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Pennville man dies in crash (5/17/04)

PENNVILLE -- A local man was killed early Saturday morning after striking three trees and being ejected from his vehicle just outside of town.

Pennville town marshal Ralph Frazee said Travis A. Horton, 22, 265 E. Lagro St., was headed east on River Road, near Water Street, when he failed to negotiate a turn and then struck three trees.

Horton was transported by Jay Emergency Medical Service to Jay County Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at about 2:30 a.m. Frazee said Horton coded at least once on the way to the hospital. He was not wearing a seat belt.

Some of Horton's friends came upon the accident scene about five minutes after the crash and called the police.

Frazee said Horton's driver's license was suspended for failure to pay a ticket, a misdemeanor infraction. He said alcohol and speed were both factors in the accident. Frazee requested a blood-alcohol test at the accident scene, but was unable to conduct the test.

Jay County coroner Paulette Wagner sent a toxicology test to Brad Slater, a pathologist at Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie, to determine Horton's blood alcohol level. Test results could take anywhere from 10 days to two weeks.

An autopsy was conducted by Slater at the Muncie hospital on Saturday. The cause of death was found to be head injury. The pathologist said he also suffered severe neck injury and an elbow injury.

Horton had been drinking at a bar before the accident, Frazee said. Some of Horton's friends said he had also been drinking with them at a bridge outside of town.

Frazee said it appeared Horton was headed back into town from the bridge, when the accident occurred at about 12:30 a.m.

The accident investigation is closed, Frazee said.

Travis Allyn Horton was born Feb. 3, 1982 in Bluffton to Tracy A. and Christi (Harris)
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Horton of Pennville, who survive.

Horton graduated from Jay County High School in 2000 and was a student at Ivy Tech in Marion. He was a member of the Millwright's Local 1029 of Warsaw and the Sons of the American Legion of Pennville. He was an employee of Millwright Fabricators, Inc. Ltd. of Pennville.

Other survivors include his stepmother, Kathleen Horton, Pennville; maternal grandparents, Bill and Bobbi Harris, rural Pennville; a brother, George P. Horton, and a sister, Cherokee McCain, both of Montpelier; three half-sisters, Tracie Jo Wharham, Spokane, Wash., Erica L. Leamon, Everett, Wash., and Jessica R. Horton, Hartford City; a stepbrother, Ryan Daniels, Portland; a stepsister, Lindsay Evers, Pennville; and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral services will be held Thursday at 11 a.m. in the Pennville Chapel of the Williamson and Spencer Funeral Home. Pastor Gene Betts will officiate. Burial will be in the IOOF Twin Hill Cemetery in Pennville.

Calling will be at the funeral home from 4 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday and prior to the Thursday service.

Contributed by Jane Edson