Wade Olson, 36

11-10-94

Kevin Woster
Sioux Falls Argus Leader

The McCrossan Boys Ranch is a somber place following a weekend traffic accident that killed a man the McCrossan boys knew as both teacher and friend.

Wade Olson, 36, Sioux Falls, formerly of Groton and Conde, died Saturday morning in a two-car crash on Highway 42 south of Bridgewater. Olson was riding in a car driven by his wife, Ann, 28, then they were hit by a pickup that ran a stop sign, authorities said.

"The vehicle was southbound and being driven by a 16-year-old male from Bridgewater," said Trooper Chris Forster of the South Dakota Highway Patrol. "He said he had brake trouble and hit the Olson vehicle on the passenger side, causing it to roll over."

The investigation continues.

Olson's wife was released Sunday night from Sioux Valley Hospital.

Olson, a native of Huron, known for his bright smile and matching personality, was the education coordinator at McCrossan.

Before taking the job, he was superintendent at Tri-Valley High School. He also held other administrative and teaching jobs in South Dakota including Conde.

In 14 months at McCrossan, he earned a reputation as a patient and intelligent educator with a soft spot for troubled youngsters.

"He was just a real nice, Christian man. I never saw him raise his voice to a kid. He never used foul language," said Terry Fiegen, a shift supervisor at the ranch northwest of Sioux Falls. "The kids just saw him on Friday and said, 'See you Monday, Wade.' They're devastated."

Fiegen said the crash left an air of sadness on McCrossan's annual rodeo at the arena. Olson attended the rodeo the night before he died.

Olson was mentioned before the Sunday session of the rodeo and also in a rodeo church service, said Walt Schaefer, McCrossan's executive director.

"This is a real loss. It's what we have to deal with," Schaefer said. "It'll be a sad Monday morning when we open school knowing that we've lost Wade."

Fiegen said the entire school will attend services for Olson if they are nearby. "No matter where it is, we'll send a group -- anywhere in the United States," he said. "Wade is just irreplaceable."

Wade Robert Olson was born February 3, 1958, to Jean (Rea) and Robert J. Olson, at Huron. He began school in Kadoka, then moved to Groton and then he completed his high school education at Winner High School in 1976. He received his Bachelor of Science and Masters Degrees in Business and Education from Northern State University, Aberdeen. In the late 1980s, he completed his Doctorate in Education from the University of South Dakota. Wade taught and coached at Watertown and Webster. He entered school administration by becoming principal at Conde. He was the superintendent of Emery/Spencer, Bennett County and Tri-Valley school districts. Recently, he was the Educational Director at McCrossan Boys Ranch and self employed in marketing and distribution.

He married Ann Peters on July 20, 1991, at Hartley, Iowa. Wade was a member of the School Administration of South Dakota, School Superintendents of South Dakota, Who's Who Among American College Students, Phi Delta Kappa, took part in coronation in high school and college, certified umpire and was The Voice of the Lady Coyotes.

He is survived by his wife, Ann, Sioux Falls; parents, Robert and Jean Olson, Groton; three brothers, Bret and Karma Olson, Aberdeen; Todd, Minneapolis; and Ryan, Groton; one sister, Kay Lewandowski and her husband, Jim, Watertown; nephews Eric, Shane and Cole and nieces Brittany and Alicia.

The funeral was held Wednesday, Nov. 9, 1994, at St. Joseph Cathedral, Sioux Falls. There will be a private committal service at the Groton Union Cemetery.