

7-VEHICLE PILEUP KILLS ONE NEAR POLLOCK

By Jerry Humphries
Town Talk Staff Writer

POLLOCK - Smoke from a U.S. Forest Service controlled woods burn was primary cause of a chain-reaction, seven-vehicle series of collisions in which a woman died and her husband was severely injured in Grant Parish Wednesday night, state police reported.

Troopers said the smoke caused "zero visibility" at the accident scene, a straight stretch of U.S. Highway 165 six miles north of Pollock.

Killed was Lillian J. Richmond, 58, of Olla. She was a passenger in a 1974 Ford Maverick driven by her husband, Charlie B. Richmond, 62, Richmond was listed in critical condition in the intensive care unit of Rapides General Hospital this morning.

The 9:30 p.m. accident also involved two tractor-trailer rigs, a station wagon, two pickup trucks and one larger truck.

According to State Police Troop E, here's how the collisions occurred:

A pickup driven by Henry F. Clark, 48, of Route 2, Pollock, was headed south on Highway 165 and met an oncoming tractor-trailer rig operated by Dennis Bardwell, 40, of Chalmette.

When the drivers entered a "heavy layer of smoke" they slowed to almost a stop.

A car driven by John M. Douglas, 46, of Lafayette approached the Clark vehicle from the rear. Seeing he was

about to hit it, he swerved to the center of the highway to go between it and the 18-wheeler.

"At this time the first impact occurred," a trooper said.

Clark left to report the accident and Douglas moved to the west shoulder.

But before all vehicles could clear the roadway, the northbound Richmond car ran into the rear of the trailer of Bardwell's big rig.

A southbound tractor-trailer rig operated by William F. Turner, 47, of Monroe approached the accident scene at that time.

Turner, in an attempt to avoid a collision, swerved his vehicle to the west shoulder and stopped just short of the other vehicles.

The left rear of his trailer, however, was sticking out into the edge of the southbound lane.

Moments later, a southbound pickup driven by Corbet L. Taylor, 43, of Columbia struck the trailer's left, rear corner with its right front section.

Just seconds after that -- and after Taylor had stepped out of his pickup -- a southbound tractor-trailer rig operated by Charles L. Oxner, 36, of Olla ran into the rear of Taylor's pickup, knocking it into Bardwell's rig and the Douglas auto.

Police said Mrs. Richmond was pronounced dead at the scene at 11:50 p.m. after she and her husband had been freed from the wreckage of their car.

A Troop E spokesman today said it could take days to complete the investigation of the series of collisions. No charges have yet been filed.

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