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Fatal car chase began on post

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Article Text:

An almost hour-long car chase through Fort Sill served as prelude to a fatal collision on the interstate that killed a 27-year-old Walters man Thursday night, according to officials.

Brandon Keith Irwin died from massive injuries following the collision at 7:25 p.m. between his Mazda 499HCC and a tractor trailer rig near mile marker 41 on Interstate 44.

Irwin drove the car up the Key Gate off-ramp and southbound in the northbound lane, according to investigators. Oklahoma Highway Patrol Trooper Ricky Van Horn said the car lost control and went into a broadside before slamming into the rig, pinning Irwin inside for two hours before being freed by Lawton firefighters using the Jaws of Life.

The collision killed Irwin on impact, but the 46-year-old truck driver was not seriously injured, said Trooper John Hoover while at the crash site. He said that Irwin was being pursued by Fort Sill Police when the vehicles collided. Neither Irwin nor the truck driver were Fort Sill civilian or military personnel, according to Nancy Elliot, Fort Sill information officer.

According to Fort Sill officials, the pursuit began almost an hour before impact. In a statement released Friday by Larry F. Icenogle, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Army Fires Center of Excellence, the chase began about 6:30 p.m. when Irwin drove through the Sheridan Road gate after being told to turn around. When a guard asked for identification, Irwin presented his but an unidentified passenger had no identification and was advised to leave the post.

"For unknown reasons, the driver continued northbound on Sheridan Road, traveling at about 70 mph. Fort Sill law enforcement observed the vehicle and gave pursuit."

Irwin turned westbound on Wilson Road and turned around, allowing the passenger to get out of the vehicle, before he drove

eastbound on Wilson Road toward the patrol car in an attempt to hit it - the officer took action to avoid the collision, according to the statement. The Mazda continued east before returning to northbound Sheridan Road. While in pursuit, the officer observed that the Mazda's lights were turned off as it continued at a high rate of speed, weaving through traffic and going through red lights, Icenogle stated. Two more Fort Sill law enforcement vehicles joined the pursuit and attempted to box in the Mazda and slow it down. Police stated that Irwin was traveling in excess of 80 mph while driving through Key Gate west and on toward the east ramp. Irwin then put his vehicle into a spin, according to the statement, and it appeared he was going to try and go back west onto post. Officers attempted to block in the car when Irwin again drove toward a unit and another officer avoided being struck by the Mazda.

According to investigators, Irwin entered the interstate traveling south in the northbound lane.

"The suspect was traveling at a very high rate of speed and still operating his vehicle without

lights. Fort Sill law enforcement officers then proceeded with caution up the ramp to try and warn traffic on Interstate 44. The suspect was already southbound on Interstate 44 in the northbound lanes. The officers saw that the suspect had struck a semi truck head-on," the report states. "Once at the crash scene, the officers made contact with the suspect but detected no vital signs."

Both drivers were wearing their seat belts, according to Van Horn, and Irwin's air bag deployed. Fort Sill officials are assisting the Oklahoma Highway Patrol in the ongoing investigation, Icenogle stated.

Irwin was taken to the Medical Examiner's office in Oklahoma City for autopsy and toxicology tests, according to the wreck report.

Stephen County man  
injured

In eastern Stephens County, a 72-year-old Comanche man was pinned inside his pickup for about 48 minutes Friday morning before being taken to an Oklahoma City hospital in fair condition following a collision with an "apparently sleepy" driver, according to law enforcement. Clifford Riddles was taken to OU Medical Center in fair condition with head and leg injuries. According to OHP Trooper Nathan Mackey's investigation, shortly after 7 a.m., Riddles was traveling east on Oklahoma 7 in his Chevrolet pickup, when he was hit head-on by an eastbound 2008 GMC Sierra driven by Raleigh Stone Jr., 40, of Duncan. Stone was treated and released from Duncan Regional Hospital with leg injuries.

Mackey said that Stone fell asleep and went left of center before striking Riddles' truck. Riddles was freed from the wreckage by the Velma Fire Department. Riddles was wearing his seat belt but Stone was not, Mackey said - the airbags deployed in both vehicles.

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