

Coroner's office identifies Chain of Rocks Canal Bridge jumper

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Madison County Coroner Stephen P. Nonn released the name of a woman who leapt from the Interstate 270 bridge into the Chain of Rocks Canal of the Mississippi River on Thursday, Sept. 7, 2017, afternoon as Betsy A. Watkins, 62, of Hazelwood, Mo.

Watkins was pronounced dead at 4:26 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 7, 2017, at the scene following her retrieval from the canal by Illinois State Trooper James Randolph. Trooper Randolph entered the canal, recovered the victim, and attempted resuscitation of the decedent until it was determined that Watkins could not be revived.

Watkins was a passenger in a vehicle being driven by her sister and was returning home from a doctor's appointment when she asked her sister to pull over to the side of the roadway because she was feeling sick. After pulling over at Interstate 270 and Route 3, Watkins exited the car and began running toward the bridge and the sister lost sight of her. A truck driver witnessed the decedent running along the roadway onto the bridge deck where she stopped and then dove over the wall barrier into the canal. The incident was reported to authorities at 3:29 p.m. (Sept. 7, 2017).

The coroner's office said interviews with family members noted that the decedent had a history of mental illness with past ideas of suicide. The tentative cause of death based on the autopsy conducted today is drowning, the coroner's office said. Routine toxicology testing for the presence of alcohol and drugs will be undertaken.

The death was also investigated by Illinois State Police, District 11 in Collinsville, Illinois. Funeral arrangements are pending, but under the direction of Ziegenhein & Sons Funeral Home in St. Louis, Missouri.