

The Chappaquidick story

Kennedy breaks silence

United Press International

BOSTON — Sen. Edward M. Kennedy said in an copyrighted interview in the Boston Globe's Sunday edition that his conduct immediately after the 1969 incident at Chappaquidick Island in which a woman companion drowned was "irrational and indefensible and inexcusable and inexplicable."

However, Kennedy denied that either he or his companion had been under the influence of alcohol. He also denied that he was driving to the beach with her instead of to the ferry.

The woman, Mary Jo Kopechne, died when the car Kennedy was driving went off a narrow bridge into the water. He and Miss Kopechne had earlier left a party at a cottage.

In the interview, the first that the Democratic senator from Massachusetts has given to the press concerning the incident of July 18,

1969, Kennedy acknowledged that he was wrong when, in reporting the accident to police, he failed to inform them that two of his friends had tried in vain to rescue Miss Kopechne.

However, Kennedy, who recently withdrew from 1976 presidential consideration, said that an inquest judge's report that characterized his driving of the car as probably criminal was "erroneous and mistaken."

Kennedy gave to the Globe a copy of a study made for him in 1969 by the Arthur D. Little consulting

company which concluded that "braking only" would not have prevented a car traveling 20 miles per hour from going off the bridge and that Kennedy's headlights could have illuminated the bridge no sooner than three seconds prior to the accident.

Kennedy also denied to the Globe reports that he asked a cousin, Joseph Gargan, to take the blame for the accident. And he denied he had left the party at a later hour than he has testified and denied that the rescue efforts of Gargan and companion Paul Markham were made the following morning rather than moments after the accident.

Kennedy, who did not re-

port the accident to police until the following morning, exonerated Gargan and Markham for not reporting it, saying he had told them he would do it.

He told the Globe he almost drowned while swimming across the 500-foot wide channel from Chappaquidick Island to Edgartown and was "absolutely exhausted" when he reached the other shore.

Kennedy also repeated earlier denials that the party of Kennedy workers had been a "married man's night out." He said his wife, Joan, had intended to be present at the party but "because of illness related to her pregnancy, she was unable to be there, really at the last moment."