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# Pottstown Mercury



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**RESCUE PREPARATIONS**—A scuba diver from the Reading Fire Department Under Water Recovery team prepares his equipment prior to entering the water of the John T. Dyer quarry, Union Township, Sunday to search for a Gibraltar youth who drowned in the quarry, while swimming with a companion.

## Youth Drowns at Quarry, Companion's Rescue Fails

By CHARLES H. PITCHFORD and RANDALL S. SHANTZ  
Mercury Staff Writers

The body of a 19 year old youth was recovered from the John T. Dyer quarry, Union Township, Sunday evening after he disappeared in the abandoned quarry while swimming with a companion.

Richard Lee Maurer, Proudfoot Drive, Gibraltar, was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital, Reading in Birdsboro American Legion ambulance, where he was dead on arrival.

Clarence Lerch Jr., a 10 year diving veteran with the Reading Fire Department underwater recovery team, located the body at 8:45 p.m., in approximately 35 feet of water. Lerch revealed that the body was lying face down on a slight incline.

The youth was swimming with a companion early in the evening when he began calling for help after attempting to swim across a 100 yard expanse of water.

A rescuer said his companion entered the water in an attempt to pull Maurer the remaining 15 feet to shore while several youths at the scene reportedly offered no assistance when the rescuer called for help, before the victim disappeared.

### SWIMMING SPOT

The quarry, which is a popular swimming location for young people, was at one time under excavation, but work was suspended when underground springs filled the quarry with water. The springs are still feeding the quarry, although the water level is below its former depth.

There is excavation machinery, buildings and a variety of other debris under the 45 feet of water, located just off Route 724.

The mishap is the second quarry accident reported in two days. John Galloway, 20, Birdsboro RD 2, is in satisfactory condition in Medical Center East with internal injuries.

He was admitted Saturday after falling 60 feet from a ledge into the water.

The drowning occurred at approximately 6 p.m. Rescue operations began nearly an hour later with Union Fire Co. Number One, Kutztown, being the first on the scene.

Rescue operations were delayed until the gravel road, which winds over a mile to the edge of the quarry, was cleared by a bulldozer of mounds of earth used to prevent cars from entering the area.

Roland S. Nolf Excavation Company was summoned to the scene to clear the path for rescuers. Cars blocked roads

leading to the quarry, causing traffic delays and blocking rescue vehicles.

Sunday's drowning was the second in the quarry, which is owned by Thomas G. McPoyle, Jeffersville.

John T. Weller, an experienced scuba diver, drowned near the scene of Sunday's tragedy on Jan. 29, 1962.

### SCUBA CLUB

Weller was diving with six members of the Aqu-Vikings, a Pottstown scuba club, when he disappeared under 18 inches of ice which covered the quarry.

The search for Weller's body lasted five days, from Sunday until Thursday, and enlisted the services of 20 area scuba divers, Navy frogmen and hard-hat divers from Telford and Green Lane.

The deep sea divers were used to search a portion of the quarry which is under 90 feet of water.

Sunday's drowning victim was recovered about 100 yards from this spot.

The rescue operation, was witnessed by 200 person an official on the scene said.

Assisting the Reading Fire Department underwater recovery team in the search were members of the Reading Scuba and Rescue team; Friendship Fire company, Birdsboro, and

Monach Fire company, Monocacy.

Before divers arrived on the scene, members of the Friendship Fire company began to drag the water with grappling hooks from a boat.

Upon entering the water the divers swam basic rescue patterns with guide ropes being handled by rescuers on shore.

Lerch said, "Due to the underwater terrain, I do most of my searching by feel. Many divers use lights to aid in their rescue operations. I do so only if necessary."

Lights were instrumental in locating the body Sunday. Divers remained in the water after the body had been found, in an effort to recover one of the lights which had been dropped.

Flood lights, manned by members of the units on the scene, were used to light the recovery area as darkness fell.

Trooper Jerome Majewski, of the Reading barracks said the victims companion was hesitant about revealing the information concerning the drowning.

"The information that has been obtained is hazy due to the fact that the boy is in shock," Majewski said.

The circumstances surrounding the drowning are still under investigation by Reading State Police.

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Richard Lee Maurer

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