

Lathrop man's body found in river

Death follows victim's barefoot release from county jail

The body of missing 28-year-old Jeremy Lum was found about 5 p.m. Sunday in the San Joaquin River near the Lockhart Road bridge about a mile west of the San Joaquin County Hospital and the sheriff's complex in French Camp at I-5 and Mathews Road.

Family members were asked to confirm the clothing found on the body about 8 p.m. – with deputies also wanting any information on his tattoos. A witness at the scene confirmed the match to both.

Lum had been the subject of a massive family ground and air search since he was released barefoot and walked out of the San Joaquin County Jail Thursday morning at 7 a.m. He had left his Lathrop home late Wednesday night and was believed to have headed toward his aunt's home several blocks away.

Jeremy left his wallet, cell phone and shoes behind. Family members believe he became disoriented and lost in the dark – knocking on several front doors in his search for his aunt's home. Deputies were called and arrested him for being drunk in public, but a family spokesman said it was probably his bipolar mental state that was affecting him.

The man's aunt, Connie Perez, said she was told that police tested him for alcohol and found the test negative indicating that he didn't have alcohol in his system.

Family questions

sheriff's policy

Lum was jailed without shoes and that was how he reportedly left the jail facility Thursday morning.

Perez said she was told that if a prisoner is coherent enough to answer a few simple questions and sign their name, they can be released.

"My response to that was that he couldn't tell you what day it was on any given day, and I think that is a pretty simple question to answer," she said.

She added that being bipolar is a mental disability and should be respected and treated like any other disability. "This is a really bad dream," the aunt said. The Lum family – former owners of Delta Market – has suffered through other tragedies in their family history.

Repeated attempts to reach a Sheriff's Department spokesman for clarification on their policy regarding prisoner release went unanswered at press time Sunday night.

During the four day search two trained rescue dogs were called in late Saturday night after the Lathrop Police Department put in a request for aid to the Office of Emergency Services (OES). Volunteer handlers responded from Lodi with their dogs, members of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Team.

They followed up two leads – one of which led them to the S&L Market on El Dorado Street. The dogs tracked Lum's scent to Lockhart Road in the direction the body was later found. They reportedly lost the scent before they got to the river.

The Lum family has had search parties on the road looking for Jeremy since Thursday evening and one of those groups happened upon a lone sheriff's patrol car on Lockhart Road shortly before 5 p.m. Sunday evening. A patrol boat was in the San Joaquin River near the bridge – they said they feared the worst. The lead in the search group stopped and identified himself to the deputy with flier in hand, asking whether or not this could have anything to do with their search – deputies were quoted as saying they couldn't comment.

The group drove back toward I-5 and went into the sheriff's office on Mathews Road hoping for further clarification. At that point they heard other police and fire vehicles' sirens heading toward the river. The body was later removed and taken to the coroner's office.

The ground search teams had focused on the south Stockton area on both Saturday and Sunday. When they were disbanding Saturday night, Lum's aunt, Connie Perez, received a call of a possible sighting at the Burger King on Charter Way. Someone at the fast food restaurant had given a man matching Jeremy's description a hamburger.

Another caller thought they had caught sight of him at a nearby Denny's Restaurant.

Four cars full of searchers headed for the Burger King location, but they were unable to locate the missing man. They handed out as many fliers as they could to people in the area. Customers at a nearby Chevron gas station all received a flyer and were told of Lum's story.

Perez said the response from people throughout the community has been consistently the same – one of heartfelt concern, promised prayers and good wishes.

Another tip came from a homeless shelter in Stockton where staffers believed they may have served Jeremy dinner. They told family members that the man was wearing a Patriots' jersey – a definite change of clothes.

Family friend uses
plane in search

Jeremy's dad Jerry went airborne in his friend Robert Zylstra's search plane on Saturday. They flew out of Stockton Airport checking the San Joaquin River shoreline back to Lathrop from the county jail area. He said they also covered the SSJID irrigation channel – flying the area four times.

"My impression was that there was so much recreational activity along the river and farmland cultivation that a person wouldn't be missed for very long – that was comforting," he said before the discovery of the body.

The senior Lum said the search was concentrating on the multiple sightings in Stockton. He said at the time if the leads were correct he felt his son was ambulatory and taking care of himself.

He voiced his concern early Sunday afternoon about his son's state of mind – not knowing how that it would play out. "It hasn't made logical sense to me yet," he said. He further noted that his son has always felt close to their "close knit family" in Lathrop and to their extended family as part of the community.

Jeremy had never walked away from home before, he father said.

Lum had last seen his son at about 8 p.m. Wednesday night when he went to his Lathrop Road home and asked him to join in a family dinner. The younger Lum declined as he was resting in bed and didn't want to get up.

It was sometime in that next two hour period that he walked out of his house with his dog Attila, and was believed to have been headed toward his aunt's home several blocks away in Lathrop. Deputies found him in a front yard a block from the Perez residence. Family members believe officers felt he was under the influence of alcohol and they took him to county jail returning his dog to his residence.

Lum is a recent grad from Cal Berkeley where he earned a philosophy degree. He recently registered for nursing classes at Modesto Junior College in Modesto.

By Glenn Kahl of the [Manteca Bulletin](#)