

Survey Rates Kopechne Death Worse Than Watergate Case

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Kevin P. Phillips and Albert Sindlinger report that a nationwide telephone survey has found that more Americans think "the drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne at Chappaquiddick" was "more morally reprehensible" than "the bugging of the Democratic National Committee" at Watergate.

The survey of 2,238 people between July 20 and 27 also found that more of them cited the Chappaquiddick incident than the Watergate bugging when asked, "Which concerns you the most?" The survey was conducted by Sindlinger & Co., of Swarthmore, Pa.

It was devised by Mr. Sindlinger, the company's president, and Mr. Phillips. Mr. Sindlinger is a financial and political opinion analyst who had been a favorite poll-taker of Charles W. Colson, a former counsel to President Nixon. Mr. Phillips is the author of "The Emerging Republican Majority" who served as a special assistant to John N. Mitchell during the 1968 Presidential campaign and when Mr. Mitchell was Attorney General.

In the survey, interviewers asked several comparative

questions about Watergate—which cited only the bugging—and the July 18, 1969, accident at Chappaquiddick Island, Mass., where Miss Kopechne was drowned in an automobile that had been driven by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts.

In response to the question, "Between Watergate and Chappaquiddick, in your opinion, which concerns you most?" a total of 40 per cent cited Chappaquiddick, 37 per cent named Watergate, 16 per cent said they were equally concerned about both, 4 per cent said they "didn't know," and 3 per cent declined to answer.

Interviewers then asked: "Which action do you yourself feel is the more morally reprehensible—which is worse—the drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne at Chappaquiddick or the bugging of the Democratic National Committee?"

The interviewers reported that 44 per cent named Chappaquiddick, 34 per cent cited Watergate, 8 per cent rated both equally reprehensible, 12 per cent said they "didn't know," and 2 per cent declined to answer.