

**Merry-Go-Round****Speculation in the  
Kopechne Tragedy****Drew Pearson**

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

**T**HE PRELIMINARY investigation into the drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne has raised an agonizing question that will haunt the Kennedy inquest this week. Could Mary Jo have been rescued from the bottom of Poucha pond if Senator Ted Kennedy had only rushed to the nearest house and banged on the door for help?

John Farrar, the diver who removed Mary Jo's body from the submerged car, has told authorities that "a large amount of air would have initially been trapped" inside the car. Had he been summoned immediately after the accident, Farrar declared, there was "a strong possibility that she would have been alive."

The Navy-trained diving expert gave his electrifying testimony and backed it up with a detailed diagram at a pre-hearing interrogation on August 20.

Farrar described how the death car had hurtled off Dyke bridge for a distance of approximately 36 feet and then dropped eight feet, hitting the water at a 45-degree angle. The momentum flipped it over, he conjectured, "bringing the car to settle upside down in the water."

★ ★ ★

**"ON IMPACT,"** he said, "the water would have gushed through the two right windows. However, due to the vertical setting of the car, a large amount of air would have initially been trapped underneath the floor of the car."

He pointed to his diagram, which

showed "a possible water level based on the way the car entered the water and settled." In his sketch, the air pocket was large enough to have sustained life for a while. The position of Mary Jo's body suggested, in his opinion, that she may have been trying desperately to take advantage of the last air.

He found the body in the right rear seat. Emphasizing again that the car was bottom up, he testified: "With respect to the seat, she was upside down. With respect to the water, she was right-side up. Her head was cocked back, her face pressed into the foot well." This is where the air bubble likely would have formed.

★ ★ ★

**"I FOUND** when I inspected the car underwater," he added, "that there was no air within the occupants' section of the car. However, by the statement of John Ahlbum and Joe Cerpa when the car was first moved by cable or by winch, numerous air bubbles escaped from the car while still underwater."

"Had I received a call within five to ten minutes of the accident occurring," declared Farrar, "and was able, as I was the following morning, to be at the victim's side within 25 minutes of receiving the call, in such event there is a strong possibility that she would have been alive upon removal of this submerged car."

Copyright, 1969