

Subject: -Authorities investigating death of canoeist in Estero River
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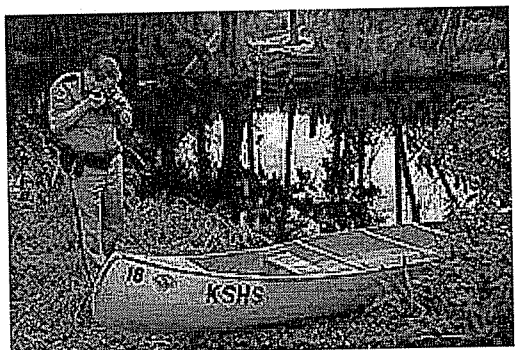
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-Authorities investigating death of canoeist in Estero River

Friday, February 27, 1998

By **TIMOTHY M. MOTZ**, Staff Writer



Investigator Donald Grey from the Florida Marine Patrol photographs a canoe as evidence in connection with the investigation into the death of a 68-year-old man who was canoeing down the Estero River on Friday. Hope Kinchen/Staff

A 68-year-old man who had been canoeing in the Estero River was found dead near his canoe Friday afternoon, authorities said.

The man, whose identity was not available Friday night, had apparently rented the canoe from the Koreshan State Historic Park where he had been camping, authorities said. The body was found washed ashore slightly east of the park near Sandy Lane.

Authorities at the site said it was not immediately clear what had caused the man's death.

"We're treating it as a boating accident," said Lt. Toby Fogle of the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Law Enforcement. Authorities had not ruled out a heart attack as a cause of death, he said.

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Police said the man appeared to have been canoeing alone. The body was reported late Friday afternoon by an unidentified person who had not been canoeing with the deceased man.

A park employee working at the park entrance Friday said park officials had no information about the death.

Tim Fitzpatrick, an employee of nearby Estero River Tackle and Canoe Outfitters, said the incident was the first such tragedy in the river that he had heard of in the three years he has worked at the store.

"I didn't even think (the water) was over anyone's head down there," Fitzpatrick said.

The Florida Marine Patrol, which had taken over the investigation by early Friday evening, said the agency would withhold the man's identity until his relatives were notified.

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