

Car crash claims well-known tackle shop, charter boat personality

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A prominent local tackle shop worker from Brookings, who spent years working at tackle shops and charter offices in Santa Cruz, recently died in a car accident in the Smith River Canyon.

Roland Robertson, 67, and his passenger, 44-year-old Travis Lea, were found dead Oct. 15 in Robertson's battered Mazda pickup truck 60 feet down an embankment off U.S. Highway 199 near Gasquet, just north of Patrick Creek Lodge.

The truck is believed to have been over the side of the winding road for several days before a California Department of Transportation worker discovered it in a heavily wooded area. The cause of the accident is unknown.

Robertson worked at the Chetco Outdoor Store in Brookings. He was well known in the fishing community in southern Oregon and northern California, both for his local fishing knowledge and for his stories of working on charter boats in Santa Cruz, where he had worked for Shamrock Charters.

Robertson had a strong following of anglers from the Bay Area who fished the Chetco and Smith rivers with local guides. They would always make a point of visiting him at the Brookings tackle shop while in town.

"Worked many days with him at Shamrock back in the day," said Brett Shaw of Santa Cruz. "I learned a lot about fishing from him. Many people can say the same thing. The memories are endless."

"Caught a lot of fish with the man," said Steve Throop of Santa Cruz. "A lot more because of him."

"I used to really enjoy talking about surfing with Roland," said Brookings fishing guide Jack Hanson. "As a young man, he was a pretty damn good surfer from the Santa Cruz region."

Robertson moved to Brookings from Santa Cruz, and lived at the At Rivers Edge RV Park, next to the famous Morris Hole on the Chetco. Anglers would call him daily to find out how many fish had moved upriver the previous evening near his home.

His expertise in albacore tuna fishing allowed the shop where he worked to become the headquarters for southern Oregon tuna fishing.

He also was an accomplished boat and shore salmon and steelhead fisherman. Customers sought his advice on the best-color Spin-N-Glo to use, or best brine to use for salmon trolling.

Andy Martin is a full-time river guide and saltwater boat captain with Wild Rivers Fishing and Brookings Fishing Charters, LLC.