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### Archives

## Two teens killed in high-speed accident

by Dawn Pillsbury - Sonoma West Staff Writer

SEBASTOPOL - Two teens are dead and two remain in serious condition at Memorial Hospital after a late night Monday car crash on Sanford Road north of Sebastopol.

Just before 11:45 p.m. on June 13, Troy Thomas Steinocher, 19, of Santa Rosa drove a 1992 Honda Accord into an oak tree on the 300 block of Sanford Road, just north of Occidental Road. The impact killed him and his front seat passenger, Alicia Coleman, 15.

Steinocher was driving too fast for the narrow road, said CHP spokeswoman Christine Jacobs. He made a sudden turn and the Honda spun off the road, its right side striking the oak tree.

"The entire front end of the Honda was sheared off as a result of the force of the collision," she said.

Windshield glass littered the roadside ditch for yards. Skid marks, highlighted in orange by CHP accident investigators, start two houses before the site.

The two back seat passengers, Kirby Hardy, 18, and Bailey Ungewitter, 16, are in Memorial Hospital in serious condition.

Ungewitter was able to free herself from the wreckage despite major injuries, said Jacobs. Firefighters freed Hardy, who suffered two broken legs, a fractured collarbone and a fractured pelvis.

All the teens were wearing seat belts, said Jacobs.

"Just because you have airbags and seatbelts doesn't mean you'll be safe if you drive in a reckless way," said Jacobs.

She said CHP investigators have not ruled out alcohol as being a factor in the accident, but speed was the most important cause.

David Wheeler, superintendent of the high school district, said Steinocher and Coleman had been Laguna High students, and Hardy and Ungewitter attend Analy.

"The whole county has been doing a good job about getting information out to kids about speed, but it still keeps happening," Wheeler said. "We still keep losing kids."

The Automobile Association of America has released its summer driving advice for teens.

According to AAA, the fatality rate for teenage drivers is four times higher than

the rate for drivers 25 to 65. Two-thirds of teen passengers killed or injured are passengers in vehicles driven by other teens.

AAA suggests parents not allow drivers under 18 to carry passengers under 20 unless a licensed driver 25 or older is present. It also recommends not allowing drivers under 18 to drive between midnight and 5 a.m. California law prohibits drivers under 18 to drive other teens during the first six months after they receive their drivers license.

Laguna High Principal Ross Bickford remembered Steinocher, who dropped out last October, as a quiet young man.

The former Analy student had fallen behind on academic credits, bringing him to the continuation school.

"He tried to hang in there, but my understanding is he had a conflict with work," Bickford said. He said Steinocher's family told him the young man helped support his grandmother, who raised him.

He was an open, sensitive person, he said.

"He came across as a gentle soul," he said.

Bickford said he did not know Steinocher well.

"That means he didn't get into trouble," he said.

"I knew Alicia, she's not going to go unnoticed," he said. "She was full of personality, really vivacious. She always had lots of friends."

Coleman came to Laguna from Analy for behavior problems but returned to Analy after a semester, he said.

"I told her before she left that whatever she decides to do, she'll get it," he said. "That's how she was."

Analy Principal Martin Webb said he knows Hardy, a member of the class of '05.

"He's a fine young man and has played football for years," he said. "He had an operation this afternoon (Tuesday) to correct his broken bones. My heart goes out to his family."

He also said he knew Coleman and Steinocher.

"On the last day of school, I say, 'Be careful,'" he said. "Kids think they're immortal and nothing will ever happen to them."

Also, see "Invincible teens", Barry Dugan's comments in Letters/Opinions

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