

Witness describes fatal hit and run

nonchalantly 'He drove off,' court hears

DARYL SLADE CALGARY HERALD

Accused hit-and-run driver Colin Jones hesitated briefly after fatally striking Lindsay Giacomelli in a southeast crosswalk, then "drove off nonchalantly," an eyewitness testified Monday.

Christopher Patterson, 22, said he had just left Southcentre mall on March 17, 2005, and was waiting to turn onto Bonaventure Drive when he saw a sport utility vehicle strike the 20-year-old woman in the crosswalk.

"I looked to the left. I saw a big impact and a girl flying through the air and tires screeching," Patterson told Crown prosecutor David Torske on the opening day of Jones's trial for hit and run causing death.

"At that point, the SUV was really close to her. He stopped for a bit, then drove around her at a fairly normal pace," Patterson said.

"I wasn't sure if he was gonna stop or not. . . . I wasn't sure if he backed up or not or had enough room. He drove off nonchalantly."

Earlier, in his opening statement, Torske told Court of Queen's Bench Justice Allen Sulatycky that Giacomelli was "taken without warning" at 8:14 p.m. as she was going to the mall to buy a present for her boyfriend.

Jones, 49, was arrested in Toronto four days later after he boarded an Air Transat flight for Gatwick, England. He was returned to Calgary and charged with hit and run, recently upgraded to include the death.

Giacomelli suffered severe head injuries, a collapsed left lung and fractures of the pelvis, right thighbone and left collarbone. She died the following day.

The victim's parents, Gerald and Leslie, and two dozen friends and family members attended the opening day of the trial.

Torske said Jones struck Giacomelli and braked heavily before fleeing.

As the victim was being rushed by ambulance to Foothills Hospital, Jones was at his residence eating pizza and watching a movie.

According to a statement of admitted facts entered into evidence, Jones's 2001 Dodge Durango was involved in another collision a day later with a stationary flat-deck truck in Carstairs, 60 kilometres north of Calgary.

Const. Cal Brown of the city traffic section testified he recovered paint chips and pieces of plastic from the scene of the collision, which the crime lab said came only from paint used in Dodge Durangos between 2000 and 2002.

Police traced them to Jones's vehicle, which they seized from a Didsbury body shop.

Meanwhile, police went to Jones's residence in an attempt to talk to him, but he was not at home, so they put out a Canada-wide warrant for his arrest.

"He was putting into motion his plan to flee across and then from Canada," said Torske.

The prosecutor said Jones rented a vehicle, which he drove from Calgary to Regina, then took one-way WestJet flights from Regina to Winnipeg and Winnipeg to Toronto, then boarded the flight from Toronto to England.

When he was arrested, Jones was carrying his birth certificate, Canadian and United Kingdom passports, as well as cash in three currencies: British (85 pounds), Canadian (\$500) and U.S. (\$1,264).

Jones's lawyer, Balfour Der, said in his opening statement that the defence will be centred around the "essential elements of intent."

"There is no issue that Mr. Jones's vehicle was responsible and he was driving," Der told the judge.

"Mr. Jones . . . was clinically depressed for a number of years and there is evidence to support it . . . he did not know or have the requisite intent to escape civil or criminal liability (for hit and run)."

Const. Douglas Ford, who has since retired from the city police, took custody of Jones when he arrived back in Calgary after his arrest.

Ford testified Monday that the accused told him he had been taking three capsules of Zoloft daily for nine years for clinical depression. Ford said he didn't see anything unusual in the man's demeanour.

"He didn't look depressed," said Ford. "He was uncertain why he was brought there. He said he was not guilty of anything . . . he didn't do anything wrong." Torske is expected to wrap up his case by Wednesday, then Jones is scheduled to take the stand. The trial will be adjourned until February for expert evidence. Jones is free on bail.

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Colin Jones



Jenelle Schneider, Calgary Herald
Leslie and Gerald Giacomelli attend the trial of their daughter's accused killer.