

Boat “Missing” In Harvey’s Lake For 20 Years Found By ‘Frogmen’

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A motorboat that sank about 20 years ago while making a test run at Harvey’s Lake has been located in 85 feet of water opposite Warden Place and efforts are planned



to salvage it.

The boat built by Jack Zorzi of 81 East Jackson Street, Wilkes-Barre, is known as a Margaret boat and was of the 151 cubic inch class. It had a top speed of 45 miles an hour.

The sinking occurred while Zorzi was operating the boat. Going through the water at fast speed, the boat hit a large wave. The craft went into the air and capsized. Zorzi was thrown clear and escaped.

Several weeks were spent grappling for the boat in the hope a hook would engage the propeller shaft or some other part of the boat but none of the efforts were successful. Grappling work was abandoned and Zorzi practically gave up hope of recovering the boat.

Afterword

HarveysLake.org interviewed Frank “Bucky” Kelly, of Forty-Fort, in May 2004, nearly 50 years after the recovery of the sunken hydroplane in Harvey’s Lake.

Jack Zorzi was a well-known race boat enthusiast and boat-builder at the Lake in the late 1920s-early 1930s. The boat in this article was a hydroplane fitted with a 6 cylinder Chrysler automobile engine. The engine weight and a front rudder assembly made the boat difficult at times to handle. It hit a steamboat wake when the accident occurred.

Bucky Kelly and one-dozen friends were among the earliest scuba divers in Pennsylvania. Their group was formed in 1954 at the Lake. After they discovered Zorzi’s boat they engaged Carl Swanson’s floating pile driver (for building docks) and raised the boat. The boat was taken to Lake Carey and restored. The original battery, underwater for 20 years, was cleaned and was able to be recharged. A 6 cylinder U.S. Postal truck engine was installed and the boat had a top speed of 45 miles per hour. Later the boat was taken to Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey, where it operated until additional damage occurred and it was abandoned.

While diving at the Lake Bucky Kelly noted grey circles on the bottom which were underwater springs feeding the Lake. His friends captured a 44 pound carp (released into the Irem Temple swimming pool). They undertook a comprehensive search for the legendary lumber sled and lost horses which fell through the Lake ice in the early 1900s but were unsuccessful.

They experienced the 10 feet of silt (mud in suspension) which covers the deepest parts of the Lake bottom.



The long-missing boat was discovered Saturday afternoon by a group of four “frogmen” who are pursuing their hobby of exploring the underwater labyrinth of the lake. Three of the men were exploring the waters while the fourth remained in a boat to direct an anchor line leading to the swimmers.

The 85-foot descent to the bottom of the lake where the boat was found was made by Malcolm Lewis, 29, of Forty-Fort, who is residing at Harvey’s Lake for the summer; George Dombeck, 28, of Maple Street, Wilkes-Barre and Gerald McGourty, 27, of Park Avenue, Wilkes-Barre. Frank “Buck” Kelly of Forty-Fort, the fourth member of the crew, was in the boat of Chief of Police J. Russell Taylor in the lake some distance from Mr. Zorzi’s boathouse at Warden Place. Mr Zorzi and Chief of Police Taylor are neighbors at Harvey’s Lake.

Mr. Lewis said the “frogmen” did not serve in the navy in a similar capacity but became interested in underwater explorations about a year ago when they purchased the equipment and decided to make underwater trips as a hobby. During World War 2 the United States Navy used “frogmen” as intelligence agents prior to amphibious landings and for dangerous work which had to be done under water.

When they discovered the boat on the bottom of the lake, Mr. Lewis said, he, Dombeck and McGourty found the visibility about 15 to 18 feet. He said the bottom of the lake was barren and muddy and the temperature was about 40 degrees.

He said the lake was dark below 40 feet but that the water seemed to clear when the “frogmen” were 85-foot depth.

The boat is upside down the lake bottom mud and while metal trimmings rusted and he said the mahogany hull appears to good condition.

The “frogmen” did not on the bottom of the lake swam, Mr. Lewis said. He said they “swam down” an anchor rope from the Taylor boat in making the descent.



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Though he did not know what method might be used Mr. Lewis said an effort might be made on Saturday to salvage the boat and return it to the surface. He said the use of a big float to try to surface the boat has been discussed together with the possibility of taking aqua-lungs to the bottom

and pumping them full of air and then trying to raise the boat. The method which he said might have to be used will be that of taking oil drums filled with water, putting them under the boat, and then hoisting the boat to the surface.

“This is no hobby for a person who does not know what he is attempting,” Mr. Lewis said. He said “frogmen” have to wear three or four pairs of heavy, long underwear under the rubber suits to keep warm. Fins, which the “frogmen” wear on their feet, are a necessity Mr. Lewis declared.

On their backs, Mr. Lewis said, the “frogmen” carry 41-pound air tanks and after they don the full regalia of underwear and rubber suits they put on a “weight belt” which weighs about 10 pounds.

“The deeper you go the more air you use,” Mr. Lewis said. Tanks of air are good for from one hour to one hour 15 minutes in 30 feet of water but at depths of 100 feet they are good for only about 25 minutes.

“Frogmen’s suits have self-contained underwater breathing apparatus with regulators on the aqua-lungs and with a reserve section as part of the air tanks. The reserve section would provide air for some minutes after the regular tank air supply is exhausted.”

Mr. Lewis said the local “frogmen” have no communication with the surface when exploring Harvey’s Lake. He said communication with the surface could be established by taking ropes beneath the surface but there is always the possibility of becoming entangled in the ropes while swimming.