Former quarry owners sued in drowning

By OLIVERA PERKINS
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PORTLAND — The mother of a Hartford teenager who drowned while swimming at Brownstone Quarry in July 1987 has filed a lawsuit against the quarry's former owners, claiming they caused her son's death by failing to post no-trespassing signs on the property.

Libia Palma of Hartford, in a lawsuit filed in Superior Court in Middletown Tuesday, is seeking compensatory and punitive damages from Wilbur and Ruth Ehlers of Venice, Fla., and Joseph Lynch of Portland, the couple's attorney. The lawsuit says only that the damages sought are in excess of $15,000.

The lawsuit says the Ehlerses were being sued as beneficiaries of a trust arrangement they set up to own the quarry. Lynch was a co-trustee of the trust, the lawsuit says.

The quarry was sold last fall to Molloy Develpment of Stamford.

Jario Gordon, 19, drowned July 13, 1987, after diving off a 40-foot-high ledge in the western section of the quarry into 60 feet of water. His body was recovered by state police divers the following day tangled in a tree in 30 feet of water. Gordon was the fourth person in 10 years to drown in a Portland quarry, police said.

The lawsuit alleges the Ehlerses and Lynch failed to warn potential swimmers about hazards at the quarry, including the depth of the water, which plunges to 100 feet in some spots, and unseen objects under the water. It also accuses the defendants of failing to inspect the property and clear the water of hazards such as ledges, stones, branches and debris.

Palma, in the lawsuit, also claims the defendants, by failing to post signs, were in violation of a town ordinance requiring them to do so.

Messages left for Lynch, of Holloran & Sage in Hartford, and for Palma's attorney, John F. Murphy Jr., of Robinson & Cole in Hartford, were not answered.

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