

Driver found guilty in collision that killed local woman

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

A Mississauga man was found guilty of careless driving in Burlington court last Wednesday in the February 2011 collision on Mountainview Rd. N. that claimed the life of a Georgetown woman.

Douglas Wehnde, 53, was not in Provincial Offences Court for Justice of the Peace Liisa Ritchie's decision, which came after a three-day trial in April. Wehnde had pleaded not guilty April 2. He is to be sentenced Oct. 9.

Donna Reid, 48, who had a mild developmental disability, was walking across Mountainview on her way to Community Living North Halton's Horizon Packaging on Todd Rd. about 9:10 a.m. Feb. 11, 2011 when she was struck by a southbound GM Sierra pickup driven by Wehnde.

Wehnde, owner/manager of Ziebart Uniglass, had just picked up the new truck and was taking it for rust proofing when Reid was struck. Ritchie said Wehnde testified during his trial he pulled out into the centre lane and the sun was in his eyes.

She said he put his hand up to block the sun, looked straight up the dedicated turn lane for Todd Rd. and saw no one. He was still accelerating.

Ritchie said Wehnde testified he checked his passenger side mirror and did a quick shoulder check to ensure there was room to merge into the southbound lane. He then looked straight ahead, focusing south and to the right, and was planning to merge into the southbound passing lane. The sun was still an issue, and he didn't see anyone, she said.

"Mr. Wehnde testified that he then put on his right signal and when he turned his head back he heard a thump," said Ritchie.

He initially thought he had been hit by a truck tire, but then, out of the corner of his eye, saw a woman slide to the ground.

The collision was captured on surveillance video by a camera at Georgetown Toyota.

In her decision Ritchie said, "A very heavy onus rests on motorists."



Donna Reid of Georgetown was killed Feb. 11, 2011 when she was struck by this pickup truck driven by Douglas Wehnde of Mississauga. *File photo*

She said the prosecution proved Wehnde drove "without due care and attention."

"Specifically the court finds that the defendant was accelerating in the left turn lane, when he was not turning left, when his vision was partially obstructed by the sun.

"In the circumstances, this is not the conduct of an ordinary prudent person. Ms. Reid was there to be seen. An ordinary prudent driver would not have driven 5.29 to 7 seconds while his visibility was so impaired. Such a driver would not have traveled approximately 80 metres when he had difficulty seeing out of the left one-third of his windshield as well as directly in front of his vehicle," said Ritchie. "An ordinary prudent driver would not have assumed the lane he traveled in remained clear when he did not have full visibility of that lane."

She said "an ordinary prudent driver" would have been alert that other users, including pedestrians, may be on the roadway, wouldn't have driven approximately 68 metres in a left turn lane if he had no intention of making a left turn, would have stopped when he realized his vision was impaired by the sun, and would have merged slowly and cautiously into the next lane when he ascertained it was safe to do so.

"Mr. Wehnde's evidence is that he took none of these steps," said Ritchie. "The court finds that the manner of driving is considered a breach of duty to the public and deserving of punishment."

A careless driving conviction can carry a maximum penalty of any or all of the following: a fine of \$2,000, six months in jail, a two-year license suspension and the application of a six demerit points and a two-year suspension of the permit for the motor vehicle.

Reid was the single mother of two grown children. A victim impact statement is expected to be filed with the court prior to sentencing.

Police blotter

Two men facing charges after vehicles broken into

Halton Police have charged two men in connection with the May 17 entry into a trailer and two vehicles on Armstrong Ave.

Entered was a locked display trailer owned by a shoe company and the two vehicles owned by a landscape company. A small quantity of cash was taken from the vehicles and nothing from the trailer.

During the trailer break-in one of the suspects cut himself leaving behind blood. The blood along with video footage aided police in identifying two suspects who were charged Friday and Saturday.

Charged with break and enter, possession of break-in instruments, theft under \$5,000 and breach of probation is Richard Leroy Hiltz, 29, of Brampton.

Also charged with break and enter, possession of break-in instruments and theft under \$5,000 is Dustin Ervin Hiltz, 20, of Halton Hills.

A Georgetown man is facing charges in connection with a recent vehicle break-in and using a stolen credit card.

Late Thursday or early Friday morning an unlocked car parked at an apartment complex on Mountainview Rd. N. was entered.

Stolen was a wallet, that among other things contained

a credit card. Within hours the stolen card was used three separate times at two businesses in Georgetown. The total amount purchased was \$90.

Later Friday morning the victim discovered the car had been entered and reported the incident to police.

Investigation by police uncovered video footage that aided police in identifying a suspect and making an arrest.

Charged with two counts of theft under \$5,000, possession of stolen property, three counts of using a stolen credit card, and breach of recognizance is Christopher Marrow, 28, of Georgetown.

Police are looking for a male who shot two people with a BB gun early Sunday morning.

About 12:20 a.m. a brother and sister were walking on Delrex Blvd. north of Faludon Dr. when someone shot at them from a dark coloured sedan.

One of the victims was struck in the shoulder, neither were injured or required medical attention.

It's believed there were three males in the vehicle.

Anyone with information is asked to call police at 905-878-5511 ext. 2415.

• For more police news see page 5.



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