

## 22-year-old falls in water

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GIRARDVILLE — A 22-year-old borough man's body was pulled from the waters of an abandoned strip mine Sunday morning, 14 hours after he had fallen 85 feet into the pit, borough police said.



BOYLAN

The body of Daniel Boylan, 121 A St., was found at 9:38 a.m. in the sea-blue waters of the "A-Hole," located off State Route 4030 in Butler Township, just east of the borough, police said.

According to Frank J. Zangari, the borough's assistant fire chief in charge at the scene, Boylan was with a small group of friends along the far eastern corner of the stripping pit when he lost his footing and slid down the slate walls and into the water.

Friends used a cellular telephone to report the accident, which brought members from the borough's two fire companies to the scene within 20 minutes.

"We're real happy that the people with Daniel didn't choose to jump in the water to rescue him because we would have had many more casualties," Zangari said.

The biggest obstacles for emergency personnel getting to the scene were the blocked roadway and rough terrain leading to the pit, he added.

"The only way to get up there was to walk or on all-terrain vehicles," Zangari said, noting the initial rescue effort was chaotic as emergency personnel and rescue divers — 75 in all — suited up and took to the water in an attempt to rescue Boylan.

When the body wasn't recovered by 11:30 p.m. Saturday, Zangari dismissed the 16 divers from Rainbow Hose Company No. 1, Schuylkill Haven, and West End Fire & Rescue Company, Mahanoy City.

"At that point, it was unsafe for the rescue personnel," he said. "It was pitch dark and the divers couldn't even see their hands in front of their

Please see PIT/Page 6

1998 Jul 22 year old falls in strip mine water

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Oct 9, 2024

# 22-year-old dies from strip pit fall near Girardville

PIT/From Page 1

faces while swimming in 3 feet of water."

The search resumed at 7 a.m. Sunday.

Members of the West End dive team found Boylan's body at 9:38 a.m. under 68 feet of water. Zangari said he was trapped by pieces of slate that had dislodged from the steep wall of the pit during his fall.

An autopsy has been tentatively scheduled for Tuesday at Pottsville Hospital.

"He was a good kid," said Zangari. "He was just looking for a place to get away. . . . It is a very popular swimming hole."

He was quick to point out that although it is a popular swimming place, it isn't safe.

"The railroad keeps the road blocked, they don't want people up there," Zangari said. "Unfortunately, it never stops them. Sure it stops vehicle traffic, but not the kids, they just walk up."

On Sunday afternoon, the only signs left of the accident were yellow police tape stuck to bushes along a dirt road leading up to the pit and white ashes from road flares, where traffic was rerouted on State Route 4030.

As many as 75 emergency person-

nel were on the scene Sunday morning, police said.

According to local residents, the pit has been full of water since 1968 — well over 100 feet deep in some sections. Zangari said the water covers back hoes and other mining equipment that was abandoned decades ago when water began leaking into the pit.

"The 'A-hole' has been a problem for 25 years plus," Zangari said. "Unless the hole is gone, you're not going to stop the partying."

It was the second fatality at the pit. The first occurred in February 1991, when Scott A. Boehmer, 26, fell to his death after walking away from police who were breaking up a beer party. Boehmer fell 100 feet between a crevice in the rock.

Meanwhile, Zangari said the borough has been "rocked" by this latest death.

"This is our third death since Easter," said Zangari, referring to the deaths of two boys in a fire. "It's rocking the community . . . these are young kids who are dying."

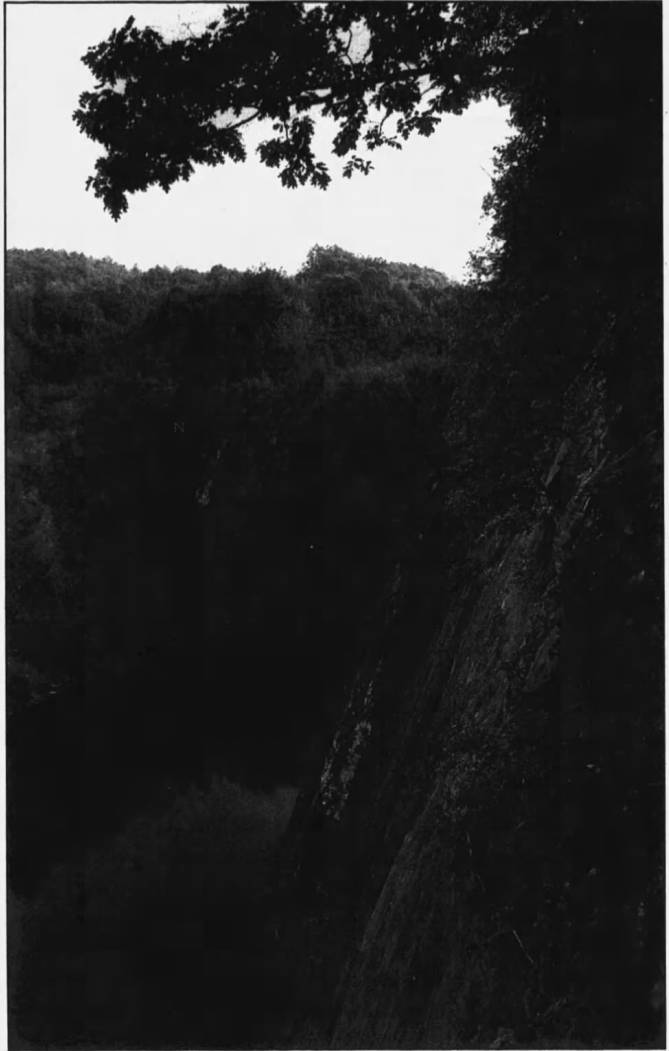
It is also putting stress on the volunteer fire companies.

"We wonder, 'what's our next call going to be?'" Zangari added. "What are we going to find? These are our neighbors. They're kids we coached and people we knew."

With conflicting eyewitness accounts, borough police said there are still unanswered questions.

"It is still under investigation," said officer-in-charge Theodore L. "Ted" Buriak III, adding that he didn't know what caused the young man to fall.

Initially handled by the Butler Township Police Department, the case was turned over to borough police.



JOHNATHAN PAROBY/Special Photo

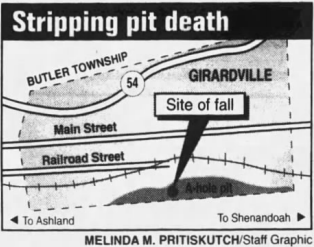
A borough man fell from this cliff into the water-filled A-hole stripping pit near Girardville, where his body was found Sunday.

Meanwhile, local teens remembered Boylan as a "loner, who was a good guy," and someone younger guys "looked up to."

"Everybody liked him," said one friend. "He was a good guy that would stick up for anybody."

Having attended North Schuylkill High School, Boylan was an Army veteran and was active in karate and body building.

Funeral services have been set for 11 a.m. Wednesday at the Robert M. McDonald Funeral Home, Girardville.



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