

A House Built on a Tragedy?

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Washington

THE PARENTS of Mary Jo Kopechne, the woman who drowned in Senator Edward Kennedy's car three years ago, soon will adopt an affluent lifestyle.

Still not entirely recovered from their tragic loss, Joseph and Gwen Kopechne are leaving the working-class suburb of Berkeley Heights, N.J., where they have lived for 25 years.

They will leave their modest rented apartment and move into a custom-built

\$75,000 home in a secluded area of the Pocono Mountains, an hour's drive from Mary Jo's grave in Larksville, Pa.

The Kopechnes' new financial security has revived curiosity about how much money they received as a result of their daughter's death. From the beginning the bereaved parents have carefully refrained from criticizing Kennedy.

The new home, now nearly complete, is reached through winding private roads. It dominates a rise at a 1900-foot elevation about 40 miles from Wilkes-Barre.

In the surrounding low-income mining communities, where the Kopechnes have roots and numerous relatives, talk is buzzing that the home "was built with Kennedy money."

The sum awarded the Kopechnes under the senator's automobile liability insurance, after the judge at the inquest found him guilty of "falsehood" and "negligence," has been a closely guarded secret.

If an additional cash settlement were made, the parties involved have kept mum

about that, too.

At the Capitol, Senator Kennedy said he is "aware" of the settlement, but suggested the figure could come from the Kopechnes' attorney in Wilkes-Barre.

"That was a long time ago. I am not familiar in detail with their plans," Kennedy said.

But Joseph Flanagan, the attorney, angrily refused to discuss the settlement.

In the summer and fall of 1969, when Mary Jo's death dominated the headlines, Kopechne retained a battery of top-notch legal talent despite his limited means.

Three attorneys from the well-known firm of Flanagan and Doran represented him at the hearing to block an autopsy on his daughter's body.

Sources in the area report the house is providing a new interest for Mrs. Kopechne, whose "nerves are shot." Kopechne reportedly is "down in the dumps at times."

He plans to retire from his



MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH KOPECHNE
Farewell to working-class living

job, selling insurance, in about a year.

The brick-and-siding resi-

dence sits on an acre and a quarter of wooded land. It boasts a breakfast room with fireplace, three bedrooms, two baths, a two-car garage and glass-walled rear decks with a splendid view.

Windows were placed high for security at Kopechne's

request, according to builder Isaac B. Miller of Pocono Summit, Pa.

Nearby is Saint Joan of Arc Catholic church, a matter of importance to the devout Kopechnes.

After the tragedy the Kopechnes dropped out of sight. In the last year they have taken an unlisted telephone number.



SENATOR KENNEDY
"A long time ago"