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Crowd Waits at Edgartown—Then Comes Letdown

By LACEY FOSBURGH

Special to The New York Times

EDGARTOWN, Mass., Sept. 2—Early this morning when the air was still cool and the only people in the streets were long-haired children riding bicycles, four men in gray coveralls started building a 20-by-40-foot scaffolding across the street from the Dukes County Courthouse.

By late afternoon tall television cameras, erect as sentinels, stood on top of the scaffolding and hundreds of newsmen, tourists and residents of this once quiet summer retreat filled the wide plaza, all waiting.

Then, at about 4:30 P.M., the word came from Boston that the inquest scheduled to begin here tomorrow morning that was to bring Senator Edward M. Kennedy and about 20 other witnesses to the red-brick courthouse to answer questions regarding the death of Mary Jo Kopechne on the night of July 18, had been postponed.

All For Nothing

For almost three weeks hotels and telephone companies, television stations and catering services, newspapers and the police had been preparing for the inquest. Now all their plans were changed.

"I'm just thunderstruck," exclaimed Mrs. Arthur Young, owner and manager of one of the town's largest hotels, the

Harborside. "All this preparation is for nothing."

Most of the 135 beds in her hotel are occupied by members of the news media here to attend the inquest.

"Everything is collapsing around us," moaned a workman for the K. A. Galley Company, who had spent the day hammering boards for the scaffolding.

Normally the population of this small coastal town dwindles from about 40,000 to 5,000 over the Labor Day weekend and the quiet peace of fall and winter begins at once.

New Phone Wires

This year, however, more than 350 newsmen from 97 news organizations all over the world arrived over the weekend to attend the inquest. Consequently, in trucks and trailers, in church basements and gray shingled cottages, in hotels and restaurants, vast changes—now in vain—were made to accommodate them.

In the basement of the white Methodist Church across the street from the courthouse about 20 telephones have been installed for the reporters' use. Even today, while the Boston court proceedings were continuing, 18 workmen continued to install hundreds of new wires connecting this isolated summer community, which has about 2,700 permanent telephones, with the mainland.

Outside, large trailer trucks

with hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of communications equipment belonging to each of the three major television networks, were lined, like ships moored along a wharf, up and down the streets.

"Each network is spending about \$17,000 a day on this story," said Robert Puglisi, unit producer for the National Broadcasting Company. He stood in the hot sun in the crowd outside the courthouse watching the scaffolding slowly being constructed.

NBC-TV, like the Columbia Broadcasting System and the American Broadcasting Company has about 50 employees here, including two correspondents. The network has rented two gray-shingled houses in the area for communications facilities and two rooftop balconies overlooking the court plaza where cameras would have filmed tomorrow's proceedings. It has also rented a restaurant to provide the crew with food, a boat, a helicopter and three planes to carry the film to New York and Boston.

Headed for Mainland

By early tonight, however, the first of these large trailer trucks was headed down the narrow highway heading for the ferry.

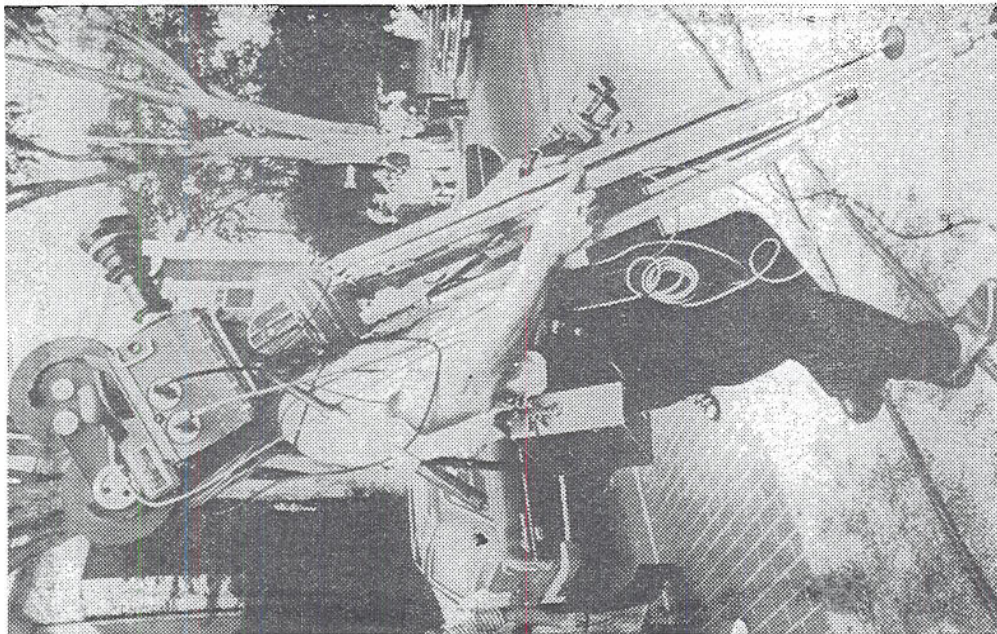
Down near the waterfront, away from the courthouse where tourists photograph each other standing on the white steps, Mrs. Young was trying

to hire more chambermaids and bus boys.

"Usually the hotel is almost empty after Labor Day and most of our staff leaves," she explained. "Usually we don't hire people to stay after Labor Day, but now the hotel is filled to 100 per cent capacity with newsmen, and I'm left with a fraction of my normal staff."

In preparation for the inquest, Mrs. Young and the managers of almost all the other hotels, had arranged to hire employees for an extra week or two. Many of them recruited additional help from the mainland.

For the hotel and restaurant owners particularly, another problem has resulted from the cancellation of the inquest. During the past few weeks many long-time visitors who traditionally enjoy the peace and quiet of September here on the beaches and walking through the scrub, canceled their reservations.



The New York Times (by Lee Romero)
SYMBOL OF POSTPONEMENT of inquest into death of Mary Jo Kopechne was this TV cameraman in Edgartown, Mass., yesterday, who packed his gear and left the scene.