

04-08-1972 Frankfort KY – James W McNeely – State LEO Boat Accident Rescue Attempt



James Willard McNeely

http://www.charleyproject.org/cases/m/mcneely_james.html

Vital Statistics at Time of Disappearance.

Missing Since: April 8, 1972 from Frankfort, Kentucky

Classification: Lost/Injured Missing

Age: 37 years old

Height and Weight: 6'2, 200 pounds

Distinguishing Characteristics: Caucasian male. Black hair, blue eyes.



McNeely, a Kentucky State Trooper, was last seen while on a flood rescue mission on the Kentucky River in Frankfort, Kentucky on April 8, 1972. His boat was swept over the dam at Lock 4. Another state trooper, 39-year-old David Thomas Childs, was in the boat. His body was later found in the Ohio River near Tell City, Indiana; he had drowned. McNeely's body has never been recovered, but he is presumed to have drowned also. A photo of Childs is posted below this case summary.

In May 2014, the Kentucky State Police held a memorial service for McNeely and named a five-mile stretch of KY 339 "James W. McNeely Memorial Highway", in his honor. He disappeared one day after the sixteenth anniversary of the day of his joining the state police, leaving behind a wife and three children.



National Law Enforcement Officers
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<http://www.nleomf.org/officers/search/search-results/james-w-mcneely.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

JAMES W MCNEELY



Rank: Trooper
Panel: 38-E: 10
Department: Kentucky State Police
End of Watch: April 8, 1972
Cause: Drowning
Age: 37
Years of Service: 16

Description: Trooper McNeely and Patrol Officer David Childs drowned when their department boat was caught in turbulent waters of the Kentucky River and went over the dam. Trooper McNeely and Officer Childs were searching for two youths reported missing but were later found unharmed.



NEWS RELEASES

KSP Post 1 Honoring Fallen Trooper

http://www.kentuckystatepolice.org/POSTS/press/2014/post1_pr05_08_14.html

Date of News Release: 05/08/2014

(Hickory, KY) – In commemoration of National Police Officers Memorial Week, the Kentucky State Police Post 1 Mayfield, will honor a fallen Trooper at a ceremony on Thursday, May 15, 2014 at 09:00 a.m. CST at the Mayfield Memory Gardens.

Trooper James W. McNeely, age 37, drowned while on a flood rescue mission on the Kentucky River in Franklin County on April 8, 1972. His death came one day after his sixteenth anniversary of joining the Kentucky State Police. Trooper McNeely, a Graves County native, was assigned to Post 12 Frankfort.



In honor of his service and sacrifice, a five-mile stretch of KY 339 in Graves County Has been designated the Trooper James W. McNeely Memorial Highway.

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.

KSP Post 1 Honors Fallen Trooper James McNeely

<http://westkentuckystar.com/News/Local-Regional/Western-Kentucky/KSP-Post-1-Honors-Fallen-Trooper-James-McNeely.aspx>

May. 16, 2016 By West Kentucky Star Staff

MAYFIELD, KY - In commemoration of National Police Officers Memorial Week, the Kentucky State Police Post 1 Mayfield, honored a fallen Trooper Monday at a ceremony at the Mayfield Memory Gardens. Trooper James W. McNeely, age 37, drowned while on a flood rescue mission on the Kentucky River in Franklin County on April 8, 1972. His death came one day after his sixteenth anniversary of joining the Kentucky State Police. Trooper McNeely, a Graves County native, was assigned to Post 12 Frankfort.

McNeely's niece, Kelly Kirchner-Toon, said her uncle was a brave man.

"He gave his life for someone else and it's nice that someone remembers, even after all these years," Kirchner-Toon said.

Troopers placed a wreath at McNeely's grave Monday morning. In honor of his service and sacrifice, a five-mile stretch of KY 339 in Graves County has been designated the Trooper James W. McNeely Memorial Highway.