

Trooper Stephen G. Rouse
End of Watch: Saturday, March 28, 1987



Trooper S. G. Rouse Memorial Rites Set
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A memorial service will be held today for Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Stephen G. Rouse, who was killed in a crash on Saturday at the east toll plaza of Alligator Alley while en route to a fatal accident in the Everglades.

The service will be at 10 a.m. at T.M. Ralph Funeral Home, 700 NW Fourth St., Plantation, the patrol said. Rouse, 23, a Pensacola native and Sunrise resident, will be buried in Pensacola on Wednesday after a service there.

Rouse was rushing to the scene of a head-on collision between a bus and a pickup truck on Alligator Alley 50 miles west of the toll plaza. Trying to avoid a line of cars westbound at the booth, he pulled his car into the open eastbound lane and struck a van making a U-turn.

The truck-bus accident injured two people seriously.

Trooper Dies On Way To Crash
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A Florida Highway Patrol trooper was killed in a car crash Saturday while rushing to the scene of a head-on collision that left another man dead and four injured on Alligator Alley.

The accidents, one involving stage crew members for the rock group Wang Chung, occurred about 52 miles apart and within a short time of one other, authorities said.

As a result, part of Alligator Alley, a two-lane highway that runs through Florida's Everglades from west of Fort Lauderdale to Naples, was closed for almost seven hours, causing eastbound and westbound traffic to back up.

Stephen G. Rouse, 23, who had been a trooper for less than a year, was killed about 2:30 a.m. as he responded to the reported accident, said Lt. Jim Lee, spokesman for the Highway Patrol.

Rouse, a Pensacola native, was a Sunrise resident. He was hired by the Highway Patrol in May and had gotten married only three months ago, his father said.

``It's just a tragic ending for a nice young man like him,`` said Rouse's father, Gayle. ``It just floors you.``

Rouse, to avoid traffic in the westbound lane of the Everglades Parkway toll booth, pulled into the open left-hand, eastbound lane of the highway, Lee said.

Just as Rouse cleared the toll booth, he struck a van broadside when its driver decided to make a sudden U-turn, Lee said. None of the four passengers in the van was seriously injured, Lee said, and no charges have been filed.

The accident Rouse was responding to was 50 miles west of the toll plaza, where an eastbound pickup truck drifted into the westbound lane and collided head-on with a bus, said Al Gordon, spokesman for the Broward County Sheriff's Department, which investigated the accident.

The bus was carrying the seven-member technical crew for the British band Wang Chung, Gordon said.

Wang Chung had performed Friday night at Six Flags Atlantis water theme park in Hollywood, and the bus was on its way to Tampa, Gordon said.

Witnesses said the pickup truck crossed into the westbound lane and rode partly on the shoulder just before hitting the bus.

``(The driver) was trying to correct and go back into the west lane when they hit,`` Gordon said.

A passenger in the pickup truck, Thomas Saltzgaber, 24, of Sarasota, was killed, and the driver, David Allen Graham, 21, also of Sarasota, is in extremely critical condition, Gordon said.

Graham was taken by helicopter to Humana Hospital Bennett in Plantation and was later transferred to Florida Medical Center, officials said.

Beer bottles were found in the truck, and a few ounces of marijuana were discovered in Saltzgaber's sock, Gordon said, adding that blood tests to detect alcohol and drugs have been ordered for the victims.

One member of the Wang Chung group, Peter Grills of Great Britain, was hospitalized. A spokesman at Humana Hospital Bennett said Grills was in fair condition with multiple trauma. His age was unavailable.

None of the other six members of the crew, nor the driver of the bus, was seriously hurt, Gordon said.

The group`s scheduled appearance Saturday night at Adventure Island theme park in Tampa was canceled because of the accident, said Bobby Silvest, marketing representative for Busch Entertainment Corp.

The highway was reopened about 9:30 a.m.