

## 12-07-1989 Edmond OK – Steve Begley - FF PSD Trapped in Parachute

A 28-year-old member of a fire department dive team lost his life in a lake in Oklahoma in December of 1989. The dive team was conducting a search for the victim of a parasailing accident that had occurred the previous October. While attempting to recover the equipment and the body of the accident victim this diver became thoroughly ensnared in the parachute's lines.



<http://www.thediversassociation.com/index.php/sheets>

## Diver dies in search for drowned man

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/archives/diver-dies-in-search-for-drowned-man/article\\_0d0b5433-54ce-597f-bd2c-3232a5027937.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/archives/diver-dies-in-search-for-drowned-man/article_0d0b5433-54ce-597f-bd2c-3232a5027937.html)

December 7, 1989 **MELINDA MORRIS**

MANNFORD - When Edmond firefighter Steve Begley's diving line went tight and bubbles from his air tanks stopped rising on the surface of Lake Keystone, his co-workers above knew something was wrong.

Efforts to retrieve the body of a drowned Collinsville man suddenly became an exhausting effort to save Begley. Two divers were unable to bring him to the surface.

Begley died at 4:24 p.m. Wednesday at St. Francis Hospital after he was pulled from the water by a line tied to the winch of the search team's boat.

Edmond Fire Battalion Chief John Gibbon said Begley, of Midwest City, volunteered for the first dive Wednesday to look for the body.

The four-man search team had volunteered to assist the Oklahoma Highway Patrol to find the body of Glen Huser, 33, who drowned after a parasailing accident Oct. 14 north of the Salt Creek recreational area.

The team had used sonar equipment to find 12 or 13 possible locations for the drowned man and his boat. Begley dived into 50 feet of water at the first site, Gibbon said.

"He was assigned to tie the tether line to the first object he found," Gibbon said.

"Apparently he tied off to the parachute (used in parasailing), which was what he was told to do." Gibbon said, "We didn't know what happened. The line became tight."

Begley had been trained to tug on the line when he was in trouble, but the firefighters felt no tugs. "All of a sudden, there were no more bubbles," Gibbon said.

Begley was equipped with knives and other cutting tools and had plenty of air, he said. "We were getting concerned," Gibbon said, so another diver was sent in after Begley.

"He reached the tether line and reached out into the parachute," Gibbon said. "He felt Steve entangled and he felt he wasn't going to be able to disentangle him."

The diver came back to the boat and said "he wanted someone with more experience to do it."

Gibbon said he then went down to look for Begley.

"I began cutting him out," Gibbon said. "I pulled him into my arms and at that time, I felt the body that we were looking for at my feet."

Gibbon said he kept trying to cut Begley out of the parachute, and then inflated a device similar to a life preserver, hoping it would pull them to the surface.

They did not rise, however, and Gibbon said he became tangled in the parachute.

"I began cutting myself out," Gibbon said.

He said he swam back to the surface, and the team decided the only way to save Begley was to tie his line to the boat's winch and bring him up.

Gibbon said when Begley became tangled in the parachute, he might have accidentally spit out the regulator device through which he breathed under water, or that it might have been jerked out.

The Tulsa medical examiner's office said the body will be viewed by a doctor today and examined for injuries. An autopsy is not scheduled.

Edmond Fire Chief Ronnie Lloyd said Begley "loved his job. He loved coming to work. That's why he volunteered up there."

Begley, scheduled to be promoted from firefighter to driver Saturday, had worked for the department for a little more than three years, Lloyd said.

Gibbon said Begley "was a very lovable person." Lloyd said today would have been the first day of Begley's shift

"Today is probably going to be the worst day (for the department) because it was the first day of his shift and all of his co-workers are here."

A pastor has been brought in to counsel the firemen, he said.

Begley is survived by a wife, Kelly, and a 2-year-old son, Lloyd said. Mrs. Begley is expecting another child.

Eisenhower Funeral Home in Midwest City is handling funeral arrangements, which have not been set.

Huser's body was recovered soon after Begley was brought to the surface, officials said.

Huser had been parasailing behind a boat and dropped to the water as the boat turned. During a rescue attempt by the boat's crew, the craft capsized and sank. Huser was attached to the boat with a tow rope.

## **Diver Drowns Trying to Retrieve Body in Lake**

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/archives/diver-drowns-trying-to-retrieve-body-in-lake/article\\_1b76d2be-fc27-5ad9-9743-5a7f843c0a5f.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/archives/diver-drowns-trying-to-retrieve-body-in-lake/article_1b76d2be-fc27-5ad9-9743-5a7f843c0a5f.html)

December 7, 1989 **Wayne Greene; Kay Johnson**

MANNFORD - A Midwest City scuba diver drowned Wednesday after he became entangled in a parachute attached to the body of a man who disappeared in Keystone Lake in October.

Steve Begley, 28, an Edmond firefighter, died at a Tulsa hospital about two hours after he was pulled from the murky water.

He was searching for the body of Glen A. Huser, 33, of Collinsville, who drowned in a parasailing accident.

Lake Patrol divers pulled up Begley and Huser's bodies - both still entangled in the parachute - about 15 minutes after Begley disappeared in 50 feet of water, said Lt. Darrell Hendricks of the Lake Patrol.

"It's like a big spider web," Hendricks said of the parachute. "Once he was down there, it just kind of enveloped him."

Begley had no knife or anything that might have helped free him, Hendricks said.

Begley, who had been an Edmond firefighter three years and on the dive team two years, ran out of oxygen before another Edmond firefighter diver could rescue him. Begley was the first diver to reach the boat and parachute.

When pulled from the water, Begley had a faint heartbeat. He was taken to Tulsa's St. Francis Hospital by a helicopter ambulance, but died shortly after 5 p.m., a hospital spokesman said.

Edmond Fire Chief Ronnie Lloyd said Begley was part of a three-man diving team sent to Lake Keystone as part of a training exercise, and to help in the search.

"It was just another routine thing," Lloyd said, adding that the department was saddened by the accident.

"It's just real hard on everybody," said Edmond Battalion Chief Nolan Boudreaux. "But that's one of the risks."

Begley is survived by a two-year-old son and his wife, who is five months pregnant, Boudreaux said.

Edmond Deputy Chief Dwight Maker said Bagley was scheduled to be promoted from firefighter to driver on Saturday.

"I notified him yesterday that he was being promoted," Maker said Wednesday. "He was quite thrilled about that."

"You couldn't help but like him. He always had a smile on his face."

Huser disappeared in Keystone Lake Oct. 19. He was parasailing behind a 17-foot jet boat when his parasail went down while the boat was turning, said Jonathan Haines, boat driver. Haines told the Lake Patrol that he and a passenger tried to pull Huser into the boat, but the weight of the three caused the boat to tip and sink, with Huser and his parasail still connected by a tow rope.

Another boat rescued Haines and the passenger.

Hendricks said the Lake Patrol will try to raise the boat Thursday.

A Tulsa police helicopter, a sonar-equipped boat and divers were called in for the 48-day search for Huser's body.

## **Edmond Firefighter Drowns Attempting to Recover Body**

<http://newsok.com/article/2297234>

December 7, 1989 Ben Fenwick Published

An Edmond firefighter only a few days from a promotion died Wednesday when he became entangled in the parachute lines of a drowning victim he had volunteered to help find, officials said.

Steve Begley, 28, was thrilled after receiving news of the promotion the day before the accident claimed his life, Edmond Deputy Fire Chief Dwight Maker said late Wednesday.

"It's like family here; sometimes you see these guys more than your own family. It hurts," Maker said.

Begley is survived by his 2-year-old son and wife, Kelly, who is five months pregnant, Maker said.

Begley's death occurred when he and two other Edmond firefighters were searching with the Lake Patrol for the body of Glen Huser, 33, of Collinsville, who disappeared Oct. 14 while parasailing on Lake Keystone, officials said.

Huser had been north of the Salt Creek recreational area parasailing behind a boat and dropped to the water as the boat turned. During a rescue attempt by the boat's crew, the craft capsized and sank. Huser was attached to the boat with a tow rope and went down with it.

In Wednesday's search for Huser's body, Begley apparently became entangled in the cords of the parachute and either drowned or his scuba tanks ran out of air at about 4:30 p.m., officials said.

Begley was rushed to St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa while paramedics tried to resuscitate him.

Huser's body was recovered shortly after Begley's death.

Maker said Begley, a 3 1/2-year-veteran firefighter, had been a member of the scuba rescue team for more than two years, was properly trained and was carrying the proper equipment for the dive.

"He was one of our best. We don't just send out inexperienced people on things like that," Maker said.

Maker said firefighters on Begley's shift and other members of the department will gather early today in remembrance of the firefighter.

Maker said Begley was looking forward to his promotion from firefighter to driver. The promotion would have been official Saturday.

"I notified him yesterday (Tuesday) that he was being promoted," Maker said. "He was quite thrilled about that. You couldn't help but like him. He always had a smile on his face."

The Associated Press contributed to BIOG: NAME:  
*Archive ID: 409402*

## **Edmond Disputes Death Settlement Ordered by Court**

<http://newsok.com/article/2340571>

December 8, 1990 Jack Money

EDMOND Edmond must pay death and other compensation benefits of up to \$500,000 to the survivors of former Edmond firefighter and diver Steven Begley, the Workers Compensation Court has found.

But Edmond city manager Max Speegle said Friday that Edmond City Council members will be asked to consider appealing the decision.

Begley, 28, died Dec. 6, 1989, while attempting to recover a body at Lake Keystone near Tulsa. When he died he left behind his wife, Kelly Jo, who was pregnant, and a son.

Speegle said Edmond doesn't feel it should pay the claim because the firefighter was off-duty and was a volunteer for the Oklahoma Lake Patrol when the accident occurred.

"It was not a city of Edmond operation that was being conducted at that lake," Speegle said. "The city of Edmond would not have sent a firefighter-diver up there for that operation."

Begley and two other Edmond divers went to the lake to help join the search for Glen Huser, 33, of Collinsville, who disappeared earlier in the year while parachute sailing behind a boat.

The Begleys' attorney, Kent S. Johnson, argued that the diver was there to fulfill job requirements.

"It was part of his employment as a member of the Edmond Fire Department dive team," he said.

"The divers were required to make a certain number of dives to keep their proficiency up," Johnson said. "The divers did use city of Edmond equipment, and had city approval to do it."

Compensation judge Terry A. Pendell found that Edmond provided Begley and other Edmond firefighters equipment and days off to perform the dive as part of an unwritten mutual aid agreement between the city and Oklahoma Lake Patrol. But Speegle said the city did not send the divers. Rather, they volunteered to go. He said officials are troubled by the judgment.

"It's a difficult situation because we have tremendous feelings for the victim's family," he said. "But taxpayers' money is involved here."

Speegle said total compensation could reach \$500,000 if the family draws benefits for as long as law allows. Edmond insures itself, he said.

Begley's wife would get a \$10,000 lump sum settlement, while each child would get half of a \$5,000 lump sum settlement placed in their respective trust accounts. The money would be available to them when they turned 18 years old.

In addition, Kelly Jo would draw a weekly sum of \$173.58 for the rest of her life unless she remarried.

The children would split a weekly sum of \$57.42 until they turned 18, or, if attending college, until they became 23. BIOG: NAME:

*Archive ID: 450180*

## **Edmond to Eye Benefits Ruling**

<http://newsok.com/article/2389838>

April 1, 1992 Jack Money

EDMOND - The Edmond City Council now will have to decide whether to admit the city shares financial responsibility with the state for an off-duty firefighter who died while participating in a volunteer search for a drowning victim.

In a ruling by the Oklahoma Court of Appeals, judges said the state and city are equally liable for the payment of workers compensation benefits to firefighter Steven Begley's widow, Kelly Jo, and their two sons.

The award amount could be up to \$500,000 if maximum benefits are drawn. City manager Max Speegle said this week that the earliest the council could be asked to consider its response to the appeals court ruling that it must share responsibility with the State Insurance Fund is April 13.

"Right now, I don't anticipate calling a special council meeting," he said. Edmond is self-insured, and taxpayers would have to pick up the tab. Attorneys representing the city have argued that the city wasn't liable to pay the benefits because Begley and other Edmond firefighters had volunteered to go to Keystone Lake near Tulsa on their own time to look for the body.

They also argued that responsibility for benefits payments at least should be shared equally by the city and state because Begley was in dual employment, for the city and the state, when he died.

Appeals court judges agreed with the latter of the two contentions and ordered that the State Insurance Fund, on behalf of the state Department of Public Safety Lake Patrol, be jointly responsible for payment of the benefits.

Speegle said Tuesday he's not sure the city council will be agreeable to the appeals court ruling, even though it might be the best the city could do.

"The original decision of the trial court was that the city was liable." Total compensation would give Kelly Jo Begley a \$10,000 lump-sum settlement, while his two sons would share a \$5,000 lump-sum settlement placed in trust accounts until they are 18 years old.

Kelly Jo Begley also would draw a weekly sum of \$173.58 for the rest of her life unless she remarries.

The children also would split a weekly sum of \$57.42 until they turn 18 or, if attending college, until they become 23. BIOG: NAME:

*Archive ID: 499022*

## **Death Settlement Reached**

<http://newsok.com/article/2409953>

October 21, 1992 Bryan Painter

The final touches have been put on a workers compensation case in the 1989 drowning death of an Edmond firefighter/diver, the attorney for the victim's wife said this week.

Attorney Kent Johnson said annuity portion of the settlement recently was settled and includes long-term monthly benefits for Kelly Begley and her two sons. Kelly Begley's husband, firefighter Steven Begley, died December 1989 while trying to recover a drowning victim's body at Lake Keystone near Tulsa.

This week's announcement ends a nearly three-year-old dispute that involved Kelly Begley, the city of Edmond and the Oklahoma Lake Patrol, Johnson said.

In an August hearing, Workers Compensation Court Judge Terry Pendell approved the overall settlement, said Edmond city attorney Steve Murdock.

It involved a payment of \$45,000 at the time, plus a payment of \$1,500 per month, Murdock said.

Johnson said the payment continues through the children's college years. But he added the payments do not start immediately.

Attorneys for the city had argued the city wasn't liable to pay benefits because Begley and other Edmond firefighters had volunteered to go to Keystone Lake to search for the drowning victim.

Murdock said on March 17 the state Court of Appeals issued an opinion that Begley was in dual employment at the time of his death as a city of Edmond employee and as an Oklahoma Lake Patrol volunteer.

Johnson said appeals were made to the Supreme Court which let the Court of Appeals decision stand.

In a statement released by her attorney, the victim's wife, Kelly Begley, said, "I am pleased that the matter has finally been resolved. My children and I can now get on with our lives and this will help with the support of the kids over the years as they are growing up. " She added, "I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who have shown such continuing support and concern, and particularly the Edmond firefighters and firefighters from other departments who were friends of Steve or were concerned about the situation. Their support has been greatly appreciated. " Aside from the three parties involved in the settlement, the case took

an unusual turn recently when it was revealed that Tommy Alsip, former executive director of the National Guard Association of Oklahoma, allegedly collected insurance money for Begley's death soon after he died.

BIOG: NAME:

*Archive ID: 519131*

## **Benne receives top local Fire Department award**

[http://www.edmondsun.com/news/local\\_news/benne-receives-top-local-fire-department-award/article\\_49cb8f96-83b0-11e4-9140-877002a31db8.html](http://www.edmondsun.com/news/local_news/benne-receives-top-local-fire-department-award/article_49cb8f96-83b0-11e4-9140-877002a31db8.html)

Dec 14, 2014 By Mark Schlachtenhaufen | The Edmond Sun

A colleague of former Edmond firefighter Steven Begley has received the Edmond Fire Department's award named for the firefighter.

In December 1989, Begley was part of the search for the body of a Collinsville man who went missing while parasailing near Tulsa on Keystone Lake. Begley and several other local firefighters — Begley volunteered to be the first diver that day — were searching for the body.

Less than five minutes into the dive, Begley became entangled in parachute cords and his regulator was pulled from his mouth. Rescue efforts were hindered by other entanglements in the water, and Begley did not survive the incident.

Begley, who was days away from a promotion taking effect, was the first Edmond firefighter to make the ultimate sacrifice while on duty. He was survived by a 2-year-old son and his wife Kelly, who at the time was pregnant with their second son.

For his sacrifice, Begley was awarded the Medal of Honor and his family received the Firefighter Cross.

The Edmond Fire Department created the Steven Begley Award to be given to an individual recognized by his peers for providing outstanding service, unselfish dedication and personal sacrifice in the performance of his duties.

During the Fire Department's recent Christmas party, Fire Capt. Doug Benne received the award from Interim Fire Chief Doug Hall.

Benne said he and Begley went through rookie school together. About six years ago, his son Jesse was hired by the Edmond Fire Department. Begley's son Kyle, who was in the same rookie school as Benne's son, also was hired by the Fire Department

"It was kind of overwhelming at first because you never feel like you're going to be the guy who gets it," Benne said, noting past recipients had items on their résumés like responding to the Oklahoma City bombing, a tornado or a high-profile rescue.

Benne, who was born and raised in Edmond, joined the Fire Department in July 1986 and rose through the ranks as a lieutenant and then became a captain. In 1986, Benne was trying to support his family on a salary of \$4.68 an hour. When he started, personnel were truly firefighters, Benne said.

"We had a lot of big structure fires and a lot of big grass fires," he recalled. Now, due to a variety of developments including better fire prevention and more educated citizens, a majority of the calls are medical related. Firefighters also became involved with hazmat response and scuba diving.

Hall, who was Benne's battalion chief for a while, said the recipient represents the spirit of the award very well. He's helped in countless department projects, including his welding skills, to help build training props and repair things. He's a leader on the hazmat team.

"For a guy who's been here 28 years, he's as active as the youngest guy walking through the door," Hall said. "He's a hundred percent reliable. You can always count on him doing his job. You can count on him always speaking his mind."

As a supervisor at Station 5, Benne looks out for his firefighters, but is ready to point out when they have done something requiring correction, Hall said.

Benne said working in Edmond has made for a great career. He said in the past, he observed department leaders and attempted to graft their best skills into his approach to the job.

Benne and his wife Brenda have three sons — David, Robert and Jesse.  
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#### DECEMBER, 1989 OKLAHOMA

A 28 yoa firefighter drowned when he became entangled in a parachute during the recovery operation of a parasailer. The parasailer had drowned when his tow boat swamped and sank. After two months of unsuccessful attempts by other teams to locate the boat and the body of the parasailer, the fire department was asked to assist in the operation. The team utilized a sonar unit to locate the victim and his parachute in 45 feet of water. The recovery dive plan was to send one diver down with a line and carabinier with instructions to run a search pattern and then just clip the line to the first object found, follow the line back to the blat and not attempt to recover the body. A potential entanglement plan had been discussed and was to first signal for help and then try to free oneself. The diver had entered the water with a knife attached to the inside of his left calf, a pair of snippers attached to the knife sheath and one additional line cutter (2) in each BC pocket. After he reached the bottom, he moved approximately 15-20 feet in the pattern and then stopped. The tender felt the diver on the end of the line for approximately seven minutes before all movement stopped. One minute later, all bubbles stopped. After one more minute the safety diver entered the wter and found the carabinier clipped into

the risers of the para-chute. In the one foot visibility the safety diver felt the missing diver entangled in the parachute and had determined it was too risky for him to retrieve the diver and surfaced after six minutes. Four minutes later the team leader and the most experienced diver entered the water and found the diver completely entangled in the parachute and attempted to cut him free. They tried several times to surface with the diver, but encountered more entanglement problems and they became entangled. The team leader finally dropped to the bottom and swam 20-30 feet along the bottom and surfaced eight minutes into the dive. The decision was then made to utilize the searchline and winch on the boat to attempt to pull all to the surface. Two minutes later, the diver was pulled to the surface. Rescue efforts failed.