



Accident Database

Report ID# 564

Help

1989-10-01

Date

John Drain

Victim

25

Victim Age

Blackwater Creek (Rt. 257

River

Rt. 257(County Road 41) to Walston Bridge

Section

Dam adjacent to the Musgrove Country Club United States Alabama, US

Location

Gage

Medium

Water Level

River Difficulty



Cause Code(s)

- Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic

Injury Type(s)

- Does not Apply

Factors

- One Boat Trip

Inexperienced

Victim Experience Level

Private

Trip Type

Open Canoe

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status

Accident Description

CANOE CAPSIZES; RESCUE TEAMS SEARCH FOR BODY

Black Water Creek, Alabama: October 1, 1989

DESCRIPTION: Rescue teams searched the Black Water creek in Jasper, Alabama all night for a man and his two friends after the canoe they were paddling capsized after going over a dam. John Drain, 25, of Jasper, is believed to have drowned early yesterday afternoon after he and his friends were unable to turn the canoe away from 6-foot dam. Two other Jasper men swam to the edge of the river and escaped with only scratches. Alabama Marine Police Officer Tommy Cagle said the men apparently knew about the dam,



go back upstream," Cagle said. "But once they got the canoe turned sideways, the current pushed them over the dam. When they went over the dam, all three came out of the canoe."

Although the men were wearing life preservers, the hydraulic held Drain in about 5 feet of water. He was still on top of the water but the pressure of the current was holding him against the dam. The other two boys went and looked for something to throw to him but couldn't reach him. Drain then took off his life preserver, apparently in an attempt to free himself from the dam's hydraulic. Once he took the life preserver off, the current pushed him down and he disappeared. 25 people from the surrounding golf course and club gathered at the scene after hearing the two young men scream for help. Several divers arrived but were unable to assist because of the strong current and rising water which had raised the creek level from its normal level of about 1 to 2 feet to about 5 feet. The creek, a tributary of the Black Warrior River, was about 175 feet wide at the dam.

Cagle said rescue squads were on the creek in rubber rafts using push poles to try and find Drain's body. About 35 emergency personnel were at the scene, including the Jasper police and fire departments, the Curry Rescue Squad and Fire Department, Carbon Hill Rescue Squad, Walker County Rescue Squad and the Alabama Marine Police. On October 4, 1989, the body was found one mile downstream from the dam.

Source: Birmingham Post-Herald Newspaper

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NALYSIS: The danger of dams is well documented, but unfortunately has not been communicated to the general public. A warning sign could have helped, but might not have prevented this accident (CW)



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