

Senator's Plea On Accident Stirs Public

BOSTON — Sen. Edward Kennedy received an immediate, overwhelming and generally favorable response from the people of Massachusetts today after asking for their "advice and opinion" in deciding his political future.

However, the editors and commentators who sampled public opinion after Kennedy's TV appearance last night pointed out their methods were unscientific and their samplings were not a true cross-section of the voting public.

"The phone calls came pouring in until the senator's reporter, the only one probably the senator would show their face."

Kennedy said he and Miss Kopechne were driving on an unlit road as they headed to make the last ferry between Edgartown and Chappaquiddick about 11:15 p.m. when the car plunged off a narrow humpback bridge with no rails and overturned in eight feet of water, immediately filling with water.

The car, it turned out, was on the wrong road, but nowhere in his speech did Kennedy explain why.

Drowning
"I remember thinking as the cold water rushed in around my head that I was, for certain, drowning. But somehow I struggled to the surface alive," he said.

"I made immediate and repeated efforts to save Mary Jo by diving into the strong and murky current, but succeeded only in increasing my state of utter exhaustion and alarm.

"My conduct and conversations during the next several hours, to the extent that I can remember them, make no sense to me at all. Although my doctors inform me that I suffered a cerebral concussion as well as shock, I do not seek to escape responsibility for my actions by placing the blame either on the physical and emotional trauma brought on by the accident or on anyone else.

Indefensible
"I regard as indefensible," Kennedy went on, "the fact that I did not report the accident to the police immediately."

Instead of reporting the accident, he said he rested "for an undetermined time" in nearby grass and finally walked the 1.2 miles back to the cottage.

He said Gargan and Markham returned and dove unsuccessfully for Miss Kopechne.

Kennedy said he then asked Gargan and Markham to take him to the ferry

crossing to Edgartown and, finding that the ferry had shut down, he swam across—and nearly drowned a second time.

Russell Peachey, a co-owner of the Shiretown Inn, where Kennedy was staying, talked to Kennedy about 2:25 p.m. **At Desk**

Peachey said he was at the hotel desk when a shadowy figure came downstairs and stood by an icebox about 50 feet away.

"What time is it?" Kennedy asked. Peachey told him, and then Kennedy said, "I was awakened by the noise next door."

Kennedy's newest account left several questions unanswered. Why did he say the accident occurred shortly after 11:15 p.m. Friday, when authorities placed it at 12:40 a.m. Saturday?

Why did he leave the party with Miss Kopechne? Why was the purse of Rosemary Keough (his secretary, who

was also at the party) found in the car? Where is Miss Kopechne's purse?

He said he was not "driving under the influence of alcohol," but was he drinking at all?

New Mysteries
The statement created an equal number of mysteries. Why didn't Gargan and Markham urge him to report the accident or report it themselves?

Did Kennedy suffer a memory loss? And why did he classify a pond Arena said was 6 to 8 feet in depth as "deep?"

If he "suffered a cerebral concussion" as well as shock, why did Gargan and Mark-

ham let him swim across to Edgartown?

Lawrence Gibson, a local drug store clerk, said today Kennedy couldn't have swum the 500 feet between the islands because of the swift undertow that is always present.

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ton were jammed with telegrams to him.

Three hours later, 250 telegrams had been received in Hyannis, near Kennedy's summer home, and officials said others from other areas were waiting for relay from Boston.

"It seems like we've handled about 95,000 calls since Kennedy was on TV — and most of the people sending telegrams are all for him," an operator said.

In Boston — a heavily Democratic stronghold where Kennedy's grandfather was one of the first Irishmen to be elected mayor —

the Boston Globe and the Herald Traveler reported that calls were about 2 to 1 in support of Kennedy. The Record American said calls received there were "almost unanimous" in support of him.

The ratio was 3 to 1 for Kennedy in Worcester, an industrial city in central Massachusetts. In Springfield, farther west, the ratio was 9 to 1 for him.

Spokesmen at newspapers in all three cities said they received more than 100 calls.

Father's Home

Looking grim, Kennedy spoke for 12 minutes from the library of his ailing father's home overlooking Nantucket Sound. Slowly — and sometimes emotionally — he related the events of the accident that cost the life of Miss Kopechne.

He explained how he and Miss Kopechne, a former

campaign worker for his brother, the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy had been attending a cookout reunion July 18 at a rented cottage on Chappaquiddick Island with five other ex-campaign workers and several Kennedy associates.

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