

## Vigil ends

# Body of drowning victim found below Robinson Dam

By TAMMIE HOLT

Assistant news editor

The recovery of a body near Harrison County's Robinson Dam Monday ended a three-day vigil kept by friends and family members of 23-year-old Todd Gibson.

Gibson, a Corinth resident, had disappeared while swimming in the Licking River's South Fork during the early hours of Saturday, June 20. According to Kentucky State Police Trooper Clinton Graves, Gibson and a group of companions had been diving into the boil line area in front of the concrete dam located near the small community of Robinson in northern Harrison County.

According to friends who had spent Friday with Gibson swimming at Robinson, he made a third dive from a spot on the dam where he already had made two successful jumps, Tpr. Graves said. When Gibson failed to surface, the group began to look for him, thinking that he had swum downstream and was trying to frighten them, said his sister, Cindy Winkle. "He was a real prankster," she said. "He's always been that way."

Within a few minutes, however, the friends called for assistance, beginning a 57-hour manhunt and vigil.

"As far as diving into the water," Graves said, "I understand kids have been doing that at Robinson for years." However, he noted, the use of alcohol "definitely" is believed to be a factor in Gibson's drowning.

Family and friends gathered at the dam Saturday morning. Some refused to leave the scene for more than a few minutes at a time, sleeping on the ground and in vehicles and keeping a watch on the rain-swollen waters of the South Licking River.

State Police officers worked

with the Harrison County Sheriff's staff and members of the Harrison County Volunteer Fire Department in the search for Gibson. Throughout the day and night Saturday, and all day Sunday, volunteers conducted a dragging operation in the river.

The recovery efforts were hindered, however, by the high water, which Graves said was "up several feet" due to recent rains. Maintaining that the water was too high for safe recovery operations, state officials would not authorize certified divers to go into the water to search.

Saturday, members of the Campbell County Rescue Squad and the Kentucky State Water Patrol joined the search, using their more sophisticated equipment to conduct a "serious" and "effective" dragging operation, Graves said. A volunteer group from Jessamine County, Paws that Save, brought two dogs to Robinson to join in looking for Gibson.

At about 11:20 Monday morning, the vigil ended as members of the Harrison County Volunteer Fire Department discovered Gibson's body, floating about half a mile downstream from the dam. As volunteers barricaded the area, law enforcement officials and other volunteers removed the body from the river and transported it to the Harrison County coroner's office.

Members of the family, as well as those friends who had maintained the long, grueling vigil, collapsed in tears and grim silence when Harrison County Sheriff Bruce Hampton notified them that Gibson's body had been found.

After the search was ended Monday afternoon, Harrison County Volunteer Fire Chief

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Photo by TAMMIE HOLT

Despite law enforcement officers' warnings that the water was dangerously high, Todd Gibson's friends and family dragged and searched the river below Robinson Dam, searching for the missing man. Others maintained a vigil on the river bank. Volunteer firefighters recovered Gibson's body Monday morning.

# Drowning

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Charles Carson expressed appreciation for the assistance he had received during the operation. Close to 100 people worked to find Gibson's body, Carson said, including volunteer firefighters and members of the Harrison County REACT group.

And, Carson said, "thank God" no one else was injured or killed in searching the dangerously high river water.

Tuesday morning, Harrison County Coroner Jim Drake said he had ruled the cause of death to be drowning. No autopsy will be performed, he said.

Jerald Todd Gibson was a native of Georgia and a former resident of Harrison County. He was a construction worker. His mother and stepfather, Phyllis

and Bill Howard, also of Corinth, own farmland in Harrison County. He was a son of Jerald Gibson, California, and a grandson of the late Wesley Havicus, Cynthiana.

Other survivors include several brothers and sisters: Deborah Lynn Carter, Larry Dale Bruner, Randy Gill, Cindy Winkle and Tracie Gibson. A grandmother, Bertha Gibson of Ohio, also survives.

Funeral services will be held at 1 p.m. today at Rogers Funeral Home in Corinth. Visitation was held Wednesday between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. at the funeral home. Burial will be in Corinth Odd Fellows Cemetery.

For more complete obituary information, please turn to page 6.