

Two men killed in North Atherton Street accident

By AIMÉE HARRIS
Collegian Staff Writer

From his house on North Atherton Street, Colby Ramos has witnessed many car accidents.

But never has he witnessed one as "gruesome" as the one he saw Saturday night, which claimed the lives of two area residents.

A truck heading north hit a concrete divider on the 900 block of North Atherton Street, flipped upside down and became airborne. The truck then landed roof-down on a southbound Honda Accord, said Lt. Diane Conrad of the State College Police Department. The truck continued traveling north-west until it landed on its side on

Ramos' lawn, 910 N. Atherton St., after hitting a car in his driveway.

The accident resulted in the deaths of the two passengers in the truck, Timothy L. Corl, 29, of Pleasant Gap and Troy E. Kellerman, 27, of Bellefonte, Conrad said.

Mick Lee Hockenberry of Milesburg, who was released from the hospital that night, was found in the driver's seat of a 1977 Ford pickup truck, which contained some opened beer cans, according to a news release from the State College Police Department.

Before the crash, 24-year-old Ramos said he saw the truck heading down the street and remarked to his mother about the high speed of the vehicle. The accident

occurred seconds later, at about 5:30 p.m.

Ramos said he ran outside to help the victims while his mother called the police.

"This is the far worst accident I've ever seen," he said of the two victims pronounced dead at the scene.

No one in the truck, which is licensed to Hoffman's Machine Shop on Benner Pike, was wearing a seat belt, according to a news release from the State College Police Department. Open and unopened beer cans were also found in the truck, according to the news release.

"There was a Coors Light case in the back seat and cans falling all

over the place," Ramos said. "There was also a case in the front."

The State College police and the Centre County Coroner's Office are continuing to investigate. The autopsy and toxicology reports will not be available for several weeks, Conrad said. The speed of the truck is not yet known, she added. No charges have been filed.

Judith Miller, 56, of Pittsburgh, the only person traveling in the Honda, refused medical treatment, Conrad said.

Ramos' mother, JoAnne Griffin, said she spent the day with Miller Sunday. Miller was in shock, Griffin said, but suffered no serious injuries.



Collegian Photo/David S. Spence

Firemen attend the scene of the fatal accident on North Atherton Street. Two of the passengers in the pick-up truck were killed in the crash.



Collegian File Photo

Traffic diverters are supposed to be mountable by emergency vehicles, but resident JoAnne Griffin said that is "ludicrous."

Diverters may have intensified accident traffic

By CHRISTINE KOSOVAC
Collegian Staff Writer

Controversy over the East College Heights traffic diverters continues to grow after Saturday's accident on North Atherton Street backed up downtown traffic for hours.

Traffic from thousands of students moving into the University and others attending the nearby Centre County Grange Fair contributed to the gridlock. Some local residents are blaming part of the problem on the diverters, which prevented commuters from avoiding the jam.

Local emergency crews said the diverters did not delay their response times.

Lt. Tom Hart of the State College Police Department said the diverters did not have a significant impact on response times. He

said officers arrived on the scene two minutes after dispatch.

The original pattern Hart said he chose to divert traffic by sending vehicles east on Park Avenue might not have been the best choice because of the resulting traffic congestion. There has been some confusion about the role of the diverters in the traffic jam, he said.

"People are trying to say that the diverters caused a slowdown in traffic," he said.

Diverters were installed more than a year ago after College Heights residents voiced concerns about increased traffic. The diverters prohibit motorists from accessing Park Avenue by traveling through College Heights.

The diverters were made to be mountable by emergency vehicles in an emergency sit-

uation — including police cars, Hart said. However, area resident JoAnne Griffin said most vehicles would not be able to drive over the diverters.

"To me, I think that's ludicrous," Griffin said.

A truck that flipped and caused Saturday's accident landed on the front lawn of Griffin's residence. Since she moved into her home July 1989 at 910 N. Atherton St., she has witnessed more than 30 accidents, ranging from fatal accidents to fender benders.

The metropolitanization of the area throughout the years has made North Atherton Street into a main traffic artery, Griffin said. "It's not a road," she said. "It's a highway."

Shawn Kaufman, assistant chief of the Alpha Fire Company, 400 W. Beaver Ave.,

said the company has no official comment on Saturday's incident.

The fire company administrator Walt Wise said the response time was a understandable considering the traffic congestion. The call came in at 5:36 p.m., vehicles were dispatched at 5:42 p.m. and arrived on the scene at 5:47 p.m., he said.

Chris Pedersen, acting operations director for Alpha Ambulance Services, 805 S. Atherton St., said the company currently utilizes four ambulances to serve the area.

Ambulance response times for Saturday's accident were unavailable. Any time there is traffic, he said, it can affect response time.

"At this point in time we have no cases where the diverters have hindered our ambulances getting to patients."

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