

# Elderly man dies seeking help

**BOB BJOIN**

*News Editor*

**JACKSONVILLE** -- An elderly Atlantic man apparently died of a heart attack near here last weekend, when he tried to seek help after his vehicle slid into a ditch one day following a spring snowstorm.

Charles T. Johnson, 80, was pronounced dead early Monday morning, April 14 by Shelby County Medical Examiner R. Duane Harris.

Shelby County Chief Deputy Mark Hervey said the sheriff's office was contacted at approximately 8 a.m. Monday by an individual who had discovered Johnson's body in a ditch off 1200th St. west of County Road M56, 2 3/4 miles northwest of Jacksonville.

"Upon arrival, I found an elderly male lying in the south ditch," said

Hervey. "A short ways down the road I found his vehicle."

Investigation of the vehicle led to Johnson, who had been reported missing in Atlantic the previous day, Sunday, April 13.

"Family members said he hadn't been seen for a few days," said Hervey.

## **Had been missing**

Johnson was reported missing to the Atlantic Police Department, who in turn contacted the Shelby County Sheriff's Office.

Relatives thought he may have headed to Prairie Rose Lake to fish, but he wasn't located there on Sunday, Hervey said.

His 1978 Oldsmobile apparently had become stuck either Saturday or Sunday, on 1200th St., Hervey said. The roadway turns from gravel to dirt,

and the vehicle slid into the ditch.

The roadway was covered with snowdrifts, and was extremely slick in spots, said Hervey, due to melting snow and muddy conditions. The region had just been socked with a spring storm that dumped 10 inches of snow, and drifted in rural areas.

"From the physical evidence at the scene, it appears Mr. Johnson exited the vehicle and walked east attempting to get back to the closest farm residence," he said. "He collapsed and fell into the south ditch."

Hervey said no foul play is suspected. The official cause of death was listed as coronary disease -- heart failure.

Funeral services for Johnson are being arranged by Ronald Funeral Home in Atlantic.