

COMEDIAN SAM KINISON KILLED IN HEAD-ON CRASH A PICKUP TRUCK HIT KINISON'S CAR, KILLING HIM AND INJURING HIS WIFE. THE TEEN DRIVER OF THE TRUCK WAS ARRESTED.



Comedian Sam Kinison, known for his manic, foul-mouthed stand-up routines, was killed in a head-on car crash in the California desert, and the teen-age driver who hit him was arrested on manslaughter charges, police said Saturday.

Kinison, 38, a Pentecostal preacher before he took up comedy, was killed instantly Friday night when a pickup truck swerved into his Pontiac Trans-Am on a darkened highway near Needles, Calif., 250 miles east of Los Angeles.

Kinison's publicist, Florence Troutman, said the comedian's wife of one week, Malika, was seriously injured and was taken to a hospital in Needles.

An 18-year-old passenger of the pickup suffered minor injuries.

The driver, a 17-year-old youth from Las Vegas, was charged with vehicular manslaughter and was being held by juvenile authorities. Police said the teen-ager was trying to pass other traffic when he collided with Kinison's car.

Beer cans were found strewn on the highway near the wreckage. Troutman said they did not come from Kinison's car.

Kinison and his wife were married April 5 and had just returned from their honeymoon in Hawaii.

Kinison was twice divorced. He often hung out with heavy-metal rock musicians and sometimes joked on stage about his history of drug and alcohol abuse. But he said he gave up drugs in 1990 and had cut back on his drinking.

Kinison was best known for his crazed, high-pitched and sometimes profane brand of comedy. He delighted in antics such as showing how Jesus might have reacted while being nailed to the cross, a routine that allowed Kinison to demonstrate his trademark scream. He sparked controversy with his gleeful bashing of women, homosexuals and religion.

Kinison was on his way to a sold-out show at the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino in Laughlin, Nev.

Born in Peoria, Ill., Kinison joined the ministry in his early 20s. After seven years as a preacher, he became a stand-up comic.

Kinison gained popularity from his appearances on Saturday Night Live, The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson and Late Night with David Letterman.

He appeared in the 1986 hit movie Back to School, starring comedian Rodney Dangerfield, and most recently co-starred in Fox Television's short-lived series Charlie Hoover.

Comedian Sam Kinison, 38, killed in head-on car collision

From Chicago Tribune wires

Sam Kinison, a former tent preacher who gained fame as a shrieking and often insulting stand-up comedian, was killed Friday night in a head-on automobile crash on a desert highway near Needles, Calif. He was 38 and lived in Hollywood Hills.

The Peoria, Ill., native's high-decibel routines became popular on the comedy-club circuit and won him film and television appearances. But his bitter jokes also provoked protest from women and homosexuals, many of whom said his material was hateful rather than humorous.

On Friday night, he was on his way to perform at the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino in Laughlin, Nev., when his sports car collided with a pickup truck on U.S. Highway 95 about 200 miles east of Los Angeles.

His wife, Malika, 27, whom he married only last Sunday, was hospitalized with a concussion, and her injuries were not life-threatening, said one of Mr. Kinison's publicists, Debbie Baker. The couple had just returned from a Hawaii honeymoon.

The California Highway Patrol said Saturday it did not yet have a formal report but did not dispute the account by another spokeswoman, Florence Troutman, who said Mr. Kinison's brother and manager, Bill, had been following in a van.

She quoted him as saying that the pickup had crossed a double line while trying to pass another vehicle and that after the accident the road was littered with beer cans



Sam Kinison

that did not come from Mr. Kinison's car. She said the pickup's driver was 17 years old and was under arrest for vehicular manslaughter.

Mr. Kinison was born in Peoria into a family of traveling evangelists, in whose footsteps he initially followed. But after a few years he moved to Los Angeles and developed his comedy act.

His Chicago appearances, first at the Wells Street club Zanies and later at the Auditorium Theatre, were raucous affairs that began with the pudgy comic bursting on-stage, wearing his trademark beret and overcoat.

His comedy, fueled by a palpable anger and misogyny (and, by Mr. Kinison's own admission, often by

liberal amounts of booze and drugs) could appear, on the surface, little more than a series of insults, four-letter words and scatological jabs punctuated by the comic's high-decibel screams.

This impression compelled some critics to compare Mr. Kinison to the more popular Andrew Dice Clay. This comparison rankled Mr. Kinison.

Mr. Kinison—who said that he gave up his many bad habits two years ago—was an original. Unlike Clay, his rage was real and not calculated. There was shock in the humor and also eerie, disquieting substance. During a Sunday afternoon performance five years ago at Zanies, Mr. Kinison displayed the same sort of angry art that characterized some of fellow Peoria native Richard Pryor's early material.

But his live appearances became increasingly boorish and repetitive, as Mr. Kinison was distracted by his film and television work.

A role as a high-strung professor in the 1986 Rodney Dangerfield film "Back to School" led to his own television special, "Breaking the Rules."

This season he starred on Fox in the situation comedy "Charlie Hoover." He recorded the song "Wild Thing," the video version of which featured Jessica Hahn, the woman who brought down the television evangelist Jim Bakker in a sex scandal.

Mr. Kinison said he gave up drugs in March 1990.

Tribune TV critic Rick Kogan contributed to this report.