Charred debris is all that remains of a mobile home near the Oklahoma state line along Highway 83 after a fire Wednesday destroyed the structure and claimed the life of Curtis Phillips. His common law wife, Lori Emmert, continues her recovery at the Via Christi Burn Center in Wichita today. L&T photo/Abe Velasquez Jr.

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

The fire that claimed the life of Curtis Phillips and destroyed his home still has one victim struggling to recover.

Phillips' common law wife, Lori Emmert, remained at Via Christi's burn unit Tuesday.

Both Phillips and Emmert were in a mobile home across the Oklahoma state line on Highway 83 Wednesday when a fire consumed the trailer. Local residents helped the couple escape from the burning home, but injuries sustained in the fire claimed Phillips, 58, Thursday, at the burn center in Wichita while Emmert continued her recovery.

According to Curtis Phillips' brother Larry Phillips, Emmert's daughters arrived Thursday after her ventilator had been removed.

"We asked the nurses not to tell her about Curtis until her daughters got there," Phillips said. "But she demanded to see him, and they had to tell him that he died. That set her back."

Phillips said Emmert was able to talk to her daughters and recovery was progressing, but there were complications with her kidneys and the medical team wanted to perform a mental evaluation after the traumatic ordeal.

"Her daughters said she could be hospitalized another two to three weeks," Phillips said.

The Central Christian Church is organizing donations for the costs involved with the fire for the couple. Cash, clothing and personal items are being accepted for Emmert, and financial contributions are being accepted for the cost of cremation for Phillips.

"If anyone would like to donate, they can contact us at 620-624-5280 and we will get back with them and pick up what they might have or help direct where it needs to go," Pastor Chuck Scroggs said. "It was a total surprise, and she lost her husband. We want to do our best in trying to help."

The trailer was completely destroyed in the fire, and Phillips said that Oklahoma officials told property owners Mona and Brian Riddle to dispose of the debris as soon as possible since it is

a hazard.

“It’s going to cost thousands, but Brian told us not to worry about it, that he would take care of it,” Phillips said.

The charred remains of the trailer will be removed later today.

Memorial services for Curtis Phillips will take place at 7 p.m. Sunday at his brother’s home at 14498 Road T near Kismet. The Rev. Rex Petty will officiate.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Donations for clothing and personal items for Lori Emmert and for the cost of cremation for Curtis Phillips are being accepted at the Central Christian Church at the corner of Fifth and Lincoln in Liberal. For more information, contact the church at 620-624-5280.