

Medical condition may have been cause --

Harlan News-Advertiser
Friday, December 2, 2005

Man dies in tragic, fiery accident

HARLAN -- An elderly Harlan man died Monday noon from injuries sustained in a tragic, fiery car accident on 1200th St. northwest of Harlan.

Harold L. Brensel, 86, was pronounced dead at the scene by the Shelby County County Medical Examiner.

The accident was the culmination of a series of events that started a short time earlier, and included an initial accident at the

corner of Highways 44 and 59.

Authorities believe a medical condition may have contributed to the accidents.

Harlan Police received a call at about 11:15 a.m. that a vehicle had struck two stop signs at the Highways 44/59 intersection. Authorities arrived to find two stop signs lying north of the intersection, but no vehicle.

The bumper to the vehicle was at the scene, however, with the li-

cence plate attached. Authorities were able to determine that the vehicle belonged to Brensel, and began a search for the man.

"We all felt it was not in his nature to be driving and striking things," said Shelby County Chief Deputy Mark Hervey. "We had just hoped to get him located before something tragic happened."

A short time later, there came another report that the Brensel vehicle was northbound on Highway

59 from Cyclone Ave. Although the vehicle couldn't be located, a third caller reported that a vehicle was on fire on 1200th St. west of the Shelby County Landfill.

Reports said upon arrival, officials found the Brensel vehicle in the south ditch of the road and fully engulfed in flames. Brensel was located in the vehicle and pronounced dead.

Brensel *please see next page*

Brensel *from front page*

"Until the fire was extinguished, we were unaware anyone was in the vehicle," said Hervey. Authorities began a foot search along both sides of the road until firefighters arrived to extinguish the fire.

The road was a Level B, minimum maintenance road. Rain earlier in the day made the dirt road muddy, and difficult to maneuver.

"We were all handicapped because of the road conditions," said Hervey. "It was extremely muddy." No emergency vehicles ini-

tially were able to get to the scene, and rescue personnel and law enforcement initially hiked nearly a mile to the accident scene. One of the Harlan fire trucks actually got stuck along the road, and neighbor Delbert Bruck used his tractor to pull out the fire truck and pull it to the scene to extinguish the fire.

"Delbert was a big help," said Hervey. "He shuttled people to and from the scene a number of times."

Reports indicate once the Brensel vehicle became disabled in the south ditch of the road, it caught fire. "It appears when the

vehicle ran off the road on the south side, the front tires continued to spin and got hot," explained Hervey. "It ignited a fire in the engine compartment."

Authorities have requested that an autopsy be conducted by the Iowa State Medical Examiner's Office.

Assisting at the scene were the Harlan Police Department, Harlan Fire Department, Iowa State Fire Marshall's Office, Medivac Ambulance/Rescue and Shelby County Sheriff's Office.

Harold Brensel, 86

HARLAN
-- Services for Harold LeRoy Brensel, 86, Harlan,

were held Thursday, Dec. 1 at Pauley Jones Funeral Home, Harlan.

Burial was in the Harlan Cemetery.

Brensel is survived by sons Harold (Marlene) Brensel and Dave Brensel, all of Harlan; daughter-in-law Shirley Brensel of Harlan; sister Irene Thompson of Dow City; and five grandchildren.

