

By JOHN H. FENTON

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EDGARTOWN, Mass., Jan. 5 — Whenever the court docket permits, Judge James A. Boyle, the presiding justice of the Dukes County District Court and holder of two holes-in-one, likes to get away from the red brick courthouse by 1:30 in the afternoon and head for the first tee at the Mink Meadows Golf Club at West Chop. But for the next few days, weather permitting or not, the 63-year-old judge will be preoccupied as the presiding officer at the inquest into the death of Mary Jo Kopechne. He is aware that the report he will be required to write about his findings will have political and perhaps even historical implications, involving as it will the activities of Senator Edward M. Kennedy on the night of July 18, 1969.

James Ambrose Boyle enjoys a special status on Martha's Vineyard Island. In nearly 50 years as a small-town lawyer and judge here, he has managed to close the peculiar gap that marks the difference between an islander and an off-islander. He is accepted, a distinction that comes to few men.

From Fall River

Judge Boyle was born in Fall River, Mass., Sept. 15, 1906, and was brought up nearby in New Bedford, graduating from high school there in 1922. Seven years later, he earned a law degree from Southeastern Massachusetts Law School and went to work for one of the largest law firms in New Bedford.

Sent to Martha's Vineyard in 1931 to represent some of the firm's island clients, Judge Boyle decided to settle here. He seldom visits the mainland. He prefers the quiet life. There is golf around the year since the island is affected by Atlantic Ocean breezes that tend to give it a relatively mild climate.

Judge Boyle is considered to be a stickler for the law,

eminently fair and a hard worker. Early-rising islanders have seen the lights in his office burning at 4 A.M. when he is involved in some particularly knotty case.

He is a former vestryman of Grace Episcopal Church in Vineyard Haven, where he lives. While he attends church infrequently, he is always available to the rector or vestry to interpret points of law involving parish situations.

Red Bow Ties

Judge Boyle is of medium build, with a ruddy complexion, receding white hair and a face that dissolves in wrinkles at the touch of a frown or the suggestion of a grin. He is addicted to red bow ties and to cloth hats, which he wears at a jaunty angle.

Before being appointed to the District Court bench in 1961 by John A. Volpe, who was then Governor of Massachusetts, Judge Boyle served as a town counsel in several island communities and as clerk of the County Commissioners. He had been a clerk of the Superior Court for 27 years. He has always been a staunch Republican.

Judge Boyle married the former Esther G. Sylvia of New Bedford while he was still a young lawyer. The Boyles, who live in a comfortable ranch-style house in Vineyard Haven, have two sons, James A. 2d and Derek.

The day he sentenced Senator Kennedy to a suspended term of three months on a complaint of leaving the scene of an accident after causing personal injury, Judge Boyle was moved to say: "He has already been and will continue to be punished far beyond any sentence this court can impose."

Unawed by the array of legal talent summoned to represent the Kennedy interests, Judge Boyle said at a preliminary hearing: "I do not want further discussion. I ask you now that if you have any further argument concerning the matter before us, do it now. If you have forgotten anything or want to add something, do it now."

Conductor of Inquest

James Ambrose Boyle



An off-islander who has won acceptance (Judge Boyle arriving at court yesterday)

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