

## **Last Ranger / Next Ranger**

26 May 2002 - Near-Drowning - Lake Discovery

### Summary:

Near-Drowning Victim

Mr. Joseph Doe

Everytown, US

White Male – between 40 and 45, 5’10” tall, 200 + lbs.

At approximately 1410, Mr. Doe and his wife arrived at the Lake Boat Ramp courtesy dock. After arriving at the dock, they removed their life jackets and began to try to move their boat to shore. Mr. Doe was standing on the east side of the floating courtesy dock attempting to hold onto the boat and Mrs. Doe was standing on the shore holding the end of a line connected to the boat. Mr. Doe lost his balance and went feet-first into the water, between the dock and the boat. When Mr. Doe surfaced he appeared to be trying to tread water, but almost immediately began to panic and slap the water.

Mr. John Q. Public, Jr. was standing on the dock, grabbed the Life Jugs and threw them to Mr. Doe. Mr. Doe took the jugs in his arms and calmed a little, but was still thrashing. I was working as Duty Ranger and had been on the sidewalk leading to the dock when I saw Mr. Doe enter the water. I initially moved to the bank adjacent to Mr. Doe intending to help him out of the water and help his wife pull in the boat, but it became immediately apparent that Mr. Doe was unable swim.

Mr. Public offered to jump in to aid Mr. Doe, but I asked him not to, and indicated that the Life Jugs were supporting Mr. Doe. I spoke to Mr. Doe and encouraged him to move toward the shore since he was less than 10 feet from water he could stand in. Mr. Doe was unable to make any progress to the shore. Bystanders on the dock tried to reach to Mr. Doe from the dock with a kneeboard but the board was too short, so they pushed it to him to provide additional flotation.

A man passing on a personal watercraft moved to aid Mr. Doe (after cutting off his engine) and Mr. Doe held on. A man on the dock tossed Mr. Doe the end of a ski rope and pulled them to the dock. I had moved to the dock and spoke to Mr. Doe, who indicated that he was tired. We used the ski rope to pull Mr. Doe to safety on the shore. Mr. Doe was able to walk out of the water under his own power. Mr. Doe indicated he was tired and a little shaken and that he did not want any medical attention. The entire incident lasted less than 2 minutes.

I remained in the area and monitored Mr. Doe. After a short rest Mr. Doe regained his composure and was able to put his boat on the trailer (with his life jacket on). The Does left the area at approximately 1450.

Last Ranger:

The Duty Ranger was present at the Lake Boat Ramp for several periods that day (approximately 0850 – 0950, 1220 – 1300, and 1330 – 1455) handing out lake brochures, answering questions, and encouraging visitors to wear their life jackets. It is not known when the Does launched or if they had direct interaction with a ranger at that time.

A banner with text “Save a Life – Wear a Life Jacket” was posted along the entrance road to the Lake Boat Ramp. The bulletin board at the boat ramp contained several posters with water safety messages in both English and Spanish stressing the importance of life jackets. The Child life jacket message (PFD with sign that states “This is your child’s best friend”) was also on display at the bulletin board.

Next Ranger:

COE Rangers will continue to engage visitors at Lake Boat Ramp and provide information about water safety, natural resources and available recreation facilities. Bulletin boards, posters, banners and other displays will continue to be utilized to educate and influence visitors.

We will modify our operations to address lessons learned.

1. Rangers will stress the need for boaters and other recreationist to wear life jackets until they completely off the water. Although the Does were wearing their life jackets while they were boating, they had removed them upon reaching the dock.
2. Will install a reach pole in the boat ramp area. The Life Jugs and Life Jug sign were in place on the floating dock and were utilized to save a life. Actually pulling the victim to shore would have been aided by a reach pole.
3. The actual life jugs used to save the victim will be taken out of service and utilized in water safety outreach programs as a teaching tool (demonstrated to kids and identified as actual jugs that saved a life), but with emphasis on life jackets as the smart way to avoid needing Life Jugs.
4. Acknowledge and publicize the actions of Mr. Public, whose quick thinking saved a life. Use the publicity to stress the need to wear a life jacket until completely off the water. Operations Manager has thanked Mr. Public, Jr. and discussed the event

with Mr. Public, Sr. to ensure the father understood the significance of his son's life-saving actions. A letter of appreciation has been prepared from Lake Discovery Project and is attached. Notice of Mr. Public's actions is being forwarded to the State Water Commission for possible acknowledgement. Copies of the Last Ranger/Next Ranger Report and letter of appreciation are being shared with Public Affairs Office along with a request to prepare an article for Mr. Public's hometown newspaper.

Rodney Ranger  
Lake Discovery