

BOILING SPRINGS MAN RECEIVES 15-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR FATAL ALCOHOL-RELATED WRECK

A Boiling Springs man received a 15-year prison sentence today after pleading guilty in connection with an alcohol-related wreck that claimed the life of a local man.

William Robert Albee, 36, of 155 Ponderosa Road pled guilty as charged to felony driving under the influence with a death. The July 15, 2001 wreck claimed the life of Lawrence J. Mann, 52, of 8540 Anchor St. The plea occurred during the third day of Albee's trial before Circuit Judge Larry Patterson. Albee entered the plea without negotiation or recommendation from the prosecutors. Prosecutors were prepared to continue the trial today had Albee not admitted his criminal conduct.

"Mr. Albee will have plenty of time to think about the consequences of his actions," Principal Deputy Solicitor Barry Barnette said.

The accident occurred about 12:05 a.m. in the northbound lane of I-85 near Highway 129. Albee's 1990 Ford Taurus station wagon struck a Harley-Davidson motorcycle driven by Mann. A tractor-trailer rig ran over Mann moments after the accident occurred. Albee's car ran over the victim before the 18-wheeler. Albee's car came to rest on the right shoulder of the interstate with heavy damage to the front left corner of the vehicle. Following the wreck, Albee didn't make any attempt to help Mann or call 911 for assistance. In fact, Albee continued driving until his car became disabled and was not able to continue.

The coroner's office concluded that Mann died of massive head and body trauma.

Wednesday's plea marked Albee's third driving under the influence conviction in the past decade. Albee will have to serve 85 percent of the prison sentence before he is even eligible for release.

Moments before he issued the sentence, Judge Patterson told Albee that he thought Mann's death had a wide-ranging impact and gave his insight into the problem of drunk driving.

"It's a tragedy on both sides, your family and this family over here," Patterson said. "And that's the reason it disturbs me. [7th Circuit Solicitor] Mr. Gowdy certainly doesn't do it but around this state, driving under the influence charges are handled cavalierly and kind of just pushed away and treated – not treated appropriately. It is my strong feeling that if they were treated appropriately on first offense and the second and third offense, you wouldn't see people in here for third and fourth offenses."

In response to Judge Patterson's comments during sentencing Solicitor Gowdy said, "unfortunately Judge Patterson is right. Too often the justice system waits until someone is dead or seriously injured before punishing that person in a meaningful way." "I appreciate Judge Patterson's remarks and we will continue our fight to make the roadways safer."

For more information, contact Murray Glenn at 596-3862 or 809-4892.