

Merry-Go-Round**More Reports on
The Kennedy Tragedy****Drew Pearson**

Today's column is by Drew Pearson's associate Jack Anderson

Washington

THE TRUTH is beginning to leak out as to what really happened on that black Friday night, July 18, when Senator Ted Kennedy and Mary Jo Kopechne hurtled off Dyke bridge into Poucha pond. As a shocked world learned, only Kennedy emerged from the murky water.

The Senator has brought absolutely no pressure upon those who played a part in the nightmare to support his account of the tragedy. But their loyalty to Kennedy is so fierce that they will back up his story to the last dotted "i." This column can state categorically, however, that he didn't tell the whole truth.

In the strictest of privacy, intimates have let some of the details out of the bag. We have now been able to piece together from the most reliable sources essentially what happened that terrible night.

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AT THE CAREFREE cookout Senator Kennedy did his share of drinking, but intimates insist he wasn't drunk. He invited Mary Jo to join him for a midnight swim, and they set out on a nocturnal adventure not uncommon on Martha's Vineyard.

They drove down the only paved road on Chappaquiddick Island. Kennedy consciously, purposefully made a hard right onto Dyke road, a dirt road that leads only to a beach. He knew where he was going; he had been there many times before.

His late brother, John F. Kennedy, had often sunbathed on the secluded beach at the end of Dyke road. While he was recovering from a serious back operation in 1955, his doctors prescribed swimming as part of his therapy; he often used the secluded beach.

As President, Mr. Kennedy continued to use the Chappaquiddick beach. He was frequently accompanied by members of his family, including Teddy.

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DYKE bridge is narrow, wooden and humped in the middle, with no guardrails. Some 200 yards beyond it is the

beach. Ted Kennedy hit the bridge at about 20 miles per hour, too fast for safety, and shot off the right side of the bridge without skidding. The car plopped bottom-up in the water.

Somehow the Senator managed to struggle free. He then made repeated attempts to rescue Mary Jo, without success. No one who knows Ted Kennedy doubts his courage or has reason to disbelieve this part of the story.

Exhausted, he lay in the grass beside the pond, trying to collect his thoughts. Despite the emotional trauma, there is reason to believe his panic was largely political. He was the last of the Kennedy brothers. He had picked up the standard of his fallen brothers. Was it all to end in the forbidding waters of Poucha Pond?

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IN THIS STATE, he conceived a preposterous idea. He would ask his cousin, Joe Gargan, to take the rap for him.

So the Senator walked back to the vacation cottage, passing four houses on his way — some with their lights burning, all containing telephones.

At the cottage, he summoned Gargan and another trusted intimate, Paul Markham, a former United States attorney for Massachusetts. Gargan grimly said he would admit to driving the car. The three men returned to the scene of the disaster to make certain Gargan would be totally familiar with the circumstances surrounding "his" accident.

It is entirely possible that Markham and Gargan attempted to retrieve the girl's body, as Kennedy claimed in his second statement. After rehearsing the details of the accident, Kennedy returned to his hotel in Edgartown. Gargan and Markham apparently went back to the cottage.

In the cold light of dawn, Kennedy decided to face the consequences himself, and he filed his terse statement with the Edgartown police.

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