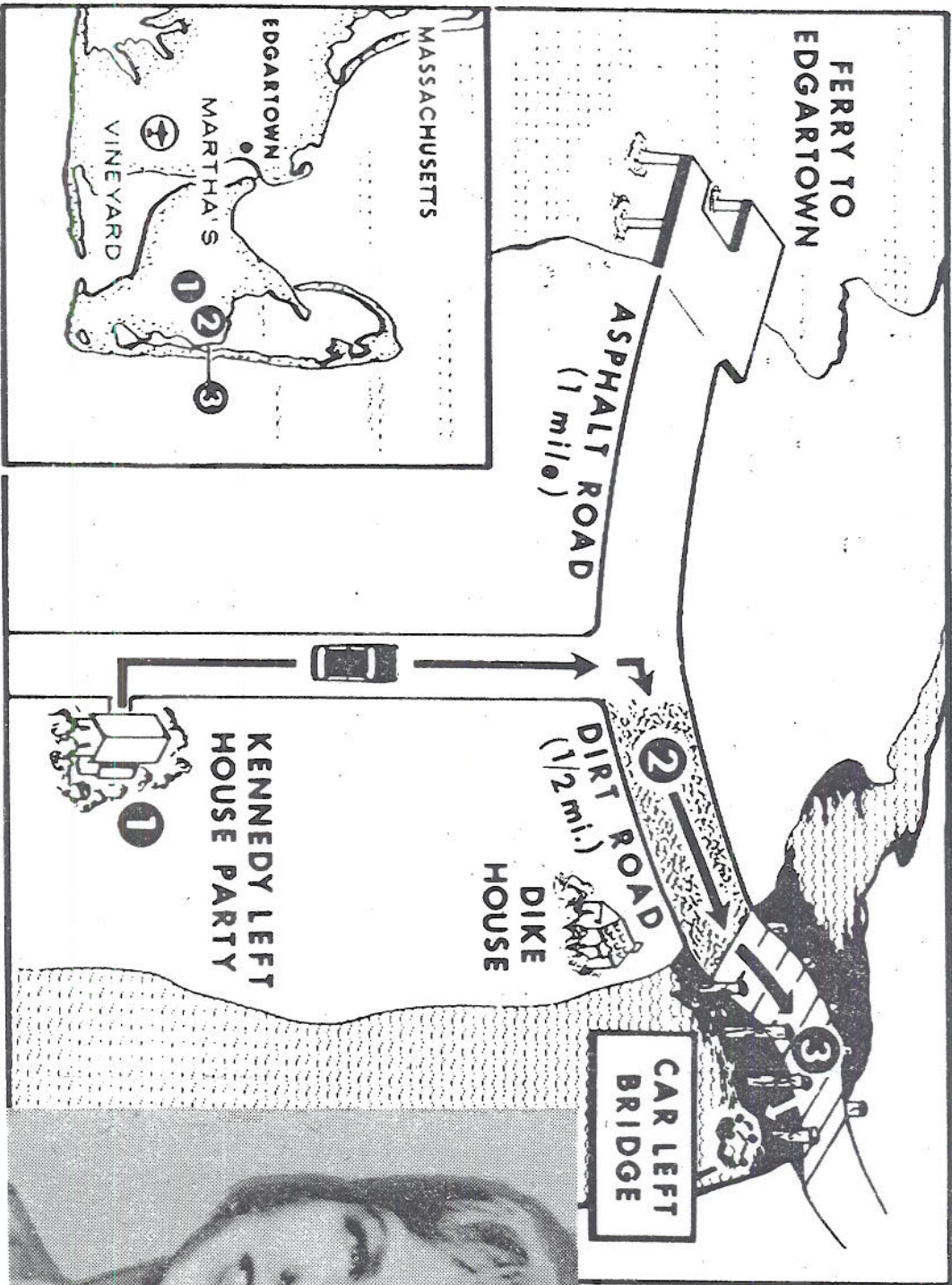


people

Thurs., July 31, 1975



In author Reybold's scenario, Kennedy slipped out of the car and Mary Jo (below) moved over to the driver's seat, locked the door and, unused to handling a large car, went off the bridge by herself



Was Mary Jo



SENATOR KENNEDY
A new Chappaquiddick theory

Driving the Car?

New York

A NEW BOOK about the Chappaquiddick incident suggests that Mary Jo Kopechne drove herself off the bridge after Ted Kennedy left the car, fearing a police car was going to stop them and their presence alone together might start rumors.

In "The Inspector's Opinion," which will be published in November, author Malcolm Reybold advances a "scenario" similar to one suggested in Robert Sherrill's New York Times Magazine reassessment of the Chappaquiddick affair a year ago.

Reynolds puts his analysis of the incident in a fictional framework: A Scotland Yard inspector, at the request of an American friend, is sifting the available evidence to account for numerous inconsistencies.

First, Reybold questions the Kennedy timetable, which frequently is in direct contrast to available evidence: If the accident took place at about 11:30 p.m. for example, why wasn't it heard by a woman who lives in a house overlooking the bridge, who says she was up reading until midnight? Also, if Kennedy was, as he says, trying to get help, why didn't he notice her light?

Reybold also points out the Chappaquiddick Volunteer Fire Station was less than 500 feet from the party cottage, where Kennedy says he went to get assistance, and yet no one thought to get professional help.

A key piece of evidence, Reybold suggests, is the door-lock button on the door next to the driver. It was pressed down — a precaution he thinks uncharacteristic of Kennedy but "an instinctive custom quite prevalent among female drivers, especially at night."

In Reybold's scenario, Kennedy and Mary Jo drive away from the party and take some alcohol with them — the high alcohol content in her blood according to the autopsy, he thinks, came from drinking after they left the party and does not contradict testimony that Mary Jo was a light drinker and in fact, drank very little at the party.

Since Mary Jo did not ask her roommate for the key to their room — a piece of evidence that skeptics other than Reybold have long found puzzling — the official story that Kennedy was driving her home seems implausible.

Reybold thinks they intended to return to the party and, in fact, did, and were amused to

find Kennedy's cousin, Joe Gargan, and friend Paul Markham setting out to look for them. Reybold imagines an odd half-hour or so of auto hide-and-seek in which Kennedy and Mary Jo elude their friends and what Kennedy imagines is a police car.

At a certain point, thinking lights behind him were those of the police, Kennedy slips out of the car with the alcohol, Mary Jo slides behind the wheel, is unused to handling a large car and shortly afterward goes off the bridge.

Reybold further speculates the car behind was not the police car but the one with Gargan and Markham and that the three, after making attempts to rescue Mary Jo, agreed to say she had driven home alone — thus they could deny knowledge of any involvement in the accident.

The intent, Reybold says, was for Kennedy to go to the police the next morning and tell them about the disappearance of Mary Jo.

Instead, the car was spotted from the bridge and the police came to question Kennedy about the young girl, who died in a car belonging to him.

The real importance of the book might be the implication that Chappaquiddick is far from dead — it can still be counted on to generate enough interest to possibly make a best seller.

Women's Wear Daily



PAUL MARKHAM JOE GARGAN
Did Kennedy think they were the police?