

**NICK THIMMESCH**

## Kennedy Faces A Second Wave

WASHINGTON — A wave of sentiment resulting from his television speech last week heartened Sen. Teddy Kennedy, but he had better brace for a second wave which will be less pleasant. The next breaker will be the public reaction to the print media's "second look" at the Kennedy episode. A look employing the investigative and analytical skills of men who work for newspapers and magazines. The "word men" have an advantage in this kind of story, which is laced with inexplicables, and the "word men" understandably have done a better job than television.

Television became so powerful in our political life that the biggest men came to regard it with awe.

President Kennedy became a matinee idol to millions of housewives on television, but President Johnson lamented that the tyrannical tube rendered him poorly, thus making his already tough communication chores more difficult.

The tube was unkind to Richard Nixon in 1960, so when he readied for his national comeback, he made sure he could handle the medium and he has. In fact, some White House staffers seem so sure of the President's television success that they give short shrift to the print media.

But the latest Kennedy episode revealed the persistent strength of the word men. When the Kennedy story broke, the networks were on the moon, and the scribblers crawled over Edgartown's precincts.

Since Kennedy's original statement left enough holes for a fullback to run through, the word men swarmed over the island, their heads swimming with theories, digging and checking, like a vast army of hawkshaws.

The network folk found it was hard to televise a news vacuum. Newspapers and magazine librarians pulled out the clips on Kennedy, thus producing his previous record of moving traffic violations, his fatalistic utterances on being a Kenne-

dy, and the whole epic of his lively yet tragic family.

The word men found the scraps of information which can be tucked away into an expository narrative. Television found it exasperating to televise a mystery and compact it into precious seconds. Radio relayed the bulletins and fired the curiosity.

An estimated 80 newsmen were around Edgartown, and Police Chief Dominick Arena and Prosecutor Walter Steele were so harassed that they finally had to agree to hold two daily press conferences in the parish house of the Federated Church.

Newsmen pounded on residents' doors in search of eyewitnesses or a telephone to use. Their very presence created an urgency which helped prompt Kennedy to act after several days of agonizing. The senator's principal communications thrust was his television speech, followed by an immediate and somewhat uncritical commentary on television, and the thousands of telegrams.

At the same time, however, the word men readied their "second look"—a host of long, probing Sunday summaries, cover stories by Time, Newsweek, and Life, and editorials, columns and features all asking questions which have the eventual effect of reducing the Kennedy case. What the American public got on the Kennedy story it got mostly from the print media.

The meaning of all this to Sen. Kennedy is that he shouldn't take too much comfort from the Massachusetts response to his televised speech. His story is still being thought over by the American public which is still reading about it because it's the kind of story best understood through reading.