

Teen killed, another injured in accident

By Bob Bjoin
Managing Editor

NEOLA -- A 16-year-old Persia girl was killed early Tuesday morning when a vehicle she was driving was struck by a junk vehicle that had fallen from a passing semi-truck about a mile north of Neola.

Elyse M. Miller, a track star, honor student, teacher's aide and drill team member at Tri-Center Community Schools in Neola, was pronounced dead at the scene.

A passenger in the vehicle she was driving, William "B.J." Pauley, 15, of Neola, also an active Tri-Center student, sustained critical injuries, and was taken by Life Flight helicopter to University Hospital in Omaha.

According to reports, a flatbed, semi-truck driven by Justin Johannsen, 22, Denison, was southbound on Iowa Highway 191 carrying a load of crushed, junk cars at about 8:15 a.m.

Approximately seven of the cars broke loose from their chains and slid into the northbound lane of the highway, reports said.

Miller was driving her 1991 Dodge northbound when the cars came off the truck, reports said, and the Miller vehicle was struck

by at least one of the cars.

The Miller vehicle was pushed off the road into a steep ditch.

Rescue squads from Neola, Minden and Underwood were dispatched to the scene, and Neola Fire and Rescue used the jaws of life to extricate Miller.

Reports said she was killed on

impact.

Johannsen, the driver of the semi-truck, was not seriously injured in the accident. He was taken to Myrtue Memorial Hospital in Harlan, and was treated and released.

No charges have been filed.



Elyse Miller

Brett A. Nanninga, Tri-Center superintendent, said the Tri-Center Crisis Team was called in Tuesday and all day Wednesday to provide support and counseling for students, teachers and the community.

Teachers read a statement in their classes Tuesday about the accident, and Tuesday night's activities and sporting events were canceled.

Funeral services for Miller will be held Saturday, Feb. 8 at 1:30 p.m. at the Tri-Center High School gymnasium, with burial in the Valley View Cemetery at Persia. Visitation will be Friday from noon-9 p.m. at Abundant Life Church, Harlan, and Saturday from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Tri-Center High School's gym.

Miller is survived by her father and mother, Gale "Chub" and Denise Miller of Persia; sister Kelsey Miller and brothers Nathan Miller and Ian Miller, all of Persia; and her paternal grandparents, Verrow "Butch" and Lue Miller of Persia.

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Elyse Miller, 16

Nov. 13, 1986 - Feb. 4, 2003

PERSIA — Elyse Margaret Miller was born Nov. 13, 1986, to Gale and Denise (Lett) Miller in Council Bluffs. She was baptized at the Glendale Presbyterian Church in Council Bluffs, and attended St. Joseph's Preschool and Tri-Center Community Schools in Neola, where she was a sophomore. She was an extremely active and outstanding young woman. As a student at Tri-Center Schools, she participated in track, basketball, softball, soccer, volleyball and drill team. She played the keyboard for the high school show choir, sang in the concert choir and played the flute in the junior high band. She also performed with the high school marching band as a member of the Satin Knights flag corp and assisted as a teacher's aid in Mrs. Schwery's first grade class.

Elyse was a school leader and an accomplished student achieving membership in the Gold Honor Roll. She was selected to attend the Iowa Western Community College Leadership Camp in eighth grade. Her love of and talent for dancing offered her the opportunity to dance at the Iowa State Fair, as well as on a dance cruise to the Bahamas. On a community level, Elyse had been a member of the Persia Satellites 4-H Club, and was a participant on the U.S. Volleyball and YMCA basketball teams in junior high. She was a member of the Abundant Life Church in Harlan where she was active in the ALC Youth Group. Elyse was employed as a newspaper carrier for the Omaha World Herald and the Council Bluffs Nonpareil Newspapers since 1997 and as soon as she received her driver's license she worked at Cyclone Lanes in Harlan. She died tragically in a car accident Feb. 4, 2003, on Highway 191 near Neola, at age 16 years, two months and 22 days.

Elyse was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents, Kenneth and Margaret Lett, and her favorite uncle, James Zumwalt. She is survived by her parents, Gale "Chub" and Denise Miller of Persia; sister, Kelsey; and brothers, Nathan and Ian Miller of Persia; paternal grandparents, Verrow "Butch" and Lue Miller of Persia; aunts and uncles, cousins and other relatives.

Funeral services were held Feb. 8, 2003, at the Tri-Center High School Gymnasium in Neola, with Rev. Michael Ploen officiating. Assisting Rev. Ploen were Rev. Jeff Erlmeier and John White. Burial was in Valley View Cemetery, Persia, with the Tri-Center High School Drill Team, Track Team and Class of 2005 honorary casket bearers. Casket bearers were Joey Kosmacek, Nick Davidson, Jared Winters, Justin Gessert, Jesta Thomas, Beth Harris and Alisha Gau. Pauley Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

