

REPRINT



PSDiver Monthly

Volume Number 3



Issue Number 42

ISSUE 42

August 2007

A Parents Nightmare –

Crews Search Missouri River For Missing Teen

<http://www.myfoxstl.com/myfox/pages/News/Detail?contentId=3474411&version=1&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=TSTY&pageId=3.2.1>

12 Jun 2007

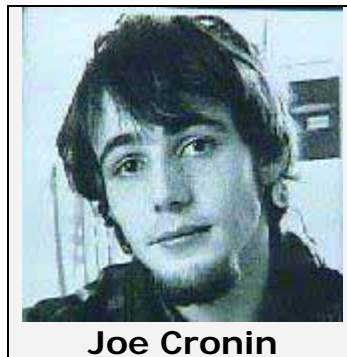
Video -

Crews Search Missouri River For Missing Teen

http://www.myfoxstl.com/myfox/MyFox/pages/sidebar_video.jsp?contentId=3473223&version=1&locale=EN-US

Rescuers have wrapped up their search for a missing teenager, who vanished suddenly in the Missouri River, Monday. A swift current caught nineteen year old Joe Cronin, while he washed the mud off himself in the water, near Sunset Park in Florissant. He and a 20-year-old friend had been fishing and riding their mini-bikes.

Today the Missouri Water Patrol put two boats in the water, along with a crew from the Shawn Hornbeck Foundation. They searched a twenty-mile stretch but failed to find anything. Both say they plan to be



Joe Cronin

back in the water around eight tomorrow.

Cronins' parents say he loved to fish, and was comfortable around water, so they are not giving up hope.

Search for missing teen swept away in river has become a recovery effort

http://www.kmov.com/localnews/stories/kmov_localnews_070612_cronin.3e543fd0.html

June 13, 2007

Video [Watch News 4 coverage](#)

<http://www.kmov.com/video/topvideo-index.html?nvid=150994>

Search underway for teen who was swept away in Missouri River *June 12th, 2007*. A massive search is going on right now. Authorities are searching for a teenager who went fishing, and never came back. Authorities are searching for Joe Cronin, 19 from Creve Coeur.

(KMOV) - The search for a man believed to have been swept away in the Missouri River has now become a recovery effort.

Joe Cronin disappeared early Monday morning while fishing with a friend near Sunset Park in north St. Louis County.

Crews are not only focusing on that area, but also a 20-mile stretch of the Missouri River. Cronin sank in the mud, and his friend was able to pull him out. His friend then turned away for a few seconds, and heard Cronin calling out for help. When looked back, Cronin was swept away in the river. Crews resumed looking for Cronin early this morning.

*******Previous story*******

(KMOV) - A massive search is going on right now. Authorities are searching for a teenager who went fishing, and never came back.

Authorities are searching for Joe Cronin, 19 from Creve Coeur.

The search centers on an area, around the Missouri River, where the teen was fishing with a friend.

The friend told police that Joe slipped under the water around 5:30 a.m. and he was swept away by the current. However, police say the friend waited more than 4 hours before contacting police to tell them that Cronin was swept away.

Family and friends say Cronin was not the strongest swimmer.

Authorities are searching the area and they say boaters with the right equipment are welcome to join in search.

If you have any information or would like to assist in the search, call the Missouri Highway Patrol at 573-751-3333.



I grew up with spending summers in the water -- my parents had a big ski boat and camper and every weekend we headed out to the lake. Water safety was a big part of normal stuff for us. I was also in Girl Scouts and of course they stressed "the buddy system" for everything.

When my kids were born, we continued going camping with my parents but it was rare and my dad had long since traded the ski boat for a small fishing boat, which Joe loved. He was Grandpa's fishing buddy for many years and I know my dad taught him as much about water safety as he did me.

We took Joe (and his sisters) for swimming lessons, made them wear life jackets out in the lake, and stressed the importance of staying out of the rivers. We floated on smaller rivers (Missouri is full of them), and they knew first hand the power of the current in the small rivers.

I just don't know what possessed him to get in the

river that night. It was about 3:30 am (he worked 2nd shift) and I do know that in the dark the river looks really quite gentle. But it was 6 feet above flood stage and when we saw it the next day my heart sank.

Missouri River Patrol told us where he went in was called a "wing dike" but it looked like a gravel pier to me. I didn't know anything about the Missouri River except that you could see it from a few places around here. I didn't know you could access it. I learned that there is a series of jetties called "wing dikes" down both sides of the river to encourage a deeper channel for barge traffic and help control flooding.

The water patrol site states that a hydraulic is created from the water flowing over the wing dikes. In a news release article entitled "Are the Rivers Safe?", the water patrol states: "When water drops over an obstacle, it curls back on itself, forming a strong upstream current that is capable of holding a person

Wing dikes:

www.rivermiles.com/resources/RacingGuide.html

These are rock structures built into the river by the US Army Corps of Engineers. They force the water away from the banks, narrowing the channel and speeding up the river. They are almost always found on the opposite side of the navigation channel. The water directly downstream of a wing dike is calm and is often a place where sandbars build up. Behind a wing dike is a good safe spot to go if a towboat creates a rough wake. The water behind the dike will remain calm and safe.

You will want to be careful to avoid hitting a wing dike while going downstream. The current pushing against it can pin your boat and capsize it. It is not difficult to avoid a wing dike. At night or in foggy conditions, take extra precautions.

Imagine the problems caused when the river is in flood stage!



Photo of Wing Dike by [Norm Miller](#)

within its "hydraulics". Some holes are great sport for rafters but can be deadly for unprepared swimmers. "Hydraulics" around man-made dams must be treated with utmost respect regardless of their height or level of the river. Despite their seemingly benign appearance, they can create an almost escape-proof trap."

The Missouri is a very fast river, and the day Joe went in the Coast Guard told me it was running at about 6 mph. It changes depth suddenly, randomly, from 2 feet to 20 feet in spots. The day we got the news, we did what we were told by the authorities and "waited." When we found out the Water Patrol stopped looking for him at 5:00 pm, we went out there ourselves to try to find him. We couldn't access the shore because the water was up in the trees. We could only stare in horror at the magnitude of the river. We tried to find a boat; there are no boat rentals or marinas on the Missouri River. No one boats it for recreation, we

were told. We even tried to buy a boat but we were afraid we'd just get ourselves in trouble and take away resources that were looking for Joe.

We finally thought to call in professionals, and my friend found a contact for the Shawn Hornbeck Search and Rescue Team. They needed a boat, and already two friends had come forward with boats but with no knowledge of the Missouri River. Both of those guys who brought their boats out later told me they will NEVER go on the Missouri River again.

I was sure Joe had gotten out somewhere downstream. He had always been so lucky in scrapes all his life. We mobilized friends and family members to comb the shores as best as we could get to all the way from the 20 mile marker of the Missouri River where he went in, past the confluence at the Mississippi, down past the Chain of Rocks on the Mississippi. The authorities involved, Florissant Police Dept and MO Water Patrol, were sure he had drowned. My friend called the news stations to get more activity going to try to find him, which definitely helped, and I called the Coast Guard.

The Water Patrol was not comfortable with having people on the river looking for Joe. However, we now know that there are several public parks with shore access to the Missouri River and no signs about swimming or even the hazards created by those wing dikes. Especially at Sioux Passage Park, the river is

beautiful and so inviting. Some of the younger people helping us look wanted to wade because it was such a hot day and I nearly had a meltdown. I finally had to walk away and a more rationale person explain to them that this is reason we are here in the first place and PLEASE do not go in the water. Fortunately they listened but I thought my head was going to explode.

Unfortunately the Water Patrol was right, and apparently he had been caught in that hydraulic. His body was found 3 days later at the 18.5-mile marker by a search and rescue dog from a boat. The day he surfaced was my youngest daughter's 17th birthday. She understands that is not the day he died, but it is what is listed as his official date of death. I just don't understand why people around here don't know about those wing dikes. I feel like I should have known, so I could have warned him. I know he would have listened. I just miss him so much.

Rose Cronin, mother of Joe Cronin (19) who drowned on the Missouri River on June 11, 2007.

www.RiverSafetyInfo.com

We lost our friend, Joe Cronin, on the Missouri River on June 11, 2007. This web site is being created in his memory in an effort to educate others about river safety in the St. Louis, Missouri area.