

## FATAL HIT AND RUN

# Crash staged to hide damage, says expert

*SUV that killed woman was in second accident*

DARYL SLADE CALGARY HERALD

A police crash expert testified Tuesday that a collision in Carstairs last year was staged to cover up damage from a fatal hit and run in Calgary the previous night.

The testimony came during the trial of Colin Jones, 49, charged with hit and run causing death.

Retired Sgt. Russ van Aalst, the former head of the hit-and-run unit in Calgary, told the court about the crash involving Jones's Dodge Durango and a flatbed truck parked on a street in Carstairs, located about 60 kilometres north of Calgary, on March 18, 2005.

"My opinion, this vehicle was involved in a secondary collision," said van Aalst, now a sheriff with the Attorney General's department.

"The secondary collision's sole purpose was to mask damage from the first collision. (The Durango) should not have had this type of collision. (The location) was too wide open," he told Crown prosecutor David Torske.

The fatal collision occurred the night before, on March 17, when 20-year-old Lindsay Giacomelli was struck and tossed 22 metres through the air while walking across a marked crosswalk on Bonaventure Drive S.E., near the Southcentre mall. She was going to the mall to buy a present for her boyfriend.

The driver stopped briefly, drove around the victim and departed the scene.

Jones has admitted he was behind the wheel of his vehicle when it struck Giacomelli, but his lawyer said his client was unaware he had hit anyone as he was suffering from clinical depression.

The Crown disputes the defence argument, as Jones was involved in the subsequent crash 20 hours later, then rented a car and drove to Regina before purchasing separate one-way flights to Winnipeg, Toronto and Gatwick, England, allegedly to cover his tracks.

It was only after police found flecks of paint and pieces of plastic at the scene that they linked them to Jones' Durango. He was arrested four days later boarding an Air Transat flight to England.

Const. Ross Jackson said Jones acted strangely when the officer went to the suspect's home the day after Giacomelli was struck.

"I told him we were investigating a hit and run in which a lady was killed," said Jackson. "He was nervous, overly nervous, extremely nervous . . . sweat on his brow."

Jackson said he did not ask Jones if he had been involved in the collision near Southcentre and the man did not volunteer such information.

The officer wanted to see Jones' Durango, but it wasn't there.

Jones told him he had been in an accident in Carstairs that afternoon and that the RCMP had towed his inoperable vehicle, although he did not know to what location.

City police later found out it was in a towing company's compound in Didsbury and seized it as evidence.

Van Aalst said the second collision did not make sense because it was on a curve leading into a new subdivision, on which there was primarily construction traffic.

"If some other vehicle forced the Durango to the right, there would be damage on the right front, not in the centre," said van Aalst.

"The only way to go to the right is impact or if there is another vehicle pushing it.

"It's either driver error or by steering into (the parked truck). Those would be the only other ways."

Const. David Alexander, who took custody of Jones after he was brought back from Toronto, said he found the suspect to be "smug and cocky" when he interviewed him at the District 5 office.

Some of the accused's coworkers also testified Tuesday. Jones was a construction manager at Summa Management, a construction company.

They were at a bar with Jones on St. Patrick's Day a few hours before the fatal collision and did not notice anything unusual about the accused.

Damien McCallion said Jones gave him a ride in his Durango, first to the Irish Rugby Club, where they had a beer, then to the Rose and Crown. He said there was no concern about his co-worker's driving.

"We had a beer when we first got to the Rose and Crown, then he was with other people," said McCallion. "He bought me a beer before he left . . . he said he had to get home to do a budget for a job."

Summa owner John Apfeld, who had a beer at the Rose and Crown to celebrate his birthday and St. Patrick's Day, said Jones had been upset for the previous month because he was splitting up with his wife. But Apfeld added Jones "appeared normal" and was not intoxicated at the Beltline bar.

"I didn't notice anything that was untoward or abnormal," said Apfeld, who left the bar around 4 p.m. after

having one beer.

Apfeld also said Jones was fine at a budget meeting with a client the next morning. The business owner said Jones left him a voice mail a couple of days later, indicating he was taking some time off. The accused did not leave a number where he could be reached and did not show up at work the next day. "I wasn't happy," said Apfeld. The trial before Court of Queen's Bench Justice Allen Sulatycky continues today.

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Colin Jones



Lindsay Giacomelli



Leah Hannel, Calgary Herald  
Leslie Giacomelli, left, the mother of 20-year-old hit-and-run victim Lindsay Giacomelli, leaves Calgary Court of Queen's Bench on Tuesday.