

04-08-1972 Frankfort KY – David Childs – State LEO Boat Accident Rescue Attempt



OFFICER DOWN MEMORIAL PAGE

REMEMBERING ALL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S HEROES

<http://www.odmp.org/officer/21985-patrol-officer-david-t-childs>



Bio & Incident Details

Age: 39

Tour: 5 years

Badge # Not available

Cause: Drowned

Patrol Officer

David T. Childs

Kentucky Water Patrol, Kentucky

End of Watch: Saturday, April 8, 1972

Patrol Officer David Childs and Trooper James McNeely, of the Kentucky State Police, drowned when their boat went over Dam 4 on the Kentucky River.

The officers were searching for two missing juveniles when the accident occurred.

Officer Childs had served with the Kentucky Water Patrol for five years. He was survived by his wife and three children.



http://www.kentuckystatepolice.org/2014/pr06_16_14.html

NEWS RELEASES

Kentucky State Police Recognize Fallen Water Patrol Officer

Date of News Release: 06/16/2014

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) -- The Kentucky State Police held a memorial ceremony for one of its fallen officers today at KSP headquarters in Frankfort.



KSP Commissioner Rodney Brewer presented a flag to Roy Childs, of Frankfort, in memory of his father, David Thomas Childs, a Kentucky State Police Water Patrol Officer* who perished along with Trooper James McNeely on April 8, 1972. The officers were searching for two Louisville teens reported missing on a canoe trip when a swift current in the rain-swollen Kentucky River swept their boat over the Lock 4 dam in Frankfort, Ky. The missing youths were found later unhurt.

Child was 39-years-old at the time of his death. His body was recovered from the Ohio River near Tell City, Ind. McNeely was 37-years-old. His body was never found.

On April 11, 1972, the Lexington Herald wrote the following about the tragic incident. "It takes the death of policemen, such as the drowning of State Trooper James McNeely and Boating Officer David Childs, to remind the public of its collective debt to the men of the safety forces who each day risk their lives in an often thankless profession."

"Today, we stand on the shoulders of all those who have gone before us and, like David Childs and James McNeely, made the ultimate sacrifice of service over self," said KSP Commissioner Brewer. "We salute them and all those who chose a life that makes a difference."



(*In 1968, responsibility for the enforcement of boating safety laws was transferred from the Kentucky Dept. of Public Safety's Boating Division to the Division of State Police. In November of 1972, responsibility for boating safety was transferred to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.)

Officer recognized 42 years after he died searching for missing teenagers on the Ky. River

<http://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article44493831.html>

JUNE 17, 2014 By Karla Ward

State police on Monday recognized a Kentucky State Police Water Patrol Officer who died on the job in Frankfort more than 42 years ago. David Thomas Childs, 39, died while searching for two Louisville teenagers who had been reported missing when their canoe was swept over the Lock 4 dam of the Kentucky River on April 8, 1972, according to a news release from state police.

The teens were later found unhurt, but Childs and Trooper James McNeely, 37, died. State police said the river was swollen from rain, and there was a swift current.

Childs' body was recovered from the Ohio River near Tell City, Ind.; McNeely's body was never found.



David Thomas Childs

KSP Commissioner Rodney Brewer presented a flag to Childs' son, Roy Childs, of Frankfort, at a memorial ceremony at state police headquarters in Frankfort on Monday.

The April 11, 1972 edition of the Lexington Herald said that "it takes the death of policemen, such as the drowning of State Trooper James McNeely and Boating Officer David Childs, to remind the public of its collective debt to the men of the safety forces who each day risk their lives in an often thankless profession," according to the news release.

At the time of the men's deaths, the state police were responsible for enforcing boating safety laws. That responsibility was transferred to the state Transportation Cabinet in November 1972, the release stated.

THE TROOPER PROJECT: TPR. JAMES MCNEELY

<http://kentuckystatepolice.blogspot.com/2014/12/the-trooper-project-tpr-james-mcneely.html>

12-08-2014

Trooper James McNeely and Officer David Childs discussed the latest movie release that afternoon on their way to the boat ramp at the Kentucky River. "The Godfather" was a historic thriller about the mafia and their influence in America. It had a star studded line-up but they would have to wait until it hit the discount theatres. With each of them having a wife and three kids, the expense of a first showing was out of the question. After all, last Sunday had been Easter and there wasn't a surplus of funds leftover. The conversation shifted to their kids as "A Horse with No Name" by America played in the background on the AM radio in the truck.

William Greenwell, a civilian, had been silent amidst the discussion. He had been visiting with his close friend McNeely when the attempt to locate call had come in from the Frankfort Post. Two teenage boys from Louisville had gone on a camping trip the day before in their canoe on the Kentucky River and hadn't been heard from since their departure. Greenwell had been invited to accompany the duo after the call had come in. Unaccustomed to such bantering, he was a bit anxious about the rescue mission with the rainfall that had occurred since Thursday. He failed to understand that these 'casual discussions' were a calming distraction for these two veteran officers. They were fully aware of the dangers of such a rescue attempt in this rain swollen river. The newscaster announced that Jack Nicklaus had just won the Masters as Childs turned off the radio and backed down the ramp.



The men discussed how swift the current was as the rain continued to fall. Usually the 18 foot craft with its big Evinrude could handle such conditions, but today it was straining to keep up. With Trooper McNeely operating the throttle, Officer Childs was at the bow watching for the teenagers while keeping a vigilant eye out for large debris that could damage the boat. The conditions were treacherous but they carefully proceeded on in the intermittent rain, committed to finding the two youth. A short time into their trip the river took control of the craft and slammed it into Lock #4 causing it to capsize. Within seconds, the boat broke apart sending all three men into the raging current. Greenwell quickly surfaced, grabbing a branch near the shoreline until he was rescued by the lockmaster's son. He later recounted that "...it happened so fast that we didn't know what hit us." Trooper McNeely and Officer Childs were never seen alive again. Officer David Childs' body was located twenty days later near Tell City, Indiana. The body of Trooper James McNeely was never recovered. He was the eleventh Kentucky State Trooper killed in the line of duty, one day after celebrating his sixteenth year of service.

The date was April 8, 1972, and newspaper editorials would remind the public of "the collective debt that we owe to members of the public safety arena that risk

their lives in such a thankless profession.” Meanwhile, two widows and six children were left behind to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives.

We continue to make progress towards our goal of erecting a bronze trooper statue at our academy compound. This incredible sculpture will represent all of the troopers and officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in our agency since its inception. It also serves as a permanent tribute to every member of our agency: past, present and future. During early discussions with the sculptor, it was decided that the features and appearance of the statue would possess a generic quality that would represent everyone....yet no one individual in the agency. That thought process changed a few months ago when we received an e-mail from one of our posts.

It seems that a Sergeant assigned to the Hazard Post had been discussing the statue with some of his squad. The conversation eventually focused on the death of Trooper McNeely and the fact that he was the only trooper that we had never brought home. Would it be possible for the sculpture to bear his resemblance? The idea was electrifying and resonated with everyone at Headquarters involved in the project. Photographs were quickly sent to the sculptor in order for the finished piece of art to bear a vague, but distinct resemblance to Trooper McNeely.

It should be noted that this statue is not a lone tribute to Trooper James McNeely. However, the symbolism of this gesture is powerful and adds to the layers of thought and imagery surrounding this iconic piece of art.

As we enter into the season of Thanksgiving let us continue our efforts to finish this project, honoring all of those who have gone before us, including the trooper that we were never able to bring home.