

Accused 'surprised' when learning of death: trial

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

When Stephen Alchin was told by police he'd struck and killed a teenaged girl the night before, he put his hands over his face and bent forward.

So stated the notes of investigating officer Stephen Martin, who arrested Alchin in connection with the death of Lauren Cooper, 18.

The officer's notes were read out to the court Monday by Paul Stunt, Alchin's lawyer, in his cross-examination of Martin as part of Alchin's trial, which continued Monday and yesterday. Stunt prodded Martin regarding Alchin's reaction upon hearing the news.

"He was surprised, that's correct," Martin replied before Justice Joseph Fragomeni at Superior Court of Justice in Milton.

Cooper was fatally struck from behind by a vehicle while Rollerblading on Second Line near her Nassagaweya home the night of July 13. Alchin, of Halton Hills, has been charged with failing to stop at the scene of an accident.

Martin agreed that Alchin's vehicle, which was located by officers in the early morning July 14 at Sixth Line's Halton Country Inn, was backed into its spot, leaving the damage to the front of the vehicle plain to see.

In his questioning, Stunt asked Martin if — judging from the radiator fluid that appeared to have leaked out of Alchin's vehi-

cle after the crash — it appeared Alchin sped away, recklessly disobeying stop signs in efforts to get away from the scene.

Martin told the court there was nothing to suggest that, and that there had been pooling of the fluid — suggesting the vehicle stopped — at stop signs. Earlier, Martin had told Crown attorney Craig Fraser that after Alchin was arrested at the inn/golf club, he was searched. Found were marijuana, two "corn cob" pipes and two beer caps.

Martin told the court, "I detected the strong odor of alcohol on his breath."

Inside the pick-up truck, court heard, police later found what appeared to be drug paraphernalia including a waterproof match container that smelled of marijuana. Also in the truck were three empty scotch bottles and three empty beer bottles.

In response to Stunt's cross-examination, Martin told the court Alchin said he'd had two drinks when he returned to Halton Country Inn, but hadn't been drinking when the crash occurred.

Stunt asked Martin why his client hadn't been read his rights word for word upon arrest, asking him if he simply "freelanced his rights." Martin said he didn't have his police notebook — where the rights are written — at the time and did the best he could.

The trial continues today.
Stephanie Hounsell can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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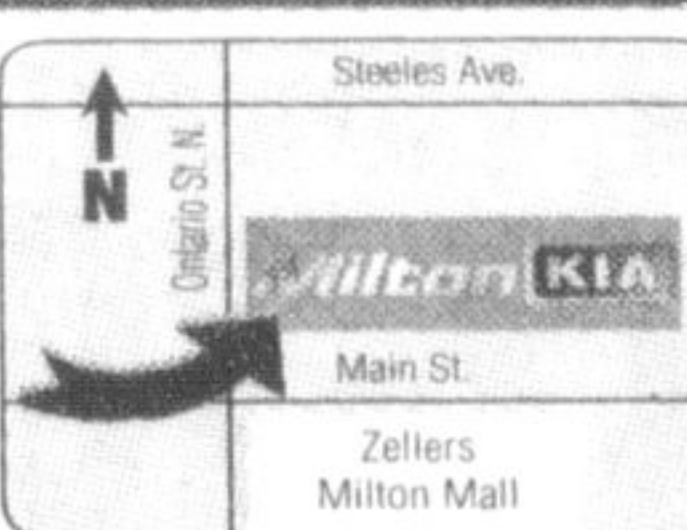
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