

# Five Years After Chappaquiddick

## A Baffling

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EXAMINER +  
CHRONICLE

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(Sun.)

FIVE YEARS ago, around midnight of July 18, 1969, a black four-door Oldsmobile 88 owned by Senator Edward Kennedy was driven off a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island, Mass., and landed upside down in eight feet of water.

About 9 o'clock the next morning a scuba diver entered the car and recovered the body of Mary Jo Kopechne, 28, one of the dozens of young women who in those days looked upon themselves as followers of the Kennedy clan.

Shortly after 10 o'clock Senator Kennedy was confessing to Police Chief Dominick Arena in Edgartown, a small village on the eastern shore of Martha's Vineyard, just across the channel from Chappaquiddick, that he had been driving the Oldsmobile at the time of its plunge.

That confession was the first in a series of statements by Kennedy and by others that turned what at first seemed a simple automobile accident into a multi-layered complex mystery that remains just as baffling as it was five years ago.

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THE "KENNEDY story" — that is, the account supplied by Kennedy and his companions of the evening — did not come out immediately or smoothly or voluntarily.

It came out in jerks, in bits and pieces, always incomplete, grudgingly, loaded with contradictions and inconsistencies.

Kennedy's first explanation, the morning after the accident, was a 240-word written statement to police that omitted any mention of half the activities he listed a week later in his television "talk to the people of Massachusetts," when once again he gave only the barest sketch of what had happened.

After that, virtually nothing was added to the Kennedy story for another six months. Then he and his friends appeared for testimony behind locked doors at an inconclusive inquest.

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IT MAY BE that the public will have to continue coping indefinitely with the old Kennedy story, which goes like this:

Senator Kennedy invited six women who had worked for his late brother Robert to attend, as a sort of reunion, the Edgartown Yacht Club Regatta on July 18-19. The six, all veterans of Robert Kennedy's 1968 campaign "boiler room," were Rosemary Keough, 23, Susan Tanenbaum, 24, Esther Newberg, 26, sisters Maryellen Lyons, 27, and Nance, 26, and the oldest of the group, Miss Kopechne, one week short of her 29th birthday. They were put up at the Katama Shores Motor Inn near Edgartown. Kennedy and his men were at Edgartown's Shiretown Inn. That evening about 8:30, the Kennedy crowd gathered for a cook-out at a rented cottage on Chappaquiddick, which is usually reached by riding from Edgartown on a two-car ferry across a channel about 500 feet wide.

## Story Still

With the six women were Kenney and five other men. Charles Tretter, a Boston attorney; Ray LaRosa, a Massachusetts civil defense official; Jack Crimmins, a legal aide and investigator serving as Kennedy's chauffeur; Paul Markham, a former United States Attorney turned bank president; Joseph Gargan, Kennedy's cousin and factotum. Gargan and Markham, long-time intimate friends of Kennedy, would be called upon that evening to play a role almost as baffling as Kennedy's own.

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AT FIRST BLUSH, it might not have seemed the best grouping for social purposes. All of the women were under 30, most of them well under. All of the men were over 30, most of them well over; one was 63. None of the women was married. All but one of the men were.

At 11:15 p.m. Kennedy decided he would like to go back to the Shiretown

\* Evans and Novak (WXP 25 Sep 74, filed EMK-A) give the date of Sherrill's article as 18 Jul 74.

David S. Broder (WXP 28 Jul 74, filed EMK-A) gives the date as 14 Jul 74, NYT Magazine; this is probably correct since the 14th was a Sunday and the article is not in the file.



THE BRIDGE ON CHAPPAQUIDDICK ISLAND  
**A multilayered complex mystery**

Inn and turn in to get a good rest for the next day's races. Mary Jo Kopechne told Kennedy she was feeling ill and asked if she could ride along to Edgartown with him.

There is only one paved road on Chappaquiddick Island. It goes past the cook-out cottage and continues for about half

a mile before turning left, toward the ferry, at a 90 - degree angle. This is a "T" intersection. Going off to the right is a dirt lane called Dike road for about seven-tenths of a mile, and that's where he went off the bridge. He did not see in time that the bridge was set obliquely to the road.

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AFTER KENNEDY escaped from the car, he made seven or eight dives in an attempt to rescue Miss Kopechne (this, by Kennedy's reckoning, took about 15 to 20 minutes). Exhausted, he rested on the bank of the pond (he says another 15 or 20 minutes), then struck out to get help at the cottage, "walking, trotting, jogging, stumbling" through the inky blackness (Kennedy estimates this trip took 15 minutes, but reporters who later made the trek by daylight needed between 20 and 25 minutes). Spotting La-Rosa outside the cottage, Kennedy told him to summon Markham and Gargan; while he waited for them, Kennedy sprawled in the backseat of the group's other car, a rented Valiant, and rested.

Back at the accident site, Gargan and Markham undressed and spent 45 minutes (their estimate) diving. They were unable to get in a position to see Miss Kopechne, much less rescue her or recover her body. Giving up, they drove Kennedy to the ferry landing, where they sat and talked with him for ten minutes (their estimate). Suddenly Kennedy bolted from the car and jumped into the channel before they could stop him. They watched him until he had swam about half way across and then they returned to the cottage.

The women met with them with questions — what had they been doing? Where was Kennedy? Where was Miss Kopechne? — that Gargan and Markham brushed aside with easy assurances: They had been hunting for a boat, Kennedy and Kopechne were at their respective motels, everything was OK, to go to sleep.

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MEANWHILE, Kennedy, struggling against the tide, had almost drowned in the channel. En route back to his motel, staggering up dark streets, he paused once to lean against a tree and rest before going on, arriving at the Shiretown Inn about 2 a.m. He shed his wet clothing, lay down on the bed, contemplated his troubles for a while, fell

asleep, was awakened by noises from the motel next door, got up and dressed (including a jacket) and went downstairs where he had a conversation with the innkeeper. In the course of their brief exchange, Kennedy said that he had misplaced his watch and asked the innkeeper the time. It was exactly 2:25.

Kennedy spent the rest of the night alternately sleeping and fitfully pacing the floor. His head ached, his neck throbbled. Sometime between 7:30 and 8 o'clock the next morning Kennedy, out for a stroll, ran into Ross W. Richards, who had won the yacht race the day before. Richards was going back to the Shiretown Inn and Kennedy walked along with him. Their conversation, about the weather and sailboat racing, was interrupted by Gargan and Markham.

Kennedy, Gargan and Markham went off to Kennedy's room to confer. About a half hour later Kennedy turned up in the lobby to place an order for The New York Times and The Boston Globe. He also borrowed a dime from the receptionist to try to make a long distance phone call at a pay booth. When Gargan and Markham discovered Kennedy hadn't notified the police, they once again told him he must do it.

Kennedy said he wanted to call his friend and sometime attorney, Burke Marshall, for advice, and he wanted to make the call from a booth that assured privacy. Gargan suggested a phone on the Chappaquiddick side of the ferry passage, and they went there sometime between 9 and 9:30, remaining 20 minutes or so. Then they were told by the ferryman that the wrecked auto had been spotted and Miss Kopechne's body recovered. Now that the word was out, Kennedy rode the ferry back to Edgartown and trotted off to turn himself in to Chief Arena.

(But questions remained and do still — see below.)