

NEW ORLEANS

Hearing Set On Motion to Exhume Body

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. (AP) —A judge today granted a hearing on a request by Dist. Atty. Edmund Denis to exhume the body of Mary Jo Kopechne, who was killed in an auto accident involving Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

President Judge Bernard C. Brominski of Luzerne County Common Pleas Court set the hearing for 10 a.m., Aug. 25, at which time Denis will present evidence to support his request for an autopsy.

Dinis, of New Bedford, Mass., district attorney for that state's southern district, said he would go ahead with a scheduled Sept. 3 inquest into Miss Kopechne's death, regardless of the court's decision here.

THE 23-YEAR-OLD secretary drowned July 18 when a car driven by Kennedy plunged off a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island off the Massachusetts coast.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kopechne of Berkeley Heights, N.J., her parents, object to exhuming her body from a cemetery in nearby Larksville.

Their lawyer, John Flanagan, attended today's hearing, but said only that he would have to confer with his clients before deciding his next step.

Brominski said Denis apparently would attend the hearing, and Denis had three aides certified as representatives in case he could not make it.

DINIS REPEATED that he considered an autopsy vital to the case and said it would show the medical cause of death. Miss Kopechne's death has been listed as drowning.

"Basically, I'm not satisfied with the findings made at the time of the accident," said Dinis.

Mrs. Kopechne said she and her husband were "still determined to prevent an autopsy."

Dinis said he wants an autopsy so that the results of the examination can be included in the inquest he has ordered into the accident.

After the filing of the petition, a hearing could be held in about 10 days, court officials said.

DINIS SAID he had three state police detectives investigating the accident in preparation for the inquest which opens Sept. 3 at Edgartown, Mass.

Mrs. Kopechne said the autopsy has turned into a political issue.

"Mr. Dinis has not given us any definite reason for wanting an autopsy," she said. "We can't understand why he waited so long to do this. He is only hurting us."

Dinis has said that he had no plans to call Kennedy to testify at the inquest. However, he said developments in the case would determine whether the senator eventually would be summoned.