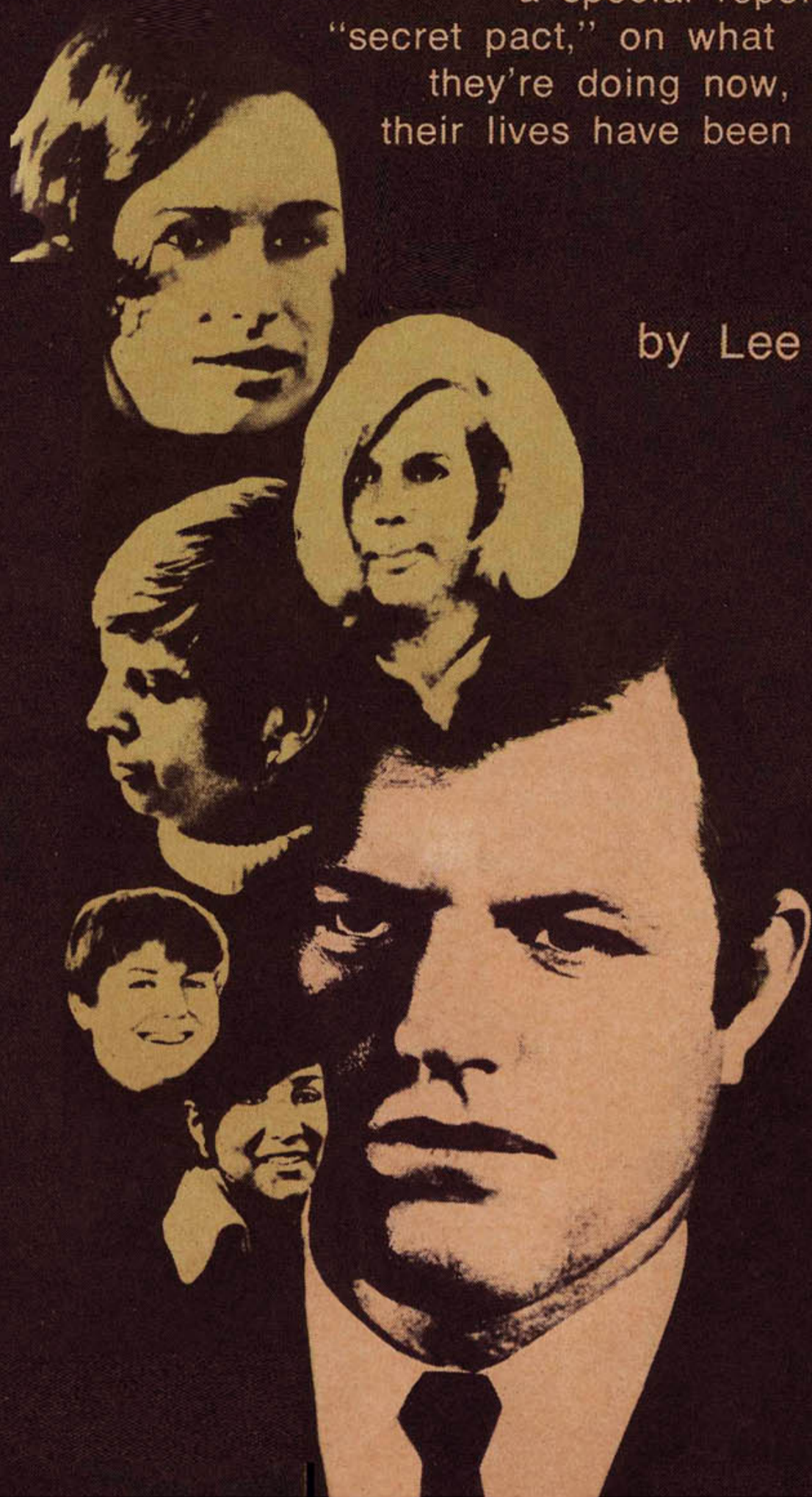


WHAT TED KENNEDY & THOSE CHAPPAQUIDDICK GIRLS ARE UP TO NOW!

A year after the tragedy,
a special report on their
"secret pact," on what
they're doing now, and on how
their lives have been changed

by Lee Belser



A girl drowned at Chappaquiddick, and by that hapless act spattered the shiny image of America's favorite crown prince, cast a heavy wave of doubt over the 1972 presidential campaign, and inundated the lives of a flotilla of wayfarers.

It is unthinkable that in her wildest dreams, Mary Jo Kopechne, a soft-spoken blonde from a Pennsylvania mining town, ever entertained the faintest idea she would launch an impact on history, that her name would be bandied around the world, or that her demise would leave indelible scars on dozens of friends—and strangers. Obscure in life, she became notorious in death merely by meeting her tragic end in a car belonging to Senator Edward Kennedy.

From the moment her stiffened body was retrieved from the turbulent waters off Chappaquiddick Island, the play began to unfold like some never-ending Machiavellian drama. Now, a year later, despite the release of the inquest transcript, the

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story is still locked in the heads of the mighty.

Only the principal players and a handful of off-stage character actors know what really happened that moonless midnight at Dike Bridge when Kennedy's 1967 Oldsmobile 88 sedan shot off a 20-year-old wooden bridge and flipped upside down into Poucha Pond. As the whole world knows, the accident was the aftermath of a beach party the night of July 18, 1969, attended by the senator, four of his cronies, and six of the Kennedy "boiler room girls."

In his famous nationwide television broadcast, Ted Kennedy said he was in the car when it jumped the bridge, but could not account for his escape, although he was able to recall accurately other minute details of that night. In a fashion typical of humanity at large, the public was more interested in why he was driving down a lonely road with a blonde than in the fact that someone had drowned. He parried that question by explaining he was actually headed for the ferry landing to Edgartown and took the wrong turn.

Edgartown and Chappaquiddick residents, completely unaccustomed to minding their own business, have advanced a number of wild theories, including vastly immoral and totally



Once close friends, Rosemary Keough, Nancy Lyons, and Susan Tannenbaum (left to right) have grown apart. Still unmarried, they try hard to lead "normal" lives.



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unsubstantiated aberrations. Even a *New York Times* reporter, after an exhaustive investigation, offered the hypothesis that Kennedy probably was not in the car when it plunged into the pond.

Whatever the tarnished truth may be, the tragedy at Chappaquiddick promptly became the secret of Chappaquiddick. Both tragedy and secrecy have left lurid trails of speculation for some, stacks of legal headaches for others, burdensome grief, embarrassment, and remorse for Kennedy, and a strange life-pattern for the five leftover boiler room girls.

These five young women, who up until Mary Jo's death, led cheerful, ordinary lives, appear to have been caught in an undertow of mysterious intrigue. Their utterances, once theirs to toss to the four winds, have been silenced by the almighty hand of somebody Down There.

The girls, all former campaign workers for the late Senator Robert Kennedy, say they have agreed upon a "pact" of silence but at the beginning, just after the tragedy, it was not so. In fact, it was they who unwittingly opened the door to the truth at Chappaquiddick. One of them was quoted as saying that Kennedy and two male guests were "looking for Mary Jo" that night, and another was quoted as saying that Joseph F. Gargan, a Kennedy



Maryellen Lyons (left) still works at the same job, but Esther Newburg (below) has left Washington for a job in New York. For both, it may take a lifetime to live down things that probably never happened.



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cousin; and Paul Markham, a lawyer friend—both were at the party—showed up at the cottage bone-dry. Kennedy told police after the tragedy that both had dived into the pond in an effort to rescue Mary Jo.

These impromptu revelations did not seem to be particularly significant at the time but later, when viewed in the light of their relationship to the over-all, intricate puzzle, they became key factors in the theory that Miss Kopechne was alone in the car when it went off the bridge.

The girls never talked at length to reporters but they, at least, were willing to say, "How do you do?" Today, their curt reply to queries is one and the same: "We have agreed not to say anything."

In a recent—and brief—telephone conversation, Susan Tannenbaum, daughter of a dentist in Greensboro, N. C., said she sees the other boiler room girls only "at times."

There is little doubt that the traumatic affair has changed their lives to a marked degree. Once a close-knit little group that met often in long gab sessions, the girls see each other rarely as though they hope in this way to forget the unforgettable.

Esther Newburg, Rosemary Keough, Maryellen and Nance Lyons, Mary Jo Kopechne, and Susan Tannenbaum had one big thing in common—Bobby Kennedy. After his assassination there was only one thing to do: transfer their allegiances to his brother Ted.

All were knee-bending devotees of the Kennedy mystique, but only Nance Lyons actually switched over to Ted's campaign camp after Bobby's death. Nance's sister Maryellen went to work for State Senator Beryl Cohen, of Massachusetts; Susan joined the staff of Representative Al-

Kennedy women - Ethel, Pat, Eunice, Jean and wife Joan - campaign with Ted



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lard Lowenstein, of New York; Rosemary was connected with Kennedy's Children's Foundation in Washington; Esther became special assistant to Washington's Urban Institute, and Mary Jo had been working for Matt Reese, a Washington campaign adviser.

A year after Chappaquiddick all but one of the survivors are in the same jobs, but things are not the same. Miss Newburg switched from the Urban Institute to a job at the campaign headquarters of New York's Arthur Goldberg. The most outgoing of all the girls, she is seldom seen in merrymaking groups these days and appears to be concentrating most of her energies on her boss's political ambitions.

Indications are that none of the girls, who landed overnight in the limelight so precipitously, are desirous of putting themselves in vulnerable positions. They are doubly careful whom they date. In each case, it must be someone they know well or someone they are sure will not ask questions. You can imagine, one of them was reported as saying, how it would be if we went out with a guy and all he wanted to do was talk about what happened that night on Chappaquiddick.

The vows of silence have set these girls apart as objects of morbid curiosity. They are seldom recognized in restaurants around Washington and, when their presence is noted, it is unlikely that any sophisticated city type would stare, point an index finger, and say, "Hey, look! That's one of the gals who was with Ted Kennedy at Chappaquiddick." However, the inference is there and no one knows it better than they. Unlike Carole Tyler, Bobby Baker's secretary, who was deeply involved in his affairs and the ensuing investigations into his activities, they will not raise their voices to protest their innocence in any wrongdoing.

Although remarks that would peel the paint off the Capitol Hill walls have been aimed at them, only once has a boiler room girl retaliated in public. Miss Newburg snapped to an interviewer that the party on the island, wives or no wives, was a "steak cookout, not a Roman orgy." She

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also has insisted that "no one" has forbidden any of the girls to discuss the case. But this was before they became incommunicado.

Another of the girls, Rosemary Keough, chatterbox daughter of a wealthy Philadelphian, admitted the tragedy had affected them deeply. "Of course, it's changed our lives," she said. And Miss Tannenbaum said, "All we want now is to be permitted to fade into anonymity." It is doubtful that boiler room girls will be accorded the same privilege as old soldiers, however, and the probability is that the longer the mystery of Chappaquiddick goes unsolved, the less chance they will have to fade.

Even their friends predict: "Some-day one of them will talk." It does not seem likely at the moment. At last count, they have been offered more than \$100,000 for their "inside" story. Some of the offers have not even elicited so much as a "no"; just a change of subject.

If they are quiet, others are not. One male acquaintance, aping some of the island residents, suggested that the girls are not the "sweet little angels" they would have everyone believe.

"They might have been 'goody-goody' when they came out of the sticks to Washington," he remarked, "but they've been around since they got to the big city. Nice single girls just don't go unchaperoned on hideaway all-night parties with a bunch of married men."

The same man, a Washington investigative type, said it is rumored that a payoff had been made. "But the real payoff," he added, "is lifetime security."

What the man chose to ignore is the unwritten law in Washington that he who talks walks. If the girls were to tell all or half what they know, and whether the tale is rare, medium, or well-done, it would ruin their reputations in the city by the Potomac. This has nothing to do with morals, only with their reputations as good, loyal ascribers. So long as they wish to remain in the political rotunda, they will play the game. The alternative is to be fired. No Washington boss will tolerate a

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tattle-tale.

After that night at Chappaquiddick, islanders told of some of the girls swearing aboard a sloop as they were watching the annual Edgartown Regatta and other residents told of hearing raucous noises coming from the party cottage in the late hours. Still later, under official questioning, the girls admitted they slept at the cottage that night—on anything they could find, including blankets strewn on the floor—because the party wasn't over until after the only ferry had closed down for the night.

It is representative of the hue and cry of the silent majority. The more urbane tend to shrug off any implications with, "Well, it's the mod generation." Whether or not it was just a harmless barbeque makes no difference. The winds of gossip will blow the same way—to the left of center and below the Tropic of Cancer. All the rest of their lives, the girls will be living down things that probably never happened that night.

Their only mistake in doing what thousands of hard-working people do every week—get away from it all—is they got caught in a tragedy. The unfortunate consequences have caused many a high-ranking public official to entertain second thoughts about a week end in the country, especially one involving members of his staff. Since the tragedy, there has been no meeting recorded between Ted Kennedy and the boiler room girls, although Nance Lyons is still a member of his staff.

Ted's pretty wife Joan, performing as any good Kennedy should, rushed to his side immediately after the incident and has remained there ever since. She was the blonde on his arm at Mary Jo's funeral and probably will remain the blonde on his arm for many moons to come. Tragedy tends to cement the Kennedys like the Pillars of Hercules.

In the Senator's case, the aftermath of Chappaquiddick has placed an important political future in jeopardy, but with pretty young girls like Esther, Rosemary, Susan, and the

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Lyons sisters, it is a case of romance, home, and family. So far, none of the girls has married, none has announced an engagement. Even Esther Newburg, who socialized more than the others, seemingly has become more and more immersed in work. Some say most of the girls have become harder, more suspicious, less malleable and—wiser.

The life of Mary Jo Kopechne is over, but the tragedy lingers on like an endless deathwatch. Some of the relatives want the end to come and others hope it will not.



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