

Strong Tides Off Pickens Buffet Raft

Single Survivor
Swam Two Miles;
Hunt Continues

By KEN GUTHRIE

Four Fort Walton Beach teen-agers are missing and presumed drowned in the Gulf of Mexico off Fort Pickens after a spearfishing trip Saturday from which apparently only one escaped.

Brian McCleary, 16, drifted and swam more than two miles through rough Gulf waters Saturday afternoon after he and four companions decided to leave their rubber life raft which was being swept to sea.

Missing are:

Eric Ruyle, 16, son of Air Force Major and Mrs. Ralph J. Ruyle, 103 Allen Drive, FWB;

Bradford J. Rice, 14, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Rice, 10 Circle Drive, FWB;

Warren R. Salley, 17, parents unknown, of 720 Beal Drive, FWB, and

Larry Stuart Bill, 15, parents unknown, of 172 Monahan Ave., FWB.

McCleary, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward McCleary, FWB, was picked up near Fort McRae about 7:45 a.m. Sunday by helicopter from the Naval Air Station after spending the night in an old gun emplacement. He suffered from shock and exposure but was released to his parents after brief treatment at NAS hospital.

The search for the teen-agers, at first thought to include only four boys, began Saturday night after their 7-foot surplus Army life raft was found on Gulf Beach.

Later that night the car the boys had used was found at Fort Pickens where they had parked it to begin their voyage to spearfish near the old battleship USS Massachusetts, sunk about two miles south of the entrance to Pensacola Bay.

McCleary told the Escambia County Search and Rescue Unit the group launched the boat in the Gulf about 1:30 p.m. Saturday and started for the Massachusetts.

He said the raft soon started to take on water and was about to swamp when the group decided to start back to shore.

But the tide kept carrying them out to sea and the boys decided to leave it and swim to a buoy.

LEFT LIFE RAFT

Brian, Eric and Larry left the raft first and started for the buoy. Bradford and Warren delayed a few moments before entering the water—and that was the last time Brian saw the latter two, he said.

Eric developed leg cramps and Brian and Larry tried to help him

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2A)

a Journal Monday, March 26, 1962

4 Feared Drowned in Gulf

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

but the water was so rough he slipped away, Brian said. Brian and Larry then started for the buoy again but Larry gradually fell behind and wasn't seen again, Brian said.

Brian realized he couldn't make it to the buoy because of the outgoing tide, he said, and instead headed for shore.

Sometime after dark, about six hours after the trip had begun, Brian touched sand and struggled

ashore at Fort McRae. He thought he still was on Santa Rosa Island and tried to find Fort Pickens. But after wandering around he crawled into the gun emplacement and fell asleep.

Major Ruyle, based at Eglin Air Force Base, was aboard the helicopter which picked up Brian. Ruyle's son, Eric, was a close friend of Brian's.

The Search and Rescue Unit started its search for the missing boys Saturday night along with

the U. S. Coast Guard Station on Santa Rosa Island. Dragging and diving operations began about 10:45 a.m. Sunday.

About 150 Search and Rescue personnel patrolled the Gulf and sound side of Santa Rosa Island and Gulf Beach all day Sunday but found no trace of the four missing youths.

Private aircraft aided the Navy helicopter and a Coast Guard plane from Biloxi, Miss., which was called out to search for another missing party of four which later was found in the Gulf. An Air Force plane from Keesler AFB, Miss., also aided in the search.

Vehicle patrols scoured the land areas of both islands and Deputy Sheriff Louis Davis said the missing four are presumed drowned.

E. E. McGovern, director of Search and Rescue, said personnel will be on duty at the temporary headquarters set up at Fort Pickens until either the boys or their bodies are found.

McGovern said the boys had little chance of getting to the old Massachusetts because they had to cross strong outgoing tide currents from the cut (entrance to the bay) and faced rough seas from stiff winds of 10 to 20 miles per hour.

Presents Swamp Jackie, Special Plane Needed

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

store in New Delhi, selling hand-made Indian goods, put on a fashion show for Mrs. Kennedy and then gave her a sky blue cotton Western dress with white Indian embroidery and inlaid with mirrors.

In Jaipur, she received a brass

fruit bowl from a merchant who had joined other bazaar shopkeepers in displaying their wares for her. He would not let her pay for the bowl.

Air India International, which put on a plush charter flight to carry the First Lady from Rome to New Delhi, gave her two tiger cubs, one male and one female. The cubs died, but are being replaced.

Then Mrs. Kennedy took off for Lahore last Wednesday, and there were more gifts.

A group of American school children at Rawalpindi presented her an embroidered Pakistani

Grateful Mother