

Ted Kennedy Can't Get Rid Of Albatross

By Louis Harris

Although 68 percent of the American people believe Sen. Edward Kennedy "works hard at his job and is a good U.S. Senator," no more than 34 percent feel "he has the personality and leadership qualities a President should have."

And one in three persons, 33 percent, holds the view that "because of what happened at Chappaquiddick, Senator Kennedy showed he does not deserve the Presidency."

As a result of this decidedly mixed reaction, Kennedy now trails President Nixon substantially in the latest Harris Survey trial heat. Those results gave Nixon 44 percent, Sen. Kennedy 36 percent, Gov. George Wallace 13 percent, and 7 percent undecided.

Fatal Plunge

The Chappaquiddick incident two years ago this July 18, in which the Senator was involved in a car crash which proved fatal to a secretary companion, unquestionably hurt Kennedy's chances. Although 51 percent of potential voters say that they will not be influenced by the tragic accident, the one in three who criticize him on this issue is politically damaging.

Chappaquiddick counts most as an issue among people over 50, white Protestants, and the college-educated. Women are no more disturbed over it than men.

Industry Praised

A majority of the public, nonetheless, gives Senator Kennedy high marks on two other scores:

- By 68 to 20 percent, people feel that he "works hard at his job and is a good U.S. Senator." He is cited particularly for his efforts in the health field and for his opposition to the war.

- By 51 to 34 percent, a majority also agree that "he is one of the few people willing to take courageous stands on basic issues facing the country." This sentiment rises to 60 percent among Catholics, 62 percent among Democrats, and 77 percent among blacks.

But numbers of voters also hold the view that Sen. Kennedy has gone as far as he has largely on the strength of his family association:

- By 57 to 35 percent, a majority agree with the statement that Sen. Kennedy "has gotten as far as he has because of his name." This view is held by 62 percent of the voters in the West, 60 percent of the college-educated, and 62 percent of persons who are independents in their politics.

- By 48 to 37 percent, a plurality feels that Edward Kennedy "is not in the same league with his older brothers." A majority of 53 percent in the West, 52 percent of the college-educated, and 53 percent of the Independents share this view.

Clearly, the challenge to Sen. Edward Kennedy is to prove to the electorate that he merits his current prominence on his own rather than as a legacy.

Not Believed

Of course, Senator Kennedy has denied repeatedly that he is interested in the nomination in 1972. However, when asked directly, most people (44 to 31 percent) say that "although he denies it, he is really trying to get the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972."

The reaction of a majority, 58 to 29 percent, is that "although one day he might run for the Presidency, he is not ready for it now."

A key question in the survey of 1614 households, conducted between June 9th and 15th, dealt with Sen. Kennedy's qualifications for the Presidency:

"Do you tend to agree or disagree that Senator Edward Kennedy has the personality and leadership qualities a President should have?"

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
Nationwide	34%	51%	15%
By Education			
8th grade or less	55	28	17
High school	37	47	16
College	23	64	13
By Race			
White	30	56	14
Black	67	15	18
By Religion			
Protestant	26	59	15
Catholic	43	42	15

The clear-cut pockets of Kennedy strength are the blacks, the least well-educated, and Catholics. But this basic support adds up to a minority.

Most significant are persons with a college education who now heavily populate the fast-growing suburbs and are highly independent in their voting habits. Without substantial backing among this affluent group, it is unlikely that any man can get elected President in the 1970's. It is the judgment of this swing group that Senator Kennedy is "not ready."

(Copyright 1971 Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate, Inc. World Rights Reserved.)

*Included in version carried by New Orleans States-Item 15 Jul 71, filed EMK (a):

Significantly, over 8 in 10 of the persons who are critical of the senator over Chappaquiddick are prepared to vote against him if he were nominated for President.