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Man killed in boating accident recovered from Seneca Lake

BY JEFF MURRAY • JDMURRAY@GANNETT.COM • SEPTEMBER 5, 2010, 9:35 PM

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Searchers late Sunday afternoon found the body of a Schuyler County man who had been missing since a boating accident Saturday on Seneca Lake.

Donald C. Roberts Jr., 44, of Burdett, who owns the Glen Harbor Marina in Watkins Glen, was a passenger on a 29-foot 2005 Kryptonite power boat that flipped over while traveling at a high rate of speed, according to the Yates County Sheriff's Office.

The accident took place around 4:50 p.m. Saturday off Juniper Point in the Town of Starkey.

Roberts' body was spotted on the camera of an underwater remote controlled vehicle at 5:24 p.m. Sunday in 104 feet of water about 300 feet



Donald C. Roberts Jr.
(Photo provided)

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from shore and just north of the point, according to Sheriff Ron Spike.

Yates County Coroner Tad Smith declared Roberts dead and he was positively identified by his sister and mother.

The operator of the open cockpit boat, 34-year-old Frank G. Carson of Odessa, was rescued from the water by residents of the area shortly after the accident and airlifted to Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre.

Carson was treated for a fractured sternum and discharged from the hospital Sunday.

Roberts owned the vessel. Carson is the head mechanic at Glen Harbor Marina, Spike said.

Carson told investigators he and Roberts were testing the boat's performance.

"Roberts had a laptop connected to the engine and they were testing it. The boat had just come back from performance tuning in Lake George, N.Y.," Spike said in a news release.

"They had taken it out the previous day as well. Carson said they were traveling between 70 and 80 mph when the steering started shaking and wobbling and he went to de-throttle and it suddenly veered hard to the right."

Witnesses told investigators that the boat flipped and ejected the two men into the water.

Neither man was wearing a personal flotation

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device, Spike said.

Authorities initially reported that Carson was wearing a life jacket, but it turns out one of his rescuers slipped it on him before pulling him from the water, the sheriff said.

The speed limit on Seneca Lake is 5 mph up to 100 feet from shore, but there is no speed limit beyond that point, Spike said.

The investigation also determined that alcohol was not a factor in the crash.

Roberts' body was transported to Soldiers and Sailors Hospital in Penn Yan for an autopsy, scheduled for Monday.

"He was one of the most complete people you'd want to meet," said Stephen Jensen, Roberts' brother-in-law.

"When Donald took something on, whatever it was, he took it on 100 percent.

"As far as the rescue team goes," he said, "they have been thorough and sensitive and the family is very much appreciative of their incredible efforts."

The Yates County Sheriff's Office impounded the boat.

In addition to state police, Seneca County Sheriff's Office marine patrol and personnel from the Dundee and Himrod fire departments assisted at the scene.

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