



Accident Database

Report ID# 453

Help

1997-06-15

Date

Larry and Terry Ratliff

Victim

53

Victim Age

Licking River

River

None

Section

Terry Dam United States Kentucky, US

Location

Gage

Medium

Water Level

N/A

River Difficulty



Cause Code(s)

- Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic

Injury Type(s)

- Does not Apply

Factors

- Failed Rescue

Inexperienced

Victim Experience Level

Private

Trip Type

Whitewater Kayak

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status

Accident Description

On June 15, 1997 Father's Day turned tragic for a family on Kentucky's Licking River. The river was coming down from a high level. Two brothers and the youngest son of one of them were kayaking near the Terry Dam in Cynthiana. One person - it's unclear who- was sucked into the hydraulic from downstream. In the wild scene that ensued each tried to save the other and took turns becoming trapped in the backwash. Despite their life jackets Larry Ratliff, 53, and his youngest son Terry, 23, were pulled into the hydraulic. Both were pronounced dead at the scene. The victim's brother capsized during a rescue attempt and was washed out unharmed.

SOURCE: Lexington, KY [Herald-Leader](#); Henderson, KY [Gleaner](#)



downstream boaters.

I just wanted to drop a note concerning a report of an accident on June 15, 1997. It took place on the Licking River in Kentucky. I am the oldest son of Larry, who was killed. The other individual who was killed was my youngest brother, Chad. Not Terry as stated in the report. There were no witnesses to the actual accident as it took place around the bend upstream from the boat ramp. The report indicated that there were three people boating and one escaped. We only had two boats that day. We were introducing Chad to kayaking and did not feel there was any danger. I was not aware of the low-head dam upriver. The water was running higher than normal and we think Chad got in front of Dad and was pulled into the hydraulic before he could be warned. My father was not the type to stand idle. He was in exceptional shape for his age and I am sure he felt he could rescue him. Please understand, I am not writing this to be critical of the report. I do hope people see and learn something from it, which is why I want to make sure the facts are correct. It has been almost three years since the accident, and I am finally considering getting Dad's boat, which was undamaged, back on the water. I don't think I will ever do much in the way of moving water, with the exception of a couple of Class I and II streams that have some good fishing. I am looking into purchasing some equipment to replace things that were lost in the accident. That is part of the reason I found the accident report. I am just now getting to the point to be able to delve(?) back into kayaking information and books. Thanks for you time. If you have any questions or need any further information, please let me know.

Sincerely, Kenny Ratliff kenratt@peoplepc.com

June 15th, Father's Day, turned tragic for a Kentucky family kayaking the Licking River. Two brothers and the youngest son of one of them were paddling near the Terry Dam in Cynthiana, Kentucky. One person - it's unclear who- was sucked into the hydraulic. In the wild scene that ensued each tried to save the other. Despite their life jackets Larry Ratliff, 53, and his youngest son Terry, 23 were pulled into the hydraulic. Both were pronounced dead at the scene. The victim's brother capsized in the rescue attempt and was washed out unharmed..



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