

# Unfair Question From Kennedy

## Reston Reports

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### Edgartown, Mass.

The question Senator Edward Kennedy has put to the people of Massachusetts — should he resign from the United States Senate?—is really unfair. They have only his own account of the tragedy, and if they accept it as true, the question of resignation should not arise.

His testimony is simply that he misjudged a turning on a dangerous bridge and plunged into the water, killing a young woman whom he tried at great peril to his own life to save.

He said in his report to the people that he was not "driving under the influence of liquor." "There is no truth, no truth whatever, to the widely circulated suspicions of immoral conduct." Only "reasons of health" prevented his wife from being with him on this tragic night.

### SHOCK

Therefore, the one and only issue, as he and the court see it, is his failure to report the accident during a period of severe personal shock; and he has pleaded guilty to this charge.

Why then the talk of resignation? He says, quite rightly, that on questions of conscience, "each man must decide for himself what course to follow." But there is nothing in his account that eases any question except the question of the delay in reporting the accident.

Indeed, his television account of the event is a kind of tragic "profile in courage." What he has really asked the people of Massachusetts is whether they want to kick a man when he is down, and clearly they are not going to do that to this doom-ridden and battered family.

### SUPPORTER

The trouble is that even many of his own supporters in this center of the controversy are not satisfied with the record or the procedure in the case. Nobody but the Kennedy-haters wants to add

to the tortures of unhappiness in this family, but serious doubts remain even among those who would prefer to drop the whole question rather than perpetuate the grief.

"A man does what he must," Senator Kennedy said in his television account, "in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures, and that is the basic of all human morality."

But most men don't meet this ideal and one wonders why the senator raised it in these awkward circumstances. For the hard facts are that he ducked the main questions, evaded the press, pleaded guilty to the charge of not reporting the accident on time, which avoided cross-examination in the court.

### SILENCE

And in these circumstances — with all witnesses to the evening's proceedings gone from the island and silenced and all questions to the senator barred in court — it is not clear why he and his counselors should raise the moral issue and appeal to the voters, who have no means of questioning the cast of characters.

So doubt remains and probably the real question is not whether the voters of Massachusetts can live with the senator's account of the tragedy, but whether he can.

He has gone through a ghastly experience — not only on this island recently but ever since the murders of his two brothers. It may be that the pressures of the last year, when he became the proxy father to his brother Robert's children, the Democratic Whip of the Senate and the leader and symbol of the Kennedy clan and its ambitions, were too much for him.

But to end the Kennedy story on this tragic note, to ask for an impossible referendum on unknown facts by the people of Massachusetts is ridiculous.