

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Tragedy struck the Imperial community again late Monday evening.

Just three weeks after a Perkins County accident claimed the life of 28-year-old Chase County native Debra Ridlen Palser, the community lost another of its young people.

Elisha Sanchez, 21, of Imperial died early Tuesday morning in an Englewood, Colo., hospital from injuries suffered in a one-car rollover on a county road west of Enders.

The accident occurred about 11 p.m. Monday, Aug. 3.

According to the Chase County Sheriff's office, Sanchez was a passenger in 1994 Ford Taurus driven by Casey Francis, 18, of Imperial.

Emily Ringleman, 19, of Imperial was also a passenger in the vehicle.

According to the accident report, Francis was westbound on County Road 733 when he lost control of the vehicle.

Road 733 is the road west out of Enders that borders the north side of Enders State Recreation Area.

The vehicle went into the north ditch and then rolled one and a half times, ending up in a pasture north of the road.

Sheriff Tim Sutherland said the car came to rest about 150 feet from where the vehicle left the road.

Sutherland said the trio was returning from the co-ed softball tournament in Wauneta that night.

He said no seat belts were in use, adding that Sanchez and Ringleman were thrown from the vehicle.

Francis sought help by walking nearby to Pauline Grosbach's rural home. Emergency personnel were then summoned to the scene.

All three were transported to the Chase County Community Hospital (CCCH).

Sanchez was airlifted to Swedish Medical Center in Englewood. His injuries proved fatal and he was pronounced dead at 5:36 a.m.

Ringleman was flown by helicopter to Swedish about 3:30 a.m. Tuesday morning after a scan indicated a possible problem with a bone near where the skull attaches to the brain.

Her father, Launy, said local doctors wanted her seen by a neuro-surgeon, who later said the injury was not threatening and would heal on its own. She will be in a neck brace for 6-10 weeks, her dad said.

In addition to the neck injury, Emily suffered a mild concussion, broken bones around her left eye socket, a partially separated left shoulder and a lacerated arm.

Launy said she was doing much better as of Wednesday. They were hoping she would be released from the critical care unit Wednesday, making it possible for them to return as early as Friday.

Francis was held overnight for observation at the CCCH and released.

Sutherland said the accident remains under investigation.

"Bubba" remembered fondly

Friends and family knew Elisha as "Bubba" and recalled his love for life.

His mother, Gloria, of Tulsa, Okla., said her son never knew a stranger. "He was there for anybody and everybody," she said this week.

With the exception of a short time spent with his mother in Tulsa, Imperial was Elisha's home. He attended Chase County Schools and was a member of the Class of 2007.

Music teacher Randy Hayes said Sanchez was always ready to help him with his music program and concerts.

"He was a really good worker, and as a result, I relied on him a lot," he said.

He would help Hayes set up for concerts and would run the lights and sound for those events.

Heather Francis said her son, Casey, and Bubba were very good friends.

She said Sanchez always liked helping other people out. He also liked the outdoors, hunting, going to the lake and music.

Launy Ringleman said Sanchez was a good friend of his daughter's and had been helping him recently with some handyman jobs.

"He was a very good young man and a hard worker," Ringleman said. "I really liked the kid."

Services for Sanchez are pending.

Immediate survivors include his mother, Gloria, of Tulsa, brothers Nathaniel of Lincoln and Elijah of Tulsa and sister Rachelle, also of Tulsa.

Others include uncles Ron Haarberg and wife, Cheri, and Steven Haarberg, aunt Mary Haarberg, all of Buena Vista, Colo., and aunt Ruth Haarberg of Merino, Colo.