



Friday, September 20, 2002

Police recover car from OU lake

By **Mary E. Iorio**, OU Writer

OU police and Oakland County Sheriff's Department divers pulled a submerged car out of the lake between Wilson and Vandenberg Halls on Sept. 19. Police believe the unoccupied vehicle could have been under water for eight years.

An Oakland University groundskeeper discovered the submerged car around 7 a.m. on Sept. 19 while working near the site.

"The car was a General Motors station wagon with license plates registered in 1994," said OU Chief of Police Sam Lucido. "We found personal belongings and luggage in the car. No deceased was found."

Police plan to pull records on the car's registration and vehicle ID to learn the name of the owner and then puzzle together how it ended up in the lake so many years ago.

With a growing crowd watching, police worked for four hours to lift the car out of the water. A diver from the Oakland County Sheriff's Department Marine Division repeatedly hooked the car to a tow truck cable, but it slipped loose several times. Covered in a thick coating of black muck, the car emerged from the water just after 11 a.m.

The car went undiscovered for so many years because the lake normally rises about 13 feet, enough to swallow the small '80s-model station wagon. Over the summer, however, OU's Facilities Management Department began draining the lake to gain access to underwater pilings and pipes. Workers also reinforced the bridge over the lake.

This fall they lowered the lake further to improve storm water management pipelines and to recontour and stabilize the lake's eroding banks, said Simon Ren, university engineer and associate director of facilities management. As a result of the work, the water level dropped to 7 feet or less, exposing the car.

This is not the first time a car has gone into the lake.

"Probably about 10 years ago, a car rolled from the parking lot right into the lake," said OU Police Lt. Richard Tomczak. "People saw that car roll and they called our office. One of our officers was able to wade into the water and verify that no one was in the car, but it continued to sink. We had to have divers out to retrieve it. There's always been a rumor that there was a car in the lake, but if you know that water, you know how dark it is. You can't see a foot in front of you, so it was never seen."

OU police will continue to investigate the Sept. 19 discovery.

SUMMARY

OU Police and Oakland County Sheriff's Department divers pulled a submerged car out of the lake between Wilson and Vandenberg Halls on Sept. 19. Police believe the unoccupied vehicle could have been under water for eight years. Police plan to pull records on the car's registration and vehicle ID to learn the name of the owner and then puzzle together how it ended up in the lake so many years ago.

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