

Reporter Bob Levy dies after crash

Three-car Highway 17 accident claims life of veteran newsman

By MARK BERGSTROM
Sentinel staff writer

SAN JOSE — Editor-reporter Bob Levy of Soquel died Saturday night of injuries suffered in a traffic accident Thursday afternoon on Highway 17.

Levy, 48, was on his way home from work on the city desk at the San Jose Mercury News when his car swerved into the opposing traffic lanes north of Lexington Reservoir and was struck broadside.

The Highway Patrol, which is investigating the accident, said the reason why Levy's car crossed the centerline had not been determined. Levy was the only person injured in the three-car collision, which occurred at 5:45 p.m.

Levy, who suffered head and abdominal trauma, was rushed to Valley Medical Center in San Jose and placed on life-support systems. He was pronounced dead just be-

fore 7 p.m. Saturday.

Although he had been working as an assignment editor on the Mercury's city desk in recent months, Levy spent most of his 24-year career as a reporter covering Santa Cruz County. He worked for the Watsonville Register-Pajaronian before joining the Mercury staff.

"It's a horrible tragedy; he was a wonderful newspaper reporter," said county Supervisor Gary Patton. "Of course, he had family ties to our board and so it's just devastating to me and all of our office to get the news," Patton said. Levy's sister-in-law is Aptos Supervisor Robley Levy.

"I will really miss Bob; he was everything you would want in a friend and in a reporter," said Santa Cruz Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt. "He was fair and ethical and smart and perceptive. He also had a good sense of humor. It's a very great

loss," she said.

Levy, who grew up in New York, earned his bachelor's degree from Cornell University and his master's degree in journalism from Columbia.

Upon graduation he followed his brother, Fred, to Santa Cruz County, after Fred Levy joined the English-department faculty at Cabrillo College in 1963.

Levy walked into the editorial office of the Register-Pajaronian and was hired on the spot. He was immediately assigned to cover the complicated county budget hearings.

Levy worked for the Watsonville paper until 1972, when he took a job as an editor on the Central Coast desk of the Mercury News. But Levy cared most for the Santa Cruz County community and returned to the Pajaronian a year later.

In 1975 he returned to the Mer-

cury, assigned to the Santa Cruz news bureau.

"He was my friend, my partner and a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist," said Lee Quarnstrom, referring to the Mercury's recent receipt of that award for its coverage of the October earthquake.

"Bob's knowledge of the area and his intense reporting skills really made for terrific stories," said Mercury News Metro Editor Jon Krim.

Krim also mentioned another attribute which both fellow reporters and local politicians agreed was Levy's hallmark.

"He was compassionate and that would come through in his copy," Krim said.

Levy also touched a younger generation of reporters. "If it weren't for Bob, I wouldn't be a journalist," said former UC Santa Cruz student Mark Henry, who now is a

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reporter for Newsday in New York. "What I respected so much was his accuracy and his tenacity," said Henry. "Bob loved his work, but he balanced that with his love of his family."

Levy is survived by his wife, Pat, who is a nurse at Dominican Hospital, and four children, Julie and Sarah, who are both grown, and David, 16, and Ellen, 14. He also is survived by his mother, Esther Levy of Soquel.

Levy was a supporter of the SCAT youth swim team and the

swim team at Soquel High School, where his children competed.

He was an avid reader and, after the newspaper business, like the rest of industry, turned to computers, Levy became fascinated by the new technology.

A memorial service is pending early this week. Unable to complete the arrangements Saturday night, the family said friends can call the following numbers after 6 p.m. today to obtain service information: 688-4514, 427-0113, 476-5539 or 462-4910.

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