

Grief revisits Quincy quarry after youth drowns

By Stephanie Ebbert
GLOBE STAFF

QUINCY - To some, the grim scene was all too familiar yesterday as rescuers descended into the mouth of a Quincy quarry to retrieve the body of yet another young person killed there - at least the 14th in the last three decades.

"You get tired of the wasted lives," said Quincy Police Lieutenant Tom Casey. "When you've seen so many over the years, it becomes pretty discouraging when you go back up there and there's another person lost."

In a meticulous operation that lasted almost three hours, State Police divers and a Quincy Fire Department rescuer were lowered into Swingle's Quarry to reclaim the body of Christopher Griffiths, which they were unable to recover under the dark of night Thursday.

Griffiths, 17, of Rockland, had fallen about 200 feet Thursday while venturing onto a ledge looking for sites for future climbing. After losing

his grip on a thin cable, which remained from the days when this quarry was mined for granite, he fell to the rocks and into the water as his girlfriend, Kerry Ann Lynch, 17, of Milton, watched.

Lynch collapsed at the quarry yesterday, after coming to retrieve her things from Griffiths's car, police said. Other friends and Griffiths's sister stared through teary eyes into the stillness of the cold, green pool of water below. Leaning on one another, they watched as the divers pulled his body into the cage to be lifted to the surface.

Carlos Cohen, 16, of Randolph, a friend of Griffiths, said he had to be there. "I knew he would probably do the same thing for me if it happened to me," he said. "Friends always stick together."

He and other friends described Griffiths, a junior studying metal fabrication at Blue Hill Regional Technical School, as adventuresome and warm, and a member of the youth group at Union Congregational Church of Weymouth and Brain-

tree.

Wilfrid Savoie, superintendent-director of the technical school, said Griffiths was swiftly becoming the "go-to guy" in his department, handling bigger projects - including the repair of a soccer goalpost for the Avon School District, which Griffiths had played soccer against last week.

Some who stood by the quarry were strangers to Griffiths, but compatriots in grief.

"How many more lives is this place going to take?" asked Karen Hammond, of South Boston, whose daughter, also named Karen, is believed to have been murdered and left in the depths of the adjacent Granite Rail Quarry.

Rock climbing is prohibited at Swingle's but permitted at Granite Rail. Swimming is banned at both quarries.

The lure of the quarries has never worn off - not with the oft-repeated stories of stolen or dilapidated cars lurking dangerously below the surface, not with the tales of bodies lost in the depths and the widely

publicized efforts to recover Hammond and other victims.

"I have seen young people up there swimming when there were divers actually searching for drowning victims," said Quincy Mayor James A. Sheets.

Swingle's Quarry is only about 40 feet deep where Griffiths fell, said Tom Gorman, the Quincy fire chief; it has been drained, periodically, since the 1980s, when J.F. White won a contract to fill the city-owned quarry. After additional draining last spring, J.F. White planned to fill the quarry with dirt excavated from Boston's Central Artery project, but pending state environmental approvals have delayed that project.

Officials are still waiting to begin the draining of Granite Rail Quarry after a fight with conservationists.

Quincy firefighter Richard DiCesare, who climbed halfway down the rocks in an attempt to rescue Griffiths Thursday night, before he was hung up and had to be rescued himself by helicopter, yesterday returned to help locate the body.

1998 Sep 17 year old killed in Quincy MA quarry

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