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Weddings '07



The Choctaw Sun

Shining Brightly Over Southwest Alabama



A special Spring Bridal Section begins on 5B

Truck driver charged in traffic death

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana — A Mississippi truck driver was arrested last week and charged with negligent homicide

in connection with a highway crash that claimed the life of a former Choctaw County, Alabama resident.

Trooper Johnnie Brown, with "Troop A" of the Louisiana State Police, in Baton Rouge,

told the Sun that Basil Van Lolley, 49, of Zachary, LA, died in a three-vehicle crash on U.S. Hwy. 61 at Louisiana Hwy. 68 in East Feliciana Parish.

Lolley, who was the son of the late Curtis Lolley, of Butler,

was pronounced dead at the scene by the East Feliciana Parish Coroner's Office.

The accident occurred about midnight on the morning of Friday, March 23.

According to authorities, a

1998 Freightliner tractor-trailer driven by Jimmy Statham, 61, of Sandy Hook, MS, was west-bound on Louisiana Hwy. 68 preparing to turn left onto U.S.

■ See DEATH, page 3A

Body of drowning victim recovered

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

WHYNOT, Miss. — The body of a Whynot, Mississippi man who had been missing for three days was recovered late Saturday afternoon, March 24th from a lake on his property.

Terry Clark, Jr., 45 — who reportedly has relatives in Choctaw Co. — had been missing since Wednesday and was presumed drowned after searchers found his empty canoe on the five-acre lake just off of Jamie Roberson Road in southeast Lauderdale County.

The body was sent to Jackson for an autopsy and Lauderdale Co. Coroner Clayton Cobler said that he expected to have a preliminary report back on the cause of death by midweek.

Divers with the Lauderdale Emergency Management Agency were called in and the lake was initially dragged on Wednesday afternoon but officials were unsuccessful in finding the body. The victim was located after the water level of the lake was lowered on Saturday.

According to information from *The Meridian Star*, personnel from the Lauderdale Co. Emergency Management Agency, Lauderdale Co. Sheriff's Department, Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks officers, volunteer firemen from the Whynot and Causeville fire departments, worked around the clock to participate in the recovery effort.

Funeral arrangements for Clark were incomplete at presstime at Barham Funeral Home in Meridian.

HOUSE DESTROYED BY FIRE



Choctaw Sun photo by Dan Melvin
Volunteer firefighters from the Scott Mountain, Lisman and Butler Fire Departments were called to a residence on Scott Mountain Road last Tuesday, March 20th. The dwelling, which was completely engulfed in flames, had reportedly been vacated earlier that same day. The fire was reported to the Choctaw E-911 Dispatch Center at 7:04 p.m.

Deputy busts man for dope, DUI

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — A routine traffic stop for speeding turned into a chase in which the suspect tried to outrun a deputy before stopping his vehicle in the middle of the river bridge on Ala. 10.

The suspect, Cedric Shidell Blanks, 25, of 1777 Lasca Road, Thomasville, was taken into custody minutes after the chase began and was later charged with DUI, reckless driving, attempting to elude police officer, no driver's license, unlawful possession of marijuana, and unlawful possession of a controlled substance.

Choctaw Co. Sheriff's Deputy Tony Gates told the Sun that he was on routine patrol on Ala. 10, near the old East Choctaw Jr. High School, about 9 p.m. Thursday, March 22, when he clocked a vehicle doing 84 mph in a 55 mph zone.

"I turned around and up with him in the stretch between the old school and Ala. 114," Gates said. "When he saw me, he sped up and acted like he was going to turn left onto 114, but he whipped back out and hit the gas and kept heading east on Ala. 10 toward the river."

Gates went "10-100" — police terminology for a high-speed, "hot pursuit" chase — and called for backup.

Blanks stopped the vehicle at the crest of the bridge across the Tombigbee River and in the middle of the highway. When Gates approached the car and grabbed the suspect to handcuff him, the man started reaching for something between the seats of the car. Gates suspected that "something" might be a gun and let the man go.

"I saw him put something in his mouth and swallow," Gates said. "He kept on grabbing at something beside him."

The deputy ordered the man to exit the

■ See ARREST, page 3A

Choctaw under "no burn" alert

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

MONTGOMERY — Officials with the Alabama Forestry Commission on Monday placed 20 more counties under a fire alert as drought-like conditions continue to worsen across the state, bringing the total now under the "no burn" order to 43.

Last week, State Forester

Linda S. Casey placed several counties — including Choctaw — among the first group to be included in the "fire alert". Several other counties were added over the weekend and the rest on March 26.

"It's going to take more than just a little shower, AFC spokesman Coleen Vansant said. "The alerts are going to stay until we get enough rain to do

some good."

Here in Choctaw County, more than 20 fires have burned approximately 100 acres since March 1.

During the alert, no burn permits will be issued in the affected counties and persons are warned that any type of non-permitted outdoor burning could result in fines and/or criminal charges being levied against

them.

"For now, until we get that rainfall, the best advice I can give is DON'T BURN ANYTHING, period," a forester told the Sun.

Vansant said that since the spring fire season began on March 1st, more than 1,000 fires have burned more than 24,800 acres in the state.

The commission said the

alerts are essential because of higher-than-normal temperatures, low humidity and a decline in rainfall over the past two years.

Law enforcement officials are working with the commission to step up patrols and investigate suspected arson cases, the spokesman said.

The major causes of fires

■ See ALERT, page 3A

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