

JACK ANDERSON

Inquest May Not End Troubles for Kennedy

WASHINGTON—The inquest next week into the drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne may not end the proceedings against Sen. Ted Kennedy. If the verdict is inconclusive, the Dukes County, Mass., grand jury may review the evidence for other possible violations. The senator and Mary Jo plunged off a crooked bridge during a midnight drive last July on Chappaquiddick Island, resulting in the girl's death. Grand jury foreman Leslie Leland, worried about a whitewash, has wanted a no-holds-barred investigation from the beginning. He tried to call the grand jury into special session last summer to look into the accident, but gave

up the idea after checking with Massachusetts Atty. Gen. Robert Quinn who warned that a rump session would be illegal.

When the grand jury was officially convened later in the fall, Leland called upon Dist. Atty.

Edmund Dinis for a review of his investigation of the accident.

The grand jury also checked into rumors of collusion between County Prosecutor Walter Steele and the Kennedy camp.

Secret testimony was taken from Edgartown attorney Rich Worth, who acknowledged that Steele had mentioned his name to Kennedy as a possible local counsel.

Steele, able prosecutor, told this column he had also recommended Richard McCarron, whom the senator retained.

DINIS PERSUADED the grand jury to await the outcome of the inquest before going ahead with its own investigation. But Leland told this column that, if he isn't satisfied with the findings he will confer with Dinis about calling the grand jury out of recess to finish the job the inquest started.

Any conflict in testimony at the inquest, for example, will give the grand jury an excuse to open an investigation into possible perjury.

This column, meanwhile, has conducted a painstaking investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Chappaquiddick tragedy. Here are the answers that the inquest is likely to develop:

1. What kind of an affair was the cook-out that preceded the accident? Witnesses will testify that it was perfectly proper, that married couples had been invited, that it was a coincidence only six men and six single girls attended, that the drinking had been moderate.

Specifically the witnesses will testify, if asked, that Sen. Kennedy had a few drinks

but was not drunk, that his cousin Joe Gargan was too busy cooking steaks to do much drinking.

2. **WHERE WAS THE** senator taking Mary Jo? No witnesses can be produced who are likely to contradict Kennedy's story that he was driving Mary Jo to catch the ferry back to the mainland. However, Mary Jo's purse, which she probably would have taken with her if she had intended to return to the mainland, is mysteriously missing. The authorities were unable to find it in the pond or the car.

3. Was the senator guilty of reckless driving, which, under the law, might have "endangered the lives" of others? No witnesses are available who can testify that his driving was responsible for the accident.

4. Why didn't the senator summon help at once to rescue Mary Jo? This is the question that Dinis will press the most vigorously. Presiding Judge James A. Boyle has also made private inquiries into the possibility that Kennedy's failure to notify the authorities immediately constituted criminal negligence.

The senator privately has explained that he dived for the girl, couldn't find her and concluded she had escaped. Three of the girls were sleeping when Kennedy returned to the vacation cottage after the accident. The other two, Rosemary Keogh and Susan Tannenbaum, probably will testify that the senator appeared disheveled and disoriented.

WITNESSES ALSO are available who can testify that Gargan next morning stated: "We can't find Mary Jo." The story that Kennedy thought the girl had escaped from the submerged car, however, contradicts his official statement to the police.

In the end, the inquest is unlikely to produce much hard new evidence against Kennedy. His worst problem will be explaining why he failed to call for help to rescue Mary Jo.

PRESIDENT NIXON'S consumer program is carefully calculated to win the housewives' favor without stirring up the businessmen's disfavor.

Ducking complaints over prices, the President has instructed his consumer coordinator, Mrs. Virginia Knauer, to concentrate on protecting the consumers from unsafe products rather than high prices.

He outlined his ideas to party leaders recently behind closed White House doors.

California Congressman Bob Wilson, the Republican congressional campaign chairman, urged the President to stress that his proposal was "not an anti-business bill but a pro-consumer bill."



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