

A Report of Joan Kennedy's Alcoholic Past

Lantana, Fla.

Joan Kennedy confided during treatment at a New York rehabilitation center that she had been a bottle-a-day alcoholic for about five years as the result of speculation about her husband and the Chappaquiddick Island affair, the weekly National Enquirer reported yesterday.

The Enquirer said the wife of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, (Dem-Mass.) admitted herself to Smithers Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center February 5 for a month of treatment.

She allegedly made the disclosures that were reported by the Enquirer to two other patients—publicist and free lance writer Michael De Marco, 45, and Rosemary Steele, 35, a black welfare recipient from Brooklyn.

"I am a lush," the newspaper quoted Mrs. Kennedy as saying. "I've been an alcoholic at least four or five years. I kept a bottle of vodka in my bedroom closet and drank about a bottle every night."

DeMarco was quoted as saying, "She told me that Chappaquiddick was where her alcoholic nightmare began. She said, 'I'd been drinking before, but after that time it started to get out of control.' She indicat-

ed she was completely destroyed by the speculation (about the death of Mary Jo Kopechne)."

(Miss Kopechne drowned when Senator Kennedy's car plunged off a bridge abutment on the island during a weekend party for former Kennedy campaign workers.)

(A spokesman for Senator Kennedy said Kennedy would not comment on the story, which he described as "an intrusion of privacy.")

De Marco was quoted as saying Mrs. Kennedy, unlike most other inmates who often exploded in anger, remained calm through most of the treatment period, however, she became angry when counselors at the center questioned her about Chappaquiddick during treatment sessions, he said.

"She said, 'they've started to bug me about Chappaquiddick. They want me to talk about it and they're putting pressure on me. They want to know the sordid circumstances, I guess.' Joan was angry about it. She said she was at the point of walking out. Joan said Chappaquiddick was Ted's problem and that she wouldn't answer any questions about it," De Marco was quoted as saying.

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