

HICKMAN COUNTY TIMES

PO Box 237 Clinton, KY 42031 270-653-4040 Volume 17 Issue 12 gaye@thehctimes.com

Tragic accident and questions why

By GAYE BENCINI

The Ingram Boat Facility sits in the Mississippi River just off the area of the long-time former location of the Columbus ferry landing.

Sunday morning, March 30, sunny skies belied the dark tragedy with which emergency personnel had been dealing since the night before.

On the grassy, flat area to the right of the fenced parking area for Ingram employees, emergency personnel vehicles- state police, ambulance, fire trucks, sheriff's office, emergency management and more- filled the lot. A Buddy's Wrecker Service truck was in the backed position on the hill, closer to the river. At around 10 a.m., no individuals were at the grassy parking lot area, but movement could be seen closer to the Ingram Boat Facility ramp as emergency first responders were gathered along the area in front of the ramp.

Emergency workers had put up a white privacy sheet. That evening, Hickman County Sheriff Ben Natividad reported that the sheriff's office had been investigating a fatality collision that occurred the night before.

"Ingram employees heard the collision and called dispatch after finding what they believed to be a car that hit their [Ingram] ramp and went into the river."

Natividad said a McCracken County Emergency Management diver dove into the river, located the vehicle, and hooked it to a wrecker to



Shown here Sunday morning, at approximately 10 a.m., emergency personnel were gathered at Ingram Barge on the Mississippi River in Columbus, Ky., the site of an accident that reportedly occurred Saturday night. (Photos by Gaye Bencini)



The cleared ramp to Ingram facilities Monday morning, March 30. The paved road to the ramp, angles, going to the parking area. It is believed the car traveled straight through the grassy area.



The car reportedly went through this grassy area from the road to the river. Two orange road closed signs are also located on the river hill road and at the bottom of the hill.

be pulled out." Once pulled out of the water on Sunday, it was

determined the car had three occupants. The identities of the de-

ceased were not released until Monday afternoon when all family was no-

tified. They are Joshua Watson, 42, Louisville; Shranda Milam, 38,

Wingo; and Krista Whitt, 30, Paducah. Watson is believed to have been the driver.

What is not known is why the tragedy occurred. There are two road closure orange signs, one along the road descending the hill to the river, another closer to the river, and a red stop sign at the grassy area where the former Columbus ferry landing was located. There is no longer a road of any sorts there.

The main entry drive to the Ingram Facility ramp is at an angle that extends up to the parking lot. It appears the driver of the car involved in the crash went straight through the grassy section that once served as a road to the Columbus ferry.

Sheriff Natividad confirmed that it appeared once the car entered the river, it turned upside down in the water.

The accident was sadly reminiscent of the 1944 tragedy at the same location when the driver of a truck hauling 16 Mexicans was fooled about the roadway by the lights on the ferry.

That accident also occurred on a Saturday night. It was around 10:30 p.m. A Gazette article at that time stated, "He did not know the river was there but saw the lights of the ferry boat about the middle of the river and thought it was a house by the side of the road. The driver stated, according to Sheriff Jack Johnson, he saw the stop sign but thought it in-

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Boaz resigns as high school principal

By GAYE BENCINI

The Hickman County Board of Education met in regular session in the board office on Tuesday evening, March 24. Present at the 6 p.m. portion of the meeting were Superintendent Heather Spillman, Finance Officer Kim Wilson, Board Members Matt Hicks, Matt Latham, Stephanie Grubbs, and Caleb Deweese; Principals Jeff Boaz and Tif-

fany Ray; Middle School Dean Eric Blacklock; Christel Nall, director of Special Education/504 Coordinator District Wide Programs, Preschool Director, Federal Titles; Shane Bizzle, director of Pupil Personnel, director of Transportation, Safe Schools Coordinator; Russ Litsinger with Ascendant Facility Partners; and Gaye Bencini. At 7 p.m. the meeting continued in the high school cafeteria with special recognition of

students who scored distinguished on state testing last year. A reception was held for them and their families.

Jeff Boaz has resigned as high school principal effective June 30 this year. He has been hired as director of Pupil Personnel, director of Transportation, effective July 1. This was a position formerly held by Shane Bizzle, who is retiring later this year.

Christel Nall has resigned as director

of Special Ed & Preschool, effective July 1 and hired as supervisor of Instruction, effective July 1.

Bonny Cannon has been approved as substitute teacher for 2025-26 and Kaitlyn Parker as new substitute instructional assistant for 2025-26.

Superintendent Heather Spillman said graduation is still on schedule for May

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Magnolia Beach at Reelfoot Lake



Reelfoot Lake Sunkist Beach in the 1960's

By DANNY WHITLOCK

I believe the time period for this story is in the late 1950's. I don't remember having my driver's license and being able to drive to Reelfoot Lake, but I do recall swimming in Reelfoot. I suppose I caught a ride or tagged along with someone else's family.

Starting in the 1940's Reelfoot Lake had three public swimming beaches open for swimming in the lake. The first was Edgewater, followed by Magnolia and Sunkist. The beaches closed dur-

ing the 1970's. I don't know why, but it probably had something to do with OSHA and/or the health department. One post on Facebook mentioned that homes directly on the lake shore had sewers that emptied directly into the lake.

I only remember going to Magnolia Beach. It had a tall tower...maybe three stories high. The other beaches had similar enhancements like a floating slide and a pier extending into the water. All three had sand beaches for sun bath-

ing or just hanging out. I have read posts from others that mention food and snacks being available. I don't remember any bath houses or restrooms, but I do remember changing to my swim suit in the back seat of a car.

Stories about swimmers being attacked by swarms

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