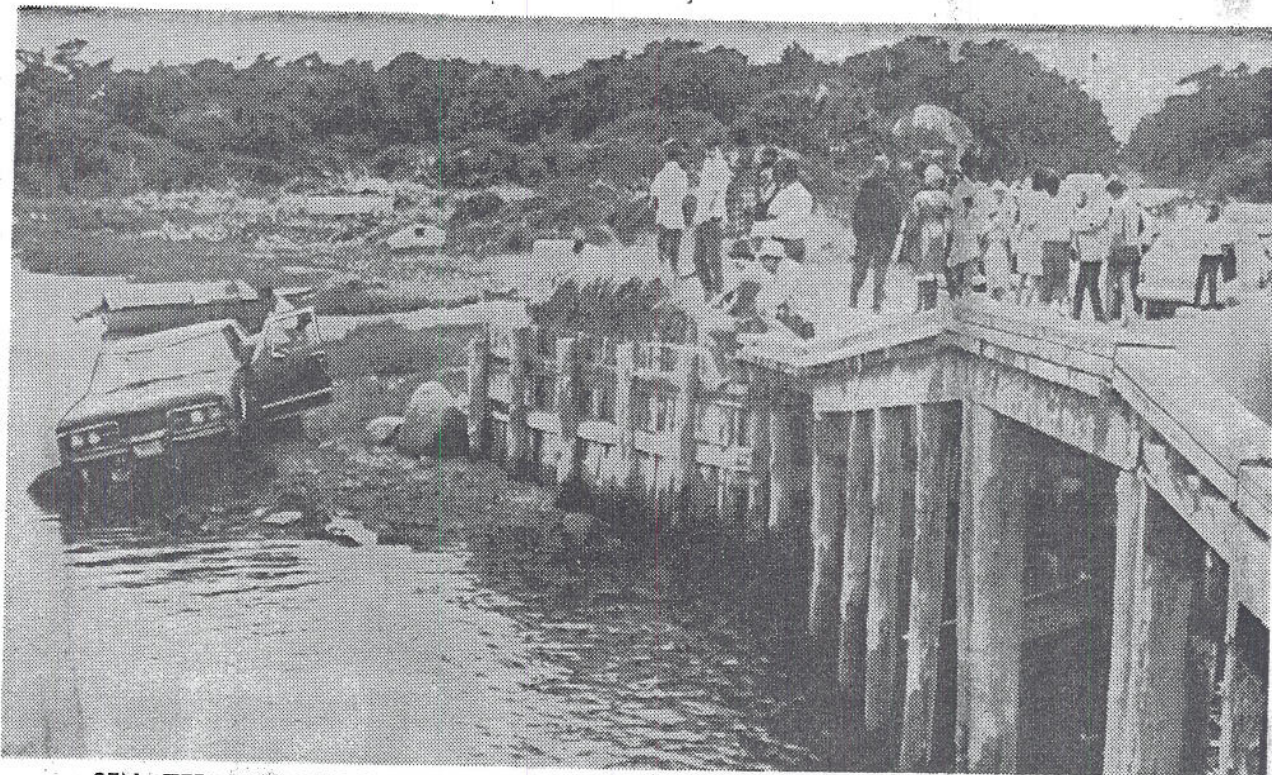
body about 9:30 a.m. The woman was clothed in a white blouse and slacks. She was found in the back seat of the car, police said.

A spokesman in Kennedy's office said the senator's wife, Joan, and their children have been at the Kennedy home on Squaw Island, near Hyannis Port, for the past several days.

It was the second time Kennedy was nearly killed. He suffered a broken back in a plane crash five years ago. All three of his older brothers met violent death.

X E M K ?

Ted Faces Charge in Crash



SEN. TED KENNEDY'S SEDAN (L) AFTER IT WAS HAULED UP FROM SALT POND
Car had hurtled off railless wooden bridge which connects small isle and big Martha's Vineyard island

—AP Photo