

Drunk driver gets six years in prison in death of Edmonton cyclist

By Teresa Wright, The Guardian
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Clarence Arnold Moose of Kensington was sentenced to six years in prison and was handed a lifetime driving ban during sentencing Dec. 4, 2012.

Photograph by: The Guardian

CHARLOTTETOWN - Clarence Arnold Moose will have the next five and a half years to think about why he has chosen time and again to drink alcohol and drive.

The 49-year-old Kensington man pleaded guilty to killing 63-year-old Elizabeth Ann Sovis of Edmonton last July when he struck her with his van while intoxicated.

In P.E.I. Supreme Court Tuesday, Justice John Mitchell sentenced Moose to six years in prison, minus 214 days for time already served in custody. He also banned Moose from driving for life.

Mitchell pointed to Moose's four previous impaired driving convictions as a serious aggravating factor in the case.

“His being caught by police four times, brought to court four times, sentenced to jail four times and had his license suspended four times did not curb his propensity to drink and drive,” Mitchell said.

On July 14, 2012, Sovis and her husband of 34 years, Edmund Aunger, were biking along the Rennies Road in Hunter River while on a cycling vacation from Alberta.

Sovis usually took the lead when riding with her husband, but had allowed Aunger to pedal ahead to show her the way to the bed and breakfast they were to stay in that evening.

Sovis never saw the B&B.

She was struck by Moase’s van between 5:30 and 6 p.m.

The RCMP found a half-empty 1.14 litre bottle of vodka in Moase’s van. His blood alcohol level was almost three times the legal limit.

“Make no mistake,” Mitchell said while handing down his sentence. “Every person who drives a motor vehicle while impaired turns a motor vehicle into a potential killing machine.”

Aunger, meanwhile, is making it his life’s mission to advocate for cycling safety. He believes a major contributing factor in his wife’s death was the highway with unpaved shoulders the couple had to cycle on to reach their accommodations from the Confederation Trail last July.

“The research is very clear that is a high risk situation for cyclists,” he said in a telephone interview from Edmonton.

“I’m amazed that so many people seem to think it’s not a contributing factor, that it’s safe for people to cycle on highway 13.”

Aunger says he and Sovis went out of their way to avoid riding along highways because she believed sharing the road with motor vehicles was dangerous.

It’s one of the reasons he partly blames himself for her death. He planned the route that led them to bicycle along that highway last July.

“What were the odds? Given that she was so incredibly cautious? I always thought she was exaggerating because the odds seemed so absolutely small.”

He is urging the government of Prince Edward Island to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure greater safety for cyclists. In the meantime, Aunger is planning a cross-country cycling trip along the Trans Canada trail from B.C. to P.E.I.

“I will arrive in Hunter River on July 14, 2017, the fifth anniversary of Elizabeth’s death, and I desperately hope to celebrate the new measures that the P.E.I. government will have taken to improve cycling safety.”

As for the six-year sentence Moase received, Aunger said: “I don’t absolve him of responsibility, but he did not go out, I do not believe, with the intention of murdering somebody and I don’t think it’s right to make those kinds of comparisons,” Aunger said. “I really wish the best for him.

“It’s all still very raw for me. It’s been very traumatic and difficult.”

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