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Tuesday, April 23, 2002

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## Boater gave his life to save friend

By **Ray Schaefer**  
Enquirer contributor

**CRITTENDEN, Ky.** — Caught in a violent storm on the Ohio River Friday night, Darrin Lonaker gave his friend of 20 years the only life jacket and told him to paddle for shore. In doing so, he gave his life.

Mr. Lonaker, 35, a brick mason from Crittenden, drowned Friday in a boating accident on the Ohio River about eight miles north of Markland Dam in Gallatin County.

Capt. Dale Appel of the Boone County Water Rescue Department said Mr. Lonaker's body was recovered about 1:30 p.m. Sunday on the Kentucky shore near Steele Bottom Road.

Friends and family will remember the sacrifice Mr. Lonaker made in his final minutes — the flotation device he gave to a childhood buddy, Robert Mann, 45, of Crittenden, who could not swim. Mr. Lonaker and Mr. Mann were in Mr. Lonaker's fishing boat Friday about 150 yards off the Kentucky side of the river with two flotation devices.

When the storm kicked up, the boat took on water — and waves washed one of the flotation devices overboard.

According to Donna Lonaker, 37, of Newport, her brother gave Mr. Mann the remaining device.

"By the time (Mr. Mann) got to shore, he thought Darrin was behind him," she said. Mr. Mann thought he heard Mr. Lonaker say, "I don't think I can make it," Ms. Lonaker said.

In addition to his sister, survivors include his mother, Dorothy "Dottie" Lonaker of Crittenden; three brothers, Dale Cupp of Taylor Mill, David Lonaker of Covington and Darrell Lonaker of Crittenden; and two sisters, Debbie Cupp of Miami and Della Lonaker of Crittenden.

Visitation is 6-8 p.m. Wednesday at Elliston-Stanley Funeral Home in Crittenden. Service is 11 a.m. Thursday at the funeral home.

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