



BOULDER, Utah, May 3, 2007

Hiker Dies Of Thirst With Water All Around

N.J. Man Led By Guides Carrying Water Collapses And Dies On Utah Survival Trek

By Dan Collins



Dave Buschow poses in this 2005 photo taken in Peterskill, N.Y., that was released by his mother (AP Photo/Jessica Large)

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(AP) By Day 2 in the blazing Utah desert, Dave Buschow was in bad shape.

Pale, wracked by cramps, his speech slurred, the 29-year-old New Jersey man was desperate for water and hallucinating so badly he mistook a tree for a person.

After going roughly 10 hours without a drink in the 100-degree heat, he finally dropped dead of thirst, face down in the dirt, less than 100 yards from the goal: a cave with a pool of water.

But Buschow was no solitary soul, lost and alone in the desert. He and 11 other hikers from various walks of life were being led by expert guides on a wilderness-survival adventure designed to test their physical and mental toughness.

And the guides, it turned out, were carrying emergency water on that torrid summer day.

Buschow wasn't told that, and he wasn't offered any. The guides did not want him to fail the \$3,175 course. They wanted him to dig deep, push himself beyond his known limits, and make it to the cave on his own.

Nearly a year later, documents obtained by The Associated Press under the Freedom of Information Act reveal those and other previously undisclosed details of what turned out to be a

death march for Buschow. They also raise questions about the judgments and priorities of the guides at the Boulder Outdoor Survival School. What matters more: the customer's welfare or his quest?

"It was so needless. What a shame. It didn't have to happen," said Ray Gardner, the Garfield County sheriff's deputy who hiked six miles to recover Buschow's body. "They had emergency water right there. I would have given him a drink."

Family members are angry.

"Down in those canyons it's like a furnace," said Rob Buschow of Glen Spey, N.Y. "I don't have my brother anymore because no one would give him water."

While regretting the tragedy, the school, known as BOSS, has denied any negligence and instead blamed Buschow, saying the security officer and former Air Force airman did not read course materials, may have withheld health information and may have eaten too heavily before leaving River Vale, N.J., for the grueling course.

Noting Buschow signed liability waivers, the school said: "Mr. Buschow expressly assumed the risk of serious injury or death prior to participating."

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