

Diver Drowns While Searching For Sunken Ship

Body Of Frankenmuth Man Recovered From Lake Charlevoix

Joseph Anthony Robbins, 23, of Frankenmuth drowned Sunday in Lake Charlevoix while searching an old sunken vessel. Robbins, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Robbins, Midland, RD2, was a Frankenmuth Public Works Department employe.

He was the state's second skin diving drowning victim yesterday. Robert D. Scott, 17, of Birmingham, drowned when he and a companion went skin diving in Gilbert Lake in Oakland County. Scott is the son of Ex-Cell-O Corp. Vice-President George D. Scott. Divers searched throughout the night without recovering his body.

Robbins joined several other divers, all using SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) equipment, to dive from a boat to search for the wreckage of the old schooner, Keuka, in 50 feet of water. Robbins was the last to go into the water. He was wearing a mask, oxygen

tank but not a protective rubber suit.

Bruce Beckert, 2025 Carmen, told authorities he swam part way down with Robbins, who signaled he was all right. Robbins popped to the surface and called for help.

Mrs. Beckert, swimming nearby, twice seized Robbins but was unable to hold him above the surface.

Donald C. McLellan, 2519 Court, recovered Robbins' body near the underwater wreckage.

Efforts to revive Robbins failed and he was dead on arrival at the Charlevoix Hospital. Charlevoix County Coroner Dr. Robert G. Martin said death was from accidental drowning.

The divers said Robbins was in the water five to eight minutes. All but Robbins wore protective clothing. The divers said the extreme cold may have panicked Robbins, causing him to lose the mouthpiece to his breathing apparatus. They said there was an air supply in the tanks when Robbins was recovered.

Robbins' companions said he told them he was an experienced skin diver, having had Navy "frogman" instruction, and had been diving for two years.

The Keuka, converted into a floating dance hall, was sunk after it was considered no longer useful. It has no value or treasure but is an attraction for skin divers.

Robbins was born Aug. 31, 1936, in Gladwin County and was graduated from Midland High School.

He leaves a son, Dale Arthur, and a daughter, Dawn Elaine, both of Homer Township; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Robbins and a brother, James, all of Mt. Haley Township; two sisters, Mrs. James Hahn of Midland and Mrs. Clarence Diener of Merrill.

The funeral will take place at 2 p.m. Wednesday at the Scott Wilson Memorial Chapel. Burial will be in Homer Township cemetery.