



BCPO News

Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor

Philip S. Aronow
First Assistant Prosecutor

Darren N. Anderson
Chief of Detectives



Joel Bewley
BCPO Public Information Officer
Desk: 609-265-5777 Cell: 609-820-4407
jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us

October 18, 2018

Man Receives 15 Years for Delaware River Crash That Killed Girlfriend

MOUNT HOLLY - Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a man whose girlfriend died after the car he was driving plunged into the Delaware River in Burlington City earlier this year was sentenced today to 15 years in New Jersey state prison for causing her death.

Jacob T. Garrett, 25, who pled guilty in July to Vehicular Homicide (First Degree) and Leaving the Scene of a Fatal Accident (Second Degree), must serve 12 years and 9 months before becoming eligible for parole under the sentence handed down by the Hon. Terrence R. Cook, P.J.Cr.

Garrett was traveling at a high rate of speed along Riverbank Road on January 14 when his vehicle struck a parked minivan before crashing through a fence and into the river near Wood Street. The front end of the car broke through the ice and became submerged.

Witnesses to the crash who rushed over to the scene indicated Garrett was already out of the vehicle by the time they arrived. "Help my girlfriend," witnesses reported Garrett as saying to them before he fled on foot.

Stephanie White, 23, of Burlington City, was found inside the sunken vehicle with her seat belt still fastened. She was extricated by emergency workers and transported to Lourdes Medical Center of Burlington County in Willingboro, where she was pronounced dead.

Members of Stephanie's family who spoke at the sentencing said they believe that Garrett loved her, and they do not hate him for his actions.

Garrett admitted that he had been drinking Fireball whiskey prior to the accident. His blood alcohol level was .17 four hours after the crash. In New Jersey, a driver with a .08 reading is considered legally drunk.

Prior to receiving his sentence today in Superior Court, Garrett told Stephanie's family that had he been sober, he would have died trying to rescue her rather than fleeing.

more...

Page 2

“I didn’t leave because I was scared of the consequences,” Garrett said. “I left because there was no way in hell I could accept what was happening.”

Judge Cook offered his condolences to members of Stephanie’s family, and said he believes Garrett is remorseful for his actions.

“But you were drunk out of your mind when you were driving,” he told Garrett. “Your conduct caused the death of Stephanie White.”

Judge Cook ordered Garrett to reimburse Stephanie’s family for her funeral and burial expenses.

“This was a senseless death, made even more tragic by the defendant’s selfish attempt to escape justice instead of trying to save the life of his girlfriend,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “I extend my deepest sympathy to Stephanie’s family and friends, and I thank the investigative and prosecutorial team that secured justice for them.”

Garrett was arrested a short time after leaving the scene.

City of Burlington Police Officer Charles Haney and his German shepherd K-9 partner Kobi tracked Garrett from the river to the Burlington Towne Center North light rail platform on West Broad Street. Police then had the train stopped at the Beverly/Edgewater Park station, where Garrett was taken into custody.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Thaddeus E. Drummond, supervisor of the BCPO Collision and Analysis Reconstruction Unit.

The investigation was conducted by the Prosecutor’s Office and City of Burlington Police Department. The lead investigators were BCPO Detective Tony Luyber and City of Burlington Police Detective Corporal Anna Czajka.

END

2018-92