

Larry Shedd Drowns On Vineyard

By Nelson Sigelman

The Martha's Vineyard Times

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Lawrence Shedd, 49, of the Blue Moon Farm in South Danbury, drowned Saturday afternoon at Quansoo Beach in Chilmark. It was a tragic end to a beautiful day spent with his wife and friends swimming at one of the Island's most remote beaches.

Confusion over Mr. Shedd's precise location hampered the rescue efforts of emergency personnel who initially responded to the West Tisbury side of the Tisbury Pond opening, the narrow man-made cut in the long barrier beach that allows water to flow between the salt pond and the Atlantic Ocean. Several people forded the tidal stream to reach Mr. Shedd and render first aid as paramedics and police in emergency vehicles from four Island towns attempted to reach the location, first from the West Tisbury side and then from Chilmark.

Liza Reynolds, an off-duty Edgartown lifeguard enjoying a beach day with her family, was the first trained Island rescuer to provide aid. The recent college graduate began CPR with assistance from bystanders in an effort to resuscitate Mr. Shedd while she waited anxiously for rescue personnel to arrive. Rescuers in all-terrain and 4-wheel drive vehicles reached Mr. Shedd from the Chilmark side of the beach and transported him to Martha's Vineyard Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 3:38 PM. The cause of death was asphyxia by accidental drowning said a spokesman for the office of the Massachusetts State Medical Examiner.

A Can-Do Guy

Mr. Shedd and his wife Jeannette were on the Vineyard for the weekend to celebrate the 70th birthday of his friend, Everett Jones, of Deep Bottom Cove, West Tisbury, and Andover.

Mr. Shedd had often done work for Mr. Jones and his brother, Malcolm Jones, also of West Tisbury, on many of the buildings located on the Jones' family farm properties. Most recently he had rebuilt a barn on the property of Everett Jones. "He was a can-do person,



a very capable guy," Malcolm Jones said in a telephone conversation with The Times Tuesday. "He knew how to figure something out and get it done."

Speaking from his home in New Hampshire on Wednesday, Everett Jones said he had lost a dear friend. "He did a lot of work for us, but he was more than a worker, he was family," he said.

Saturday was clear, warm, and sunny in effect a perfect Vineyard beach day. There were no weather advisories warning of dangerous surf conditions issued.

Mr. Shedd was among a group of people who had crossed the pond from the Jones property and were enjoying the day on Quansoo Beach on the south end of Tisbury Great Pond. The barrier beach is made up of parcels. Owners include the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank, the Jones family, and members of the Quansoo Beach Association, who control access to the west side by means of a locked gate set back on a long private road.

To the east and on the other side of the cut is Long Point Reservation, owned by The Trustees of Reservations, which includes a long strip of popular oceanfront beach available to the public and accessed at the end of a long dirt road.

The cut that allows the ocean to flush Tisbury Great Pond is a popular spot for beach goers and fishermen. Swimmers often allow themselves to be swept along by the currents that also sweep bait in and out of the pond.

Those same currents can create dangerous swimming conditions along the front beach and in the vicinity of the cut according to those familiar with the area. Rip currents capable of pulling a swimmer from shore are not uncommon. Everett Jones said the tide was low and as a result, the surf was breaking well off the beach. There was a lot of white water, he said.

Mr. Shedd and Robert Hayford of Connecticut, a member of the same party of friends, went for a swim off the beach, Mr. Jones said. When they decided to return to shore they found themselves struggling against the current.

Mr. Hayford and Mr. Shedd were about 30 feet apart. Mr. Hayford said they both realized they were in trouble, according to Mr. Jones, and decided to swim on their backs and try to make it to shore. Mr. Hayford lost sight of Mr. Shedd until he saw bystanders pulling Mr. Shedd unconscious out of the surf and up on the shore.

Callers Create Confusion

The initial calls for emergency aid from people not entirely familiar with the area created confusion. A review of the taped calls showed that the Dukes County Communications Center received the first 911 call at 2:07 PM, said Dukes County Sheriff, Michael McCormack.

The very first caller, a female, identified her location as being at the cut in Tisbury, Mr. McCormack said. There was some conversation between the dispatcher and the caller in an effort to pinpoint the location. The caller then said Tisbury Great Pond.

The next caller identified her location as The Trustees of Reservations Long Point property in West Tisbury. Then there was a gentleman who said Quansoo Beach in Chilmark. Another call location provided Trustees Long Point only.

Mr. McCormack said the dispatchers were receiving many calls at the same time and relaying the information to emergency personnel just as they received it. "And they were telling the responders that there is conflicting information, but here is what we have," he said.

At 2:20 PM, Zeke Wilkins, a Tri-Town EMT, called 911 dispatchers and provided a positive location for Mr. Shedd. West Tisbury Police Sergeant Jeffrey "Skipper" Manter arrived at 2:32. The medics arrived at 2:37 PM, said Mr. McCormack.

Heroic Efforts

About 2 PM, police, fire, and emergency medical personnel starting receiving reports of a possible drowning near the cut. Based on information provided in the initial call, rescue personnel that included a paramedic from Oak Bluffs began to respond to the West Tisbury side of the channel through the Long Point Reservation.

At the same time, others closer to the scene heard the dispatch call or were alerted to the emergency, and knowing someone needed help, responded on their own to the beach.

Liza Reynolds, a veteran Edgartown lifeguard alerted by her brother to trouble down the beach, was the first to respond. She immediately took control of the emotional situation and coordinated the CPR effort.

Long Point Trustee rangers Kevin Walsh and Justin Aiken heard the dispatch call and went to render assistance. Mr. Walsh waded across the waist-deep cut and assisted Ms. Reynolds with CPR.

Kate Conde, Trustees conservation ranger and EMT, was about to leave the property when she received a call from

Lieutenant Kelly of the Edgartown fire department asking where the cut was.

Ms. Conde turned around and got an ATV from the barn. She asked another ranger to bring a defibrillator. Ms. Conde intercepted the responding EMTs and advised them to go around through Chilmark because the man was on the other side of the cut. Ms. Conde and a responding Oak Bluffs EMT then waded across the cut. When they attached the defibrillator, the screen prompt indicated that a shock was not advised and to continue CPR.

Sergeant Manter, the first police officer to arrive, was among those who arrived on the wrong side of the cut. Mr. Manter, a marathon runner, ran down the beach and waded into the water in his uniform carrying a defibrillator and first aid bag across the cut.

Chilmark Police Chief Brian Cioffi was home when he heard the initial call over the police scanner. When he realized the man was on the Chilmark side, he knew that it would be important to save time. Mr. Cioffi loaded a defibrillator and backboard onto his personal ATV and went to the beach.

Oak Bluffs paramedic John Rose in a four-wheel drive ambulance vehicle navigated the long dirt road to the Quansoo Beach parking lot located about a third of a mile from the cut. Luckily, the tide was low and he was able to drive across Crab Creek which runs between Tisbury Pond and Black Point Pond, and drive down the beach.

Sincere Thanks

Following the fatal drowning, Chris Kennedy, Trustees regional superintendent, spoke to the Long Point staff to let them know how appreciative The Trustees were of their efforts.

Mr. Kennedy said the staff did not hesitate to respond with all of the equipment available. "What they did is put all of their training into use under very, very difficult circumstances," he said.

"It is really impressive when you see young people step up the way these individuals did," Mr. Kennedy said.

Sergeant Manter noted the many people who responded. "It truly was a group rescue effort," Mr. Manter said. "Unfortunately, it was unsuccessful."

On Tuesday, Bonny Morris, a Shedd family member, sent an e-mail to *The Times* expressing the family's thanks for those efforts. "Larry Shedd was a craftsman and carpenter who had worked seasonally on the Vineyard for many years," Ms. Morris wrote. "Larry loved his trips to the Island whether working or making memories with his family.

"Jeannette Shedd and her family would like to extend their most sincere gratitude to everyone who assisted Larry in their life-saving efforts. From the friends and good Samaritans who immediately offered assistance to the rescuers, police, and safety officials."

Mr. Shedd, a father of three, was buried today in Proctor Cemetery in Andover.

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