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THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2001 SECTION B

TRUCK IN OUR
WRECKED FUTURE
BREAKING NEWS
CONTROVERSY
OPINION

THE KEYS

Dolphin rejected by mom is dead

Center's staff feels 'crushed'

BY LISA FUSB
Herald Staff Writer

Destiny, the newborn dolphin calf rejected last week by its mother at the Dolphin Research Center on Grassy Key, died in the arms of caretaker staff Tuesday after it unexpectedly stopped breathing in its holding tank.

"We've all just crumbled," said Dana Carrigan, center spokeswoman and veterinarian.

Nick Ryan, Allen, the second of three pregnant dolphins at the center, gave birth to Destiny last Monday. She passed her calf to Turti, another pregnant dolphin, but moments after her morning delivery.

For unknown reasons, Allen never showed interest in nursing her first-born calf and left it in the care of center staff and veterinarians who had been working around the clock to keep the three-foot-long, 35-pound infant alive.

Barely a week old, Destiny had learned to nurse from a bottle and was showing signs of improved strength when she started breathing erratically around 6 p.m. Tuesday. Two hours later, the calf took her last breath in the arms of center veterinarian Mandy Rodriguez, who tried to resuscitate the dolphin by blowing into her blow-whistle.

An autopsy was conducted Wednesday to determine the cause of the dolphin's death, but the findings won't be available for some time, said Linda Erb, vice president of animal care and training.

Major mammal experts say the calf could have died from any of a number of causes, including undetected congenital disease that may have been the reason Allen rejected the baby.

Although it is uncommon, captive and wild dolphins have been known to abandon offspring born sick.

While heartbroken, center staffers say Destiny's short life and quick death have been learning experiences, ones they hope to share with others in the marine mammal community.

More unusual than Destiny's rejection by Allen was the surrogate mothering that took place between Turti and the calf. Erb said the two dolphins formed an adoptive bond some time before the facility. Turti, who is due any day with her third calf, allowed Destiny to nurse from her during her first few days of life.

"Without Turti, who is our super mom, Destiny would have never survived as long as she did," said Erb. "I don't think anybody could have done anything more for this little girl."

NEWS BRIEFS

ISLAMORADA

MAN MISSING FOR A WEEK AFTER LEAVING JOB SITE

Police are combing the Keys in search of an Islamorada man reported missing last week.

Steve Allen Wierwens, 47, was last seen March 7 when he left his job at Chereca Lodge after telling co-workers that he wasn't feeling well and was going home.

Wierwens departed on his blue bicycle and appeared to be headed toward his home on Fisher Drive in Islamorada. He didn't show up for work the next day at his second job at Squid Row Restaurant, nor did he call to say he wasn't coming in.

Wierwens is described as white, five feet nine inches tall and 230 pounds with blue eyes and light brown shoulder-length hair that he wears in a ponytail.

Anyone with information about Wierwens or his whereabouts is asked to contact the Monroe County Sheriff's Office at 888-883-3211.

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ALL IN A DAY'S FISHING



A 25-pound tuna hangs on the dock of Islamorada's Holiday Inn Marina, one of the busiest sport-fishing docks in the Keys, particularly in the line of gear when visitors flock to enjoy the waters surrounding the island chain.



THE GOOD LIFE: Amid a maze of towers and catwalks, above, crews prepare their charter boats for the next day's fishing. Mousabeh Curt Denev, right, captain of the Genesis, enjoys the reward of a day's sea by filleting a 35-pound blue marlin.

Collision on key kills 2 in pickup

Deputy stopped driver 90 minutes before accident

BY LISA FUSB
Herald Staff Writer

A 19-year-old Coast Guard firefighter killed Tuesday in a car crash on Winkley Key had been cited for speeding and improper passing less than two hours before he drove his truck into the path of an oncoming tractor-trailer.

Andrew Christopher Rice, who had worked aboard the Miami-based cutter Valiant for more than a year, died instantly after colliding with passenger Colleen Marie Ryan after their black Chevy S-10 pickup collided head-on with a U.S. Mail Service tractor-trailer on U.S. 1.

Both Rice and Ryan were from Asheville, N.C.

Ryan, 38, was a Florida State University freshman in the Keys on spring break.

Autopsies on both victims were completed Wednesday, but toxicology test results will not be available for at least a month, said Florida Highway Patrol detective Eric Dine, who is investigating the accident.

Investigators found a small amount of marijuana in the pickup, but it remained unclear whether alcohol or drugs played a part in the accident in which Rice and Ryan were crushed by the front end of the pickup.

Because of the severity of the impact, rescue personnel spent hours prying their trapped bodies from the wreckage.

Just 90 minutes before the accident, a deputy from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office stopped Rice for driving 85 miles an hour in a 45-mile-an-hour zone on Rammed Key.

Rice also was cited for illegally passing a tractor-trailer on two-lane Nile Channel Bridge and another car on Rammed.

Despite speculation that Rice may have been driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the 4:30 a.m. crash, sheriff's deputy John Allen did not subject Rice to a sobriety test during the stop because he found no evidence of impairment, said sheriff's spokeswoman Becky Herrin.

Allen asked Rice to exit the car during the traffic stop and observed that Rice was walking and talking normally, Herrin said. Allen did not smell alcohol on Rice's breath nor did he notice any alcohol or drugs inside the pickup as he stood beside the vehicle.

Allen "was talking to the driver and observed him walking around steady so there was no reason for him to do anything further," Herrin said. "You can't just stop someone and give them a field sobriety test without probable cause."

Herrin said sobriety tests are conducted based on deputy discretion, adding that traffic offenses such as reckless driving or obvious impaired speech or movement could warrant a roadside sobriety test should the officer deem it necessary.

Dine said he is working on a time line of Rice's travels early Tuesday and isn't sure if Rice made any stops — for example, at a bar or convenience store that sells alcohol — between the traffic stop and the accident, which occurred 38 miles apart.

Should toxicology tests show alcohol or drugs were a factor in the crash, Dine said Allen's traffic stop will likely be "looked at a little closer" to determine if Rice should have been allowed to get back behind the wheel.

The sheriff's office considers Allen's judgment sound, however, and does not plan to examine the traffic stop, said Herrin.

Allen "is sorry they were killed but he feels he did everything he could do," she said.

Key West chosen to host peace talks

Leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia invited

BY LISA FUSB
Herald Staff Writer

The U.S. State Department has invited the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia to Key West next month for peace talks toward a resolution of the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The talks, which will open April 1 at Harry Truman's Little White House, will be sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and mediated by U.S., French and Russian experts.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell may attend the event depending upon his schedule, a State Department spokesman said.

Calling peaceful resolution of the conflict a "major U.S. priority," the State Department will host Armenian President Robert Kocharyan and Azerbaijan President Heydar Aliyev in an attempt to bring peace to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and mediated by U.S.,

occupied by Armenian forces.

Both leaders have met more than a dozen times since 1999, most recently this month in Paris, but have made no progress toward a solution. The scheduled talks in Key West are a continuation of those discussions.

Although a cease-fire has been in place since 1994, hundreds of people are killed each year by sniper fire and landmines along a so-called Line of Contact separating the two countries.

State Department officials say the unresolved conflict remains a major impediment to stability and prosperity in the region.

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