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Neighbours hear loud bang: trial

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Halton Hills resident Stephen Alchin is charged with failing to stop at the scene of an accident. Dressed in a suit, he sat beside defence lawyer Paul Stunt and listened as Crown witnesses testified Tuesday, Wednesday and yesterday at Superior Court of Justice in Milton before Judge Joseph Fragomeni.

Court heard from Crown attorney Craig Fraser that Lauren was struck from behind by a southbound vehicle on Second Line when she was just north of her house. She suffered spine, neck and head injuries after being thrown an estimated 30 metres. She was pronounced dead at Milton District Hospital. The speed of the vehicle wasn't expected to be a factor, court heard.

Lauren had spent that day at the Georgetown day-care centre where she worked, Stuart told the court. When she returned home after 3 p.m., she changed into her bathing suit for a quick swim in the family's pool. "It was a glorious day," Stuart testified.

He asked Lauren if she wanted to go with him and Deborah for dinner, but she said she was tired and would probably go to bed early, the court heard. The last time he saw his daughter alive, she was lying on her bed.

When Stuart saw the in-line skate, flip-flop and headlight on the road near his house, he said he thought maybe Lauren had tripped and walked home.

"We didn't think anything (of it)," he told the court.

After finding her in the west ditch, he ran home and told Deborah to call 911. He then got into his vehicle and parked it across the road to block traffic. A woman driving by stopped and helped him in his attempts to resuscitate Lauren until emergency workers arrived, the court heard.

Halton Regional Police officer David Hamer continued the sequence of events when he took to the stand Wednesday.

Hamer told the court he saw a Chevrolet emblem in the ditch near the Coopers' house, and a trail of radiator fluid that he followed.

After four or five kilometres, the thin line disappeared at No. 10 Sideroad and Guelph Line.

"My thought was a vehicle can't go far with a fluid leak," he told the court, so he searched the immediate area.

At the Halton Country Inn on Sixth Line early the next morning, Hamer saw a black Chevrolet pick-up truck with damage to the front, a missing emblem and headlight, and what appeared to be blood on the passenger mirror.

Alchin walked out a short while later. A bag of what seemed to be marijuana was found on him and he was arrested, court heard.

Various neighbours testified about having seen Lauren earlier that night and about hearing a loud bang around 10 p.m.

Cindy Mott told the court she was driving home when she saw Lauren rollerblading on No. 15 Sideroad just after 9:30 p.m. "My headlights picked up the reflectors of her skates," court heard.

It was dark, she told the court, but not pitch black; the sun had set, but the sky was still blue. It wasn't until the next day that Mott found out what had happened.

In his cross-examination, Stunt asked Mott why she had said it wasn't very dark when she had told the court it was very dark at the preliminary hearing.

"It was dark in areas," she replied, explaining the sky was light, but the valley was dark.

Husband Howard Mott was next on the stand and said he arrived home at 9:40 p.m. and went outside. "It was very bright, with lots of ambient light, a clear sky," he said.

Between 9:55 and 10 p.m., something caught his attention. "I was sitting there enjoying the night air, having a cigar... All of a sudden, I heard a bang and thought, 'What the heck is this noise?'"

He told the court he walked toward the sound and noticed a vehicle in a driveway next to the Coopers' home. As he walked toward it, the vehicle drove off, he testified.

The trial continues today.
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