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Ted Hurt But Has Chance To Emerge as His Own Man

WASHINGTON—The telegrams stack up and the people of Massachusetts tell Teddy that they still love him. The vagaries of last week's tragic episode will likely be forgotten by most folk in a few months, but Teddy Kennedy remains considerably blemished. The best result for him is that he must now prove his fitness for President, if that office is his ultimate

ambition. It was such a sure thing, like shooting fish in a barrel, for Teddy to ask Massachusetts people to give him a mandate to continue. They have lived with too much Kennedy triumph and tragedy to do any different. Kennedy's televised emotional appeal started a transient handwagon which rolls well in his home state, but will have tougher going elsewhere.

Kennedy went heavy on moral conduct, the question of his leaving the Senate, and courage. But fair-minded people weren't charging debauchery, and no one asked him to resign. And after consulting with Theodore C. Sorensen, who was reputed to have ghosted much of the late John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer-Prize winning "Profiles in Courage," Teddy used, word for word, partial paragraphs from the book's closing chapter in his televised speech. So the ghost-writer rewrote himself for another Kennedy.

What fair-minded people wanted to know they never found out. Why didn't Kennedy or his close friends, Paul Markham, a former United States attorney, and Joseph Gargan, his cousin, report the accident and missing girl at midnight when they all knew about it?

What did the three men actually decide when confronted with the realization that the girl might be dead? How did an emotionally and physically exhausted Kennedy manage to swim 600 feet in a five-knot channel to the Edgartown shore and why did Markham and Gargan allow him to do so?

How much did Mary Jo Kopechne's girl friends know of the accident and why did they disappear so quickly the next morning?

Beyond the Kennedy responsibility are the questions concerning an inade-

quate autopsy, a confused constabulary, the lack of a thorough investigation with its cross-examination of Kennedy and the others involved. The American press now rightfully cross-examines Kennedy, a mute witness at this point.

Whatever the answers, one can reasonably conclude that Kennedy—by his "own" words—showed that in this episode, at age 37, he could not command himself in a critical situation.

It was bad luck for him, perhaps, to have been in a dazed condition and to have to rely on sycophants like Markham and Gargan for counsel during those horrible hours. Too bad there wasn't a hard-nosed guy around to coldly tell Teddy the score. It is also clear that the power of the Kennedy name and wealth provided a treatment by the law which ordinary citizens don't enjoy. Big names cow small-town cops.

And which poor soul in a jam can summon the help of former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara; presidential speechwriters like Sorensen and Richard Goodwin; a brilliant government and corporate attorney, Burke Marshall; and a swatch of friends and advisers? Who can get 15 minutes prime television time on all three networks for free?

Teddy Kennedy might have lost some of his mystique through the terrible ordeal of Chappaquiddick's small wooden bridge. Mystique can fade. A big, handsome man named Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., finished third in the 1966 New York gubernatorial campaign and barely nosed out an unknown named Paul Adams. So Kennedy is better off in that he has gained the opportunity to be his own man and a vastly strengthened one. He has the blessing of many years ahead, and it's up to him.