

First fatality of year in city
Car hits tree on Winchester
Decatur lady, 25 dies in ...

After almost nine months without a death on Decatur's streets, the city recorded its first traffic fatality of 1971 early Sunday morning when 25-year old Linda Gephart Dawson died instantly of severe head injuries and a broken neck after a car driven by her former husband, Kenneth Dawson, struck a tree along Winchester street. The Dawson death raises to 10 the Adams county highway fatality toll for this year.

Decatur police report that Dawson was traveling south on Winchester at a high rate of speed when he crossed the Norfolk and Western railroad tracks and apparently blew a tire. He then lost control of his 1960 Chevrolet and slammed into a tree in the front yard of the Corwin Fleming home at 611 Winchester. By coincidence, Fleming and his next door neighbors, Mr. and Mrs Arthur Landis, were second cousins of the dead woman.

Two Injured

Injured in the wreck were Dawson, 28, 227 N. 4th street, Decatur, who suffered severe face lacerations and was admitted to the Adams county memorial hospital and Roger Gephart, 23, 227 N. 4th St., Decatur who received facial lacerations and a broken jaw. Gephart, a brother of Mrs. Dawson, was transferred to Fort Wayne's Lutheran hospital where he was listed in fair condition this morning; Dawson was also in fair condition at Adams county memorial hospital.

An on the scene observer of the accident, Mrs. Arthur Landis, reported today that she saw a man in a two-door maroon sedan pull up across the street from the accident and take a coat-like object from the Dawson vehicle and put it in his own auto.

The accident is still under investigation by the Decatur police department.

Funeral Wednesday

The accident victim was born in Decatur Aug. 8, 1946, a daughter of Ernest and Virginia Springer-Gephart, and was a lifelong resident of this city. Mrs. Dawson attended the Bobo Methodist church.

Surviving are a son, Ricky Lee, and two daughters, Sharon Lynn and Erica Sue, all at home; her mother, Mrs. Virginia Gephart, with whom she made her home at 222 North Fourth street; one sister, Mrs. Tom (Sharon) Fulton of Decatur; and two brothers, John and Roger Gephart, both of Decatur.

Funeral services will be conducted at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Winteregg-Linn funeral home, with burial in the Ray cemetery at Monroe. Friends may call at the funeral home after 2 p.m. Tuesday until time of the services.