



## ROTC teacher's ferry suicide stuns students

*By Peggy Kreimer, Post staff reporter*

The man who apparently dived to his death off the Anderson Ferry in Boone County on Friday was a popular Naval Junior ROTC teacher in suburban Cincinnati.

As water rescue workers dragged the river for Terry Graf's body this weekend, more than 75 of his former students came to the Anderson Ferry entrance with their teachers.

'I took them down to the water's edge,' said Dale Appel, chief of the Boone County Water Rescue.

'They all had roses and had a little ceremony. You could see the hurt and the loss in those students, and in his family members and friends. So many people were there who cared about him.'

Graf, 43, of Cincinnati, apparently had been disgruntled over a relationship that had broken off, Boone County Sheriff Mike Helmig said today.

Graf had spent all his adult life associated with the Navy. His last assignment had been in Hawaii, and his answering machine opens with a cheerful 'Aloha' and ends with 'Go Navy.' He joined the Navy during his senior year of high school and earned a diploma while in uniform. After 24 years of service, he retired and became a Naval Junior ROTC instructor.

He first split his teaching time between Colerain and Northwest high schools in the Cincinnati suburbs. Then, after two years of teaching at both schools, he moved to Northwest full time when each school started its own Junior ROTC unit more than a year ago.

'He spent a lot of time with drill team,' said Dave Kremer, who runs the career center at Colerain High School.

'He was kind of a perfectionist, working with students on his own time, getting them to perform and be good role models.'

Graf's drill team performed at the opening of the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway and at malls and school events.

On Monday, naval cadets in the ROTC program at Colerain High gathered on the football field and raised the flag to half staff in honor of Master Chief Graf, said Capt. Roger Argalas of the Colerain ROTC program.

Northwest High School held a program for students and parents on Saturday to help them deal with the news. 'He was very dedicated to the Navy and promoting the Naval Junior ROTC. He was very well liked by the cadets,' said Margie Rennie, spokeswoman for Northwest School District.

Graf had one son, who lives out of town, said his brother, David Graf. The family did not want to talk about Graf's apparent suicide until the son arrives later this week.

Graf's associates said they were stunned by the news.

According to ferry owner Paul Anderson, Graf first boarded the ferry about 6:30 a.m. Friday, when he crossed from Cincinnati to the Kentucky shore in Constance.

Graf parked his car in the ferry parking lot, overlooking the river, and waited on the hill for almost two hours.

Anderson said Graf moved the car twice. Then, about 8:35 a.m., when no other cars were waiting to board the ferry, Graf drove his car back onto the boat. Anderson said Graf paid the \$3 and didn't look up or reply when the attendant thanked him with, 'Have a good day.' Two more cars got on after Graf's.

'As soon as we left the landing, he got out of the car,' Anderson said.

Graf was wearing a short nylon-type jacket with U.S. Navy on the back and leaned against his car.

Anderson said the ferry attendant had fastened the cables that block the boat's entrance and exit ramps.

'We were about a third of the way across the river, and the guy took off running,' Anderson said.

'He jumped over the cables and went hands first into the river.'

Anderson said he immediately stopped the engines and let the ferry drift downstream, hoping to follow the path the current would take Graf.

Anderson radioed the Coast Guard, which relayed alerts to commercial river traffic and notified police and emergency workers. 'We drifted for six or seven minutes - about three quarters of a mile. We didn't see any sign of him. He never surfaced,' Anderson said.

Anderson, his employees and passengers scanned the water, hoping to see some sign of Graf.

'Paul Anderson did everything humanly possible to save that fellow,' said Appel.

'The water he hit was 38 degrees. At that temperature, hypothermia would kick in immediately.'

By the time the ferry touched down on the Cincinnati shore, emergency crews were waiting. Inside his car, Graf had left his keys, his driver's license on the seat, his glasses and a list of the names and phone numbers of family members, Anderson said.

Searchers have not found the body.

Anderson was shaken by the apparent suicide - the first from the ferry.

Close to 30 years ago, some passengers who were drunk dared each other to jump and one did.

'I took off after him,' Anderson said. 'I caught him before he drowned.'

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