

Wife of former Harlanite killed near Avoca -

Two die in holiday accidents

AVOCA -- Icy conditions on Interstate 80 were blamed for two separate holiday deaths on Sunday morning, Dec. 23 at approximately 10 am.

The accidents occurred within 10 miles of each other and 10 minutes apart near the Avoca and Shelby exits.

Kim Crawford, 35, wife of former Harlanite Kelly Crawford, died in an accident near the Avoca exit and Matthew Schwarz-Smith, Ann Arbor, Michigan lost his life near the Shelby exit.

Crawford accident near Avoca

According to family members, the Crawfords were traveling from their home in Gretna, Nebraska to Denison and were eastbound on I-80. Approximately a half from mile from the Harlan/Avoca exit, they lost control of their Dodge Durango on the icy bridge that spans the Nishnabotna River.

The accident sent the vehicle into the south ditch alongside the river.

Family members then left the vehicle and remained in the ditch.

Kim Crawford called her mother-in-law Virginia Crawford, Denison, from the ditch while her husband, Kelly, went to the car to get the family's coats. She was able to tell her mother-in-law of the accident before the phone went dead.

At the same time her husband, Kelly, had walked back to their vehicle, a Dodge Ram pickup lost control on the same stretch of Interstate bridge and slid down to-

ward the family in the ditch. The Dodge Ram struck the mother, her two daughters and missed the father.

Crawford's wife, Kim, died at the scene. The children, Gabrielle, 5, and Jessica, 10, were taken to Myrtue Memorial Hospital by Avoca ambulance crews and later transported by medical helicopters to University Hospital in Omaha.

As of presstime the children had been removed from the intensive care unit and were expected to be in the hospital for up to two weeks. The Dodge Ram's driver, Chad Gouchee, Cedar Rapids, was not injured.

Troopers Sunday said areas were icy where they were shaded or had wind blowing snow across the road.

Kelly was a 1981 HCHS graduate and his father was the former assistant manager at the Nishnabotna Valley REC in Harlan and general manager of the Denison-based Western Iowa Power Cooperative.

Funeral services for Crawford

Services are Sat., December 29 at 1 p.m. at the Walker-Merrick Funeral Home, 422 East Washington, Clarinda with burial in Memory Cemetery, New Market. Memorials may be directed to Gabrielle Crawford and Jessica Crawford.

Kim J. Crawford was born May

16, 1966 at Bellevue, Nebraska to Richard and Annemarie Nord. Kim was a graduate of Millard South High School and attended the Univ. of Nebr. at Omaha.

She married Kelly Crawford on August 15, 1986 in Omaha and they have two daughters, Jessica and Gabrielle.

Survivors include her husband and daughters, parents Richard and Annemarie Nord, Omaha; sisters - Cheri (James) McCarville, O'Neill, Nebr.; Kristine (Charley) Adams, Houston, Texas; Brit (Bill) Michlik, Stuart, Florida; brothers - Bob (Sandy) Omaha; Erik (Kim) Omaha; grandmother Mabel Nord, Omaha; father-in-law and mother-in-law Keith and Virginia Crawford, Denison; brother-in-law Kevin (Lori) Crawford, Dallas, Texas; sister-in-law Kayla (Mark) Jacobs, Harlan and nieces and nephews.

Fatality near Shelby

In another accident just 10 miles away, Schwarz-Smith died when the westbound 1996 Chevy Tahoe he was driving was struck head-on by an eastbound 1999 Jeep Cherokee that lost control and crossed the median.

The driver and passenger of the Jeep were not injured. Schwarz-Smith's wife, Wendy, 26, was flown by medical helicopter to University Hospital in Omaha and was reported in fair condition.