

Rescue...continued from Page 1A

said. Both Schmidt and Passmore say they don't feel like heroes. Both say that if put in the same situation as Yebba, they just hope that there is someone out there that cares enough about human life to save them.

The two acted in tandem to save Yebba's life after all three were put on the spot on the morning of Wednesday, May 29th on Georgia 515.

Schmidt was headed west on his motorcycle, Passmore was driving east in his work truck. That's when Yebba entered their lives and put them to a test.

Yebba was driving east toward Blairsville, he was in the slow lane, but his black PT Cruiser was dead even with Passmore's vehicle, which was right beside Yebba.

Suddenly, Yebba's Cruiser bolted, it cut in front of Passmore's work truck, and traveled across in front of the truck and into the turning lane.

The Cruiser then traveled across the median, off the north shoulder of the roadway, struck a DOT sign, ran out of roadway, went airborne, traveled through the air, over the embankment overlooking Nottely River, struck several trees, and came to a final rest in the swift, murky waters.

Yebba's Cruiser missed Schmidt's motorcycle by 100 feet.

"I thought I was going to have to put the motorcycle down," Schmidt said. "I was heading west out of Blairsville and here comes this black PT Cruiser, changing lanes. He cuts through the turning lane, then he slides into the median, goes through the grass. Then before I know it, he's headed toward me."

"I started locking the bike down, and he missed me by about 100 feet," Schmidt said. As Schmidt watched the accident unfold before his eyes and then in his rearview mirror, he had a decision to make. He turned his motorcycle around, and went back to check on the man in the vehicle that almost took him out.

Passmore had a more scary encounter with the Cruiser. Yebba's car was in



the slow lane, both were doing about 70 mph and then the Cruiser cut him off, bolting right in front of him, Passmore said.

"He timed the turning lane just right," Passmore said, referring to Yebba's route that cut his work truck off. "I was more than a little upset at being cutoff. I was watching him in my rearview window, and wow, he just kept going across 515. He ran out of road and went airborne."

Passmore turned his vehicle around, knowing the Cruiser was going into Nottely River.

After Schmidt turned around and arrived at the accident scene, Passmore was running down the embankment, stripping out of his clothes along the way.

Yebba's Cruiser was in the middle of the swelled waters of Nottely River. It was floating and sinking at the same time.

Schmidt followed, going through the exact same routine as Passmore. They stood on the embankment, waiting for Yebba to crawl out of the vehicle - he didn't.

The car began to make popping sounds and sank 12 feet to the bottom of the creek.

Schmidt and Passmore looked at each other, they went in the cold, murky waters, without fear.

"It was like we had been working together forever," Passmore said. "We didn't have to communicate out loud to understand what we were doing."

Working in tandem, the two men found the Cruiser, and together, they forced the rear hatch of the vehicle open.

"We jerked on that hatch and it didn't want to open," Schmidt said. "The last of the air in that vehicle was holding it back. We finally broke it free and all kinds of stuff came out of that car."

Once open, everything you could think of came rushing out of the Cruiser. The two men dodged multiple items floating out of the vehicle.

"It scared the woo out of us," Schmidt said.

Schmidt went into the Cruiser and began feeling his way to Yebba. At first, he thought he had found the man. No such luck, it was a motorcycle helmet.

In between returns to the surface for air, Schmidt's luck changed.

He went back down, felt the top of Yebba's head and knew what he had to do.

Yebba wasn't wearing a seat belt; Schmidt tugged on Yebba's T-shirt. About the fourth tug, Yebba's body broke free and began to rise to the surface.

Schmidt guided Yebba to the top of the water, all the while performing a Heimlich-like maneuver.

Passmore, still in the water, helped bring Yebba ashore. The paramedics were making their way down the embankment.

By the time they reached the shoreline, Yebba was on his back and Schmidt and Passmore were working

to revive him.

What seemed like an hour in Yebba's rescue, only took three minutes. Yebba was soon in the safe hands of Union County Fire & Rescue.

"It was totally surreal," Passmore said. "It felt like an eternity getting him out of the water, but it turned out to be just a few minutes."

Certified divers of Union County Fire & Rescue, Andrew Burnette, Patrick Schmidt, and Dustin Lee, went in the water to make sure no one was with Yebba. It turns out, he was alone, Lt. Fortenberry said.

Passmore said the biggest thanks he could get came from Yebba's father.

"I'm sure he called Tony Schmidt too, but he called to tell me how grateful he was that I helped save his son's life," Passmore said. "I told him thank you. I would have done it for anyone in trouble."

For Schmidt, who is a U.S. Navy veteran, this is the second life he's helped save.

"A pilot crashed and I ran out and helped pull him from the burning jet," Schmidt said. "I'm just glad I've been in the right place, at the right time, two times in my life."



Above, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason talks with his deputies about the crash of a PT Cruiser into Nottely River. Below, Lt. Jeff Fortenberry and Union County certified divers. Photos/Charles Duncan

Scots...continued from Page 1A

at Meeks Park on Saturday.

On Saturday, another great group of athletes will compete in the annual Highland Games, a Southeastern Scottish Amateur Athletic Association sanctioned event. Classes Super A, A, B, and Masters will compete both Saturday and Sunday.

The games consist of seven different events that include the Open Stone Throw. The Blairsville Stone weighs 21.8 pounds. The Stone is tossed for distance with a style that is similar to that of an Olympic discus throw.

Other events include the Hammer Toss, throwing heavy weights (56 pounds) and light weights (28 pounds) for distance, and over a bar for height, the Sheaf Toss (a 16-pound bale of hay wrapped in burlap).

One of the most popular events is the Caber Toss, originating from the tossing of fallen trees in the Highland forests of Scotland.

The Caber ranges from 15-18 feet long, with a base of 6-8 inches, tapering to 4-5 inches. The athlete grasp the bottom of the Caber, balancing it as he moves forward, searching for the precise moment for the optimum release.

The Clans Tug-of-War competition begins at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday.

The event also includes an abundance of activities for the kids, lots of good food,



Highland Cattle will be on display on Saturday and Sunday.

music and of course, the Kilted Mile Race at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

Participants must be dressed in Kilts or Tartan apparel to compete. All age groups are welcome to take part. Prizes are awarded for the top finishers in all age groups.

There's also a Mini Cooper Car Parade through Meeks Park at 10:45 a.m. on Saturday.

Musical entertainment throughout the festival includes Uncle Hamish and The Hooligans, Blairsville's own Modern Vinyl, The Blarney-Girls, Colin Grant-Adams, Solo Pipers, The Oatcakes, Blairsville's own L.O.C.H., and Keltic Kudzu.

Also, there will be

bagpipe and Scottish Fiddle workshops.

Dancing also is a huge part of the Scottish culture. This year's dance entertainment is headlined by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (Atlanta Branch), and the Glencoe Highland Dancers.

And don't forget the Falconry exhibition presented by Dr. Bob Gordon of the Georgia Falconry Association, the Border Collie and Sheep herding display, and get a gander at the Scottish Highland cattle.

Also, Clann Nan Con returns, and don't forget the Flying Hawkes Axe Throwing. Come on out and enjoy the fun.