

# 'Curious' teen-ager rescued fr

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Correspondent

GUERNEVILLE — Rescue crews pulled a tired and thankful teen-ager from a 150-foot abandoned mercury mineshaft Saturday night where the luckless explorer was trapped for more than six hours.

Rick Gloege, 18, of Sebastopol was hoisted with rope and harness by firefighters and the Sonoma County sheriff's rescue and search team from a carved "room" 150-feet down the mercury mineshaft where he had been stuck since 2 p.m. that afternoon.

The youth, who described himself as a professional tree climber now work-

ing at a pizza restaurant, said he was stranded in the shaft at the old Quicksilver Mine off Sweetwater Springs Road when he was unable to find the footing and strength needed to pull himself 30 feet to a ledge.

Neither Gloege nor his 19-year-old friend Jeff Brown, who didn't enter the mineshaft, were injured in the incident.

But both said the experience had been an education.

"The lesson I've learned is that unless you're an experienced rock climber it's not safe to go into holes in the ground," said Gloege, just moments after being pulled to safety.

"I wanted to see what was down there.

Believe me, my curiosity is satisfied."

Gloege spent about three hours trying to pull himself out of the mineshaft Saturday afternoon before Brown drove into town for help at the Guerneville firehouse.

Brown, who had explored other small mineshafts at the site, refused to enter the one in which his friend was later stuck.

"I didn't think it'd be safe," he said. Guerneville firefighters asked for assistance from sheriff's rescue team. The sheriff's helicopter was able to land on a small flat patch near the mineshaft. Rescuers also included a Forest-

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## 1986 Teenager rescued from abandoned mine after 6 hours

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Sat, Jul 3, 2021

## Rescue

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ville firefighter who used to work in the mine before it shut down in the late 1960s.

Firefighters had to haul up a generator and numerous pieces of emergency equipment to the mine shaft, located at the base of a 100-foot rock outcropping a quarter-mile up a heavily eroded trail from the road.

The entrances to the old mine and quarry are posted with numerous no trespassing and billboard-sized signs warning that the area is unsafe.

"It's death just waiting to happen if someone ignores the warn-

ings and goes in there," said 54-year-old Guerneville resident Thomas Pickering, who stopped his pickup along the road to watch what he could see of the rescue.

"I hope their parents paddle their behinds for this foolhardy escapade," he said. "They're lucky to be alive."

Brown, who stood by anxiously throughout the two-hour rescue, said the two have explored several natural caves near Occidental but that this was the first time they'd ever entered the mine shafts.

"This will be the last. I think I've learned to stick to climbing trees

and to stay away from rocks," said Brown.

Gloege, who was wearing only a sweatshirt and jeans, described his lonely alcove as wet and about 50 degrees.

The once busy site, which provided mercury off and on for almost a century, is now an eerie collection of empty buildings slumped against the scarred hills.

Discovered in 1874, it was most active around World War II. It was sold to a Guerneville contractor in 1972 after the mercury business lost out to foreign imports.

(Reporter Susan Swartz contributed to this report)

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Sun, Sep 13, 2020