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A Crowd Applauds as Kennedy Approaches and Leaves Church

By MURRAY SCHUMACH

Special to The New York Times

HYANNIS, Mass., July 27—Senator Edward M. Kennedy was applauded today on his first public appearance since his televised statement last Friday on the fatal auto accident that has touched off a national controversy.

As the Senator approached and left a church here, a few hundred persons pressed around him, several shouting such remarks as "We're with you, Ted."

In the excitement, Mrs. Ethel Kennedy, widow of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, entered and left the church, almost unnoticed, with several of her 11 children.

Mr. Kennedy, who was accompanied by his wife, Joan, and two of their three children, made no apparent effort to encourage his partisans. He seemed grim as he walked, at times with his head lowered, across the parking lot of the St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church.

The Senator's failure to respond to the applause seemed to excite the crowd even more. Men and women lifted children on their shoulders to see him. Others pushed close to him to take pictures.

Usher Is Angered

At one point, enthusiasts became so unruly that a church usher, who was escorting the 37-year-old Senator and his family back to the car after services, shouted:

"This is church ground. Let's not make a carnival out of it."

But this plea for restraint was smothered in another wave of applause and shouts, as the crowd jostled newsmen and virtually ignored the four policemen in the vicinity.

The outburst, which seemed entirely spontaneous, occurred while thousands of telegrams were continuing to pour into the Senator's summer home in Hyannis Port. The wires are

being sent in response to his televised announcement that he will be guided by the public in deciding whether or not to resign as Senator as a result of his role in the tragic auto accident.

Senator Kennedy was driving a car the night of July 18 when it went off a narrow bridge on nearby Chappaquiddick Island, into a pond. Mary Jo Kopechne, 28, a former secretary to Robert Kennedy, was found drowned in the car.

Last Friday night, in his coast-to-coast television talk, Senator Kennedy said his failure to report the accident immediately was "indefensible." He waited about nine hours before reporting it. By that time others had told the police about the accident.

The morning of the day he issued his televised statement, he pleaded guilty to the charge of leaving the scene of an accident and received a suspended two-month sentence. Since Senator Kennedy turned to the public for guidance, he has remained in seclusion at his summer home, on Squaw Island in Hyannis Port, which has been sealed off from the public and press by the police.

'Obviously Moved'

The only comment on the telegrams has come from his press secretary, Richard C. Drayne, who said they were running about 100 to 1 in the Senator's favor and that the Senator was "obviously moved."

Today, Mr. Drayne, who has been meeting with the Senator over the weekend, was asked when Senator Kennedy would return to Washington. He replied:

"I don't know. He has no immediate plans."

Asked how long the Senator would wait before deciding whether to resign, Mr. Drayne said he did not know.

It was against this background that the Senator ar-

rived shortly before 10 A.M. at the church. His wife was driving the blue Chevrolet convertible with the Senatorial license plates USS 1.

In the car were their children Kara, 9, and Edward Jr., 8. The youngest child, Patrick Joseph, 2, was left at home. Also in the car was Claude Hooten, a friend of the Senator's.

The car was spotted easily as it approached the white clapboard church with wooden columns.

Hundreds of persons were standing outside the church and across the street. As they recognized the occupants, they rushed into the parking area, closing in on the car that Mrs. Kennedy was trying slowly to back into a space.

Silence at First

The Senator was the first one out of the car. For a second there was silence. Then the applause began. A Negro, who later said he had worked for the Senator at one time, greeted him and walked alongside for a few paces.

As the crowd moved in on Senator Kennedy, some children began breaking away from parents. The Senator's family walked quickly into the smaller of the three entrances to the church.

Nothing was said during the half-hour service, conducted by Msgr. William Thomson, that related to the accident and its aftermath. During the recessional the congregation sang "America the Beautiful."

Later, Monsignor Thomson said that while this has been sung at the church in the past, "today we used it in tribute to Senator Kennedy."

During the services the police tried to avert a crush by pleading vainly with the hundreds in the parking area to stand back when the service ended.

But as soon as the Senator and his family appeared in the doorway again the crowd closed in, this time more determinedly than before. One man even reached into the car and tried to shake hands with the Senator as his wife was trying to drive out of the parking area.



United Press International

ATTEND CHURCH: Senator Edward M. Kennedy, his wife and two of their children, Edward Jr., 8, and Kara, 9, on the way to St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church in Hyannis, Mass., yesterday. The story is on Page 28.