



OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY

THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

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Press Release

State Attorney John F. Durrett announces that on March 12, 2025 following a jury trial, defendant William Lee Clayton was found guilty as charged of two first degree felony counts of Leaving the Scene of a Crash Involving Death and one third degree felony count of Operating a Motor Vehicle Carelessly or Negligently Causing Death.

On January 1, 2023, the Defendant was unlawfully driving a Ford Maverick and attached trailer without a driver's license on Interstate 75 in extremely foggy conditions. The Defendant was heading northbound when he struck a disabled vehicle in the roadway. The disabled vehicle, occupied at the time by Maribel Macedo and Armando Gomez Sanchez, had been involved in a separate collision which disabled their vehicle moments before being struck by the Ford Maverick. Macedo and Sanchez were residents of the State of Illinois who had been visiting Florida for their honeymoon vacation at Disney World. Both Macedo and Sanchez succumbed to their injuries at the scene of the crash.

Video evidence, crash reconstruction, and event data recorder evidence (also known as "EDR data" or "black box data") established that the Defendant was driving between 83 and 84 miles per hour in low visibility conditions a mere 5 seconds before the fatal crash. The Defendant did not apply the brakes until 2.5 seconds before the crash, and he struck the victims' vehicle at approximately 60 miles per hour in a head-on collision. After the collision with the Ford Maverick, several additional vehicles were involved in the collision, with a total of 21 involved vehicles and 3 fatalities.

Testimony and physical evidence further established that the driver's compartment of the Ford Maverick contained a pervasive odor of alcohol following the crash, and a bottle of liquor was recovered from an area within reach of the driver.

Out of the 21 drivers, 20 were accounted for by remaining on scene or being transported for medical attention via ambulance. The Defendant fled the scene on foot as first responders approached despite having significant physical injuries of his own. The Defendant remained at large for approximately 13 hours before he was located by Master Corporal Paul Azrak of the Florida Highway Patrol. The Defendant was hiding in the woods but made a campfire to keep away mosquitos, and the smoke from the campfire revealed his position to law enforcement. The identity of the driver was established through a combination of DNA evidence, video evidence, and items of physical evidence located at the scene.

The Defendant has prior convictions for DUI, did not have a driver's license, had active warrants in two states, and his privilege to apply for the issuance of a driver's license was indefinitely suspended out of the State of Indiana.

The sentencing hearing is currently set for April 12, 2025.

This case was investigated by the Florida Highway Patrol, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, the District 4 Medical Examiner's Office, and State Attorney's Office Investigators.

The State of Florida was represented at trial by lead counsel Assistant State Attorney Sean Crisafulli and Assistant State Attorney Lorelie Brannan. The Honorable Melissa Olin presided over the case.