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by Brent Curtis – September 28, 2010

Well-known Proctor businessman dies following crash

A well-known Proctor resident and businessman died Monday following a motorcycle crash Sunday on Route 153 in Rupert.

James Taranovich, 59, was found pinned by his 1987 Harley Davidson motorcycle at the edge of a swamp just off a curvy section of the highway, according to state police Sgt. Brian Turner.

Police said he was in cardiac arrest when he was found at 3 p.m. Sunday by a pair of bicyclists but rescue personnel were able to restore his pulse and he was taken first by ambulance to Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington and later airlifted to Albany Medical Center.

He died in the hospital Monday morning.

Turner said Monday that police were still investigating both the cause of the accident and of Taranovich's death, but said speed did not appear to be a factor nor was any obvious mechanical problem. He said road markings suggested the motorcycle leaned too far into the turn, causing the bike to skid off the road.

An autopsy would be conducted to determine cause of death, he said.

While police tried to piece together what caused the crash, those who knew and worked with the Proctor businessman were still reeling from the loss.

"We're feeling like we've been through the rabbit hole here," said Emily Fredette, who works at the office of Proctor Gas, the company owned by Taranovich. "Everyone that calls is devastated. Everyone liked him. I never knew of anyone who didn't."

Fredette was one of several employees in the small family owned business who frequently wiped away tears throughout the workday Monday. Few felt up to the job, but all agreed that opening for business was what Taranovich would have wanted.

"He was a professional. He would have wanted us to be here for the people we serve,"

In addition to running a business in town for more than 40 years, Taranovich also donated money to schools, churches and other local causes, his employees said.

"This town is going to miss him," Proctor Gas business manager Laurie Poro said.

The industry he worked and advocated for will miss him as well, according to Matt Cota executive director of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association.

In addition to owning a fuel dealership, Taranovich was a member of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, the Vermont Director for the National Propane Gas Association and on the Board of Directors for the New England Propane Gas Association.

"He played a critical role in a number of functions," Cota said. "He meant a lot to the propane industry and was a great advocate for it."

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