

Fort McRae

One Drowns And Another Nearly Dies

Sally After Ducks Fatal, Quicksand Traps Rescuer

One man drowned and another narrowly escaped drowning late Friday afternoon in Fort McRae Lagoon.

James B (Jimmy) Mitchell, 22, of 307 Magnolia St., Warrington, was pronounced dead on arrival at Escambia General Hospital about 6 p.m., according to E. E. McGovern, director of the Escambia Search and Rescue Unit.

McGovern said Carl Nelson, 25, of 214 Bay Ave., was with Mitchell, another man and Mitchell's aunt on an outing at Fort McRae. Nelson was quoted as saying that Mitchell was shooting ducks around the lagoon and that some of them fell into the water.

He waded in after the ducks with a bag around his neck, Nelson said, and then went under.

Nelson said he waded out to try to grab Mitchell but got stuck "in quicksand or moss" just before he reached the spot where Mitchell went down.

Nelson said he could not move backward or forward and remained trapped in the lagoon for more than an hour. He was pulled

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to safety by two passing fishermen, he told McGovern.

The fishermen left the scene just as police arrived saying they "had to catch a fishing boat and would be at sea for a week." They were unidentified.

On the scene during rescue operations were a Sherman Field helicopter, a Coast Guard unit, members of the Escambia search and rescue squadron, and members of the sheriff's department and Florida Highway Patrol.

A Coast Guardsman, BM-3 H. E. Moore, used a life raft from the helicopter to row out into the lagoon to locate the body. BM-1 W. C. Johnson aided Moore.

The rescue unit boat carried Mitchell to the Rod and Reel Club in Warrington where an ambulance picked him up.

Surviving Mitchell are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James A. Mitchell of Warrington; his grandmothers, Mrs. Martha Mitchell of Pensacola and Mrs. Kate Rettig of Gulfport, Miss., and other relatives.

He was a member of St. John's Catholic Church in Warrington.

Funeral arrangements will be announced by Fisher-Pou Funeral Service.