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■ *I think it's just been a*  
Sgt. Tom Van Dalinda, Lyon County Sheriff's

# Traffic deaths soar in Lyon



Lisa J. Tolda/Reno Gazette-Journal

**IN MEMORY:** Two crosses stand along U.S. 95A in Silver Springs as a reminder of a fatal wreck in August that took the lives of Dani Jo Baker, 11, and Jennifer O'Brien, 14.

## Vehicle fatalities up 340%, figures show

By Sandi Wright 12/31/02  
RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Vehicle fatalities in Lyon County are up 340 percent this year — the highest percentage increase for any county in the state, according to the Nevada Office of Traffic Safety.

Although there were only five highway fatalities in the rural county in 2001, the number of deaths shot up to 22 in 2002.

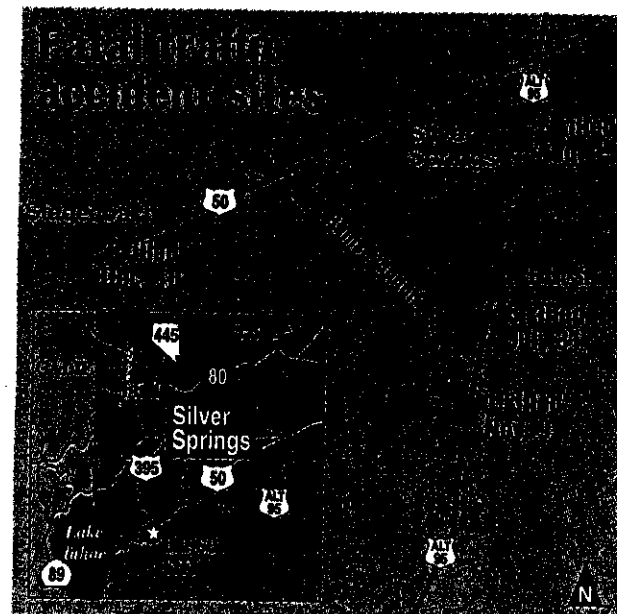
Almost half of those — nine people — have died during the past five months in highway crashes in and around the small desert town of Silver Springs.

Silver Springs is about 35 miles east of Carson City at

the crossroads of U.S. 95 Alternate and U.S. 50 East. Silver Springs and its neighbor, Stagecoach, have a combined population of only about 7,000 people, according to the county's latest statistics.

State officials and Silver Springs residents are puzzled as to why their area suddenly has become a death corridor.

"Here in Silver Springs everybody's concerned about why we're having so many accidents, especially fatalities," said Lyon County sheriff's Sgt. Tom Van Dalinda, who has operated out of the county's Silver Springs substation for the past eight years. "But there's nothing



S. Reich/Reno Gazette-Journal

we could put our finger on." "I think it's just been a bad year. We've had some growth, but I don't think the growth is paralleling the ac-

cidents, and they were all caused by different things," he said.

See **SILVER SPRINGS** on 4A

ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION

DATE: 2-27-03 ROOM: 3143 EXHIBIT F

SUBMITTED BY: Mary Ellen Holly

F1 of 2

# Silver Springs/Various causes cited in rise in deaths

From 1A  
On July 31, a Silver Springs man and two teenage boys were killed after being ejected from their four-door sedan after it went through a stop sign onto U.S. 93A and struck another vehicle.

A Silver Springs woman pleaded guilty in October to two counts of driving under the influence of marijuana causing death after her pickup rolled off onto the same stretch of highway on Aug. 13, killing two Silver Springs girls.  
On Nov. 9, a Reno man was killed a little farther south on the same highway in a 14-vehicle pileup caused by a late-afternoon dust storm.

And in the pre-dawn hours of Dec. 10, two Silver Springs residents and a Carson City man were killed in a head-on crash on U.S. 50 East about eight miles west of Silver Springs.

effect before, so I wouldn't blame it on that. We do have some accidents out there, but we don't have a lot of T-bones," Van Dalinda said.  
Acting Sgt. Terry Whitehead, who works out of the Nevada Highway Patrol's Fernley subsection, said he doesn't have an answer, either.  
"I've worked here 11 years and we get very few wrecks out there, but when we do, they tend to be very high-profile," Whitehead said.  
He agreed with Van Dalinda that the crossroads don't present a big problem.

Most of those roads have been there forever. I think it's just that there is more traffic on the highway and people are in a bigger hurry, so they don't pay attention, Whitehead said.  
■ **Insurrection.** Whitehead said a lot of drivers could steer clear of accidents by paying better attention to their surroundings.  
"I don't know how anyone around here wouldn't be able to see someone driving up a side street going 60 mph since you can

these accidents has to be on both drivers," he said.  
Sam Jepson, 63, a retired military man who has lived in Silver Springs for 15 years, said inattention is the biggest cause of accidents in the area.  
But he also blamed excessive speeding.  
■ **Speed.** The speed limit through Silver Springs south of the four-way stoplight is posted at 65 mph within about a mile. But people drive faster than that.  
"Speed limits don't seem to mean anything to people these days," Jepson said.  
And from the other side, in the rural areas, people pull out right in front of you and it takes them four miles to get up to 45 mph," he said.

Another Silver Springs resident has several ideas for making the highway safer through rural communities.  
"They need to do something through there, either widen it or add a center lane," said Tina Zylstra, 58.  
"It would also help if the speed limit was lowered through there,

Zylstra, who moved to Silver Springs three years ago from Modesto, Calif., said she knows what it's like to lose a child in a traffic accident.  
"We lost our 15-year-old daughter to a car accident 20 years ago this January, so this comes from the heart. I feel for them, and I'm still praying for those people who lost those kids in the back of that pickup," she said.  
Jepson is skeptical about reducing the speed limit through town.  
"It doesn't matter. What good is the speed limit if you don't enforce it? People automatically drive five over the limit anyway," Jepson said. "I'd like to see better enforcement of the traffic laws all the way around."

In fact, drugs and/or alcohol were determined by the NHP — or are suspected to have been — a factor in three of the four accidents and all but one of the deaths in that area, officials said.

During the next three years, NDOT will widen to four lanes six miles of U.S. 50 East from Chavez Drive just outside Dayton.

The project will be completed to Silver Springs — another 15 miles — over the next 10 years, Magruder said.

Fatalities are up all over Lyon County, but our priority is between Fernley and Fallon because that's where most of our fatalities have occurred in previous years," he said.

There were six double fatalities on U.S. 50 Alternate in a four-month period in 2000 and seven more died there in 2001. Fifteen people have died on that highway since 1995, Magruder said.

Kay Bennett, Silver Springs Chamber of Commerce president and a former Carson City supervisor, said a steering committee has been established to address

serious and gets a huge amount of traffic."

She said the committee is considering asking NDOT to put in right-hand merging lanes.

"What would help on 93 would be some kind of a turn lane and some better runouts. Some of those side roads are more heavily used than others and I'd like to see some attention to those areas," she said.

Bennett said she believes reduced speeds also would help.

"I would like to see the speeds significantly reduced in all of the approaches to Silver Springs, but especially along 93 where there is so much residential and commercial traffic," she said.

"Widening Highway 50 to four lanes is going to make a very, very big difference, but the speed on 93 is pretty scary. When you're trying to access that road, you pretty much have to accept that any oncoming traffic is going in excess of 60," Bennett said.

"I think it's just tragic that so many people have died here this year," she said.

Magruder said the state is al-

## Common factors

If the accidents have anything in common, they are:

■ **Cross traffic.** Nearly two dozen roads cross U.S. 93A along

street going 60 mph since you can

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