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Judge finds sufficient evidence

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After three days of witness testimony in Santa Barbara County Superior Court on the death of Dr. Ronald Shlensky, Judge Joseph Lodge found sufficient evidence to hold the defendant, Heather Lea Hulseley to answer for an arraignment on April 5.

Hulseley, 20, who pleaded not guilty to several counts of vehicular manslaughter and driving under the influence of alcohol on Aug. 7 of last year, said she hit Shlensky with her 2004 Toyota 4Runner when she reached down to retrieve her cellular phone from the floor of her truck.

Testimony from some of Hulseley's friends on Tuesday and Wednesday revealed Hulseley had been drinking alcohol at the Montecito Country Club hours before the incident, which occurred around 6 p.m. on July 27, 2006.

On Tuesday Magdalena Alvarado, who was invited by Hulseley to "hang out and drink" at the pool area of the country club, said she and Hulseley took a few drinks of vodka from a water bottle in an employee room.

Alvarado said Hulseley took additional trips to the room without her.

Alvarado then described how when she and another friend, Gabriela Trellas, who also testified, dropped Hulseley off at her home. Alvarado then said she saw Hulseley get into her car and back into bushes that lined the driveway.

Alvarado said she then called Hulseley.

"I called her because I didn't think she should be driving," Alvarado said during her testimony on Tuesday.

Hulseley's end of the telephone line then went silent for a short time, followed by Hulseley saying in what Alvarado described as a "shocked" tone, "I think I just hit somebody. Oh my god, oh my god."

On Wednesday Michelle Torres, a friend and co worker of Hulseys said she saw Hulseys take a drink of alcohol from a flask, as well as from a Blenders in the Grass cup at the pool area as well.

Another friend of Hulseys, Dannielle Favela, said she did not see any alcohol containers at the pool, but did say she witnessed seeing Hulseys become more intoxicated throughout the day.

Also heard on Wednesday, was testimony from Greg Wilkins, a criminal investigator for the Santa Barbara County District Attorney who has investigated Shlensky's death.

Wilkins said he and Senior Deputy District Attorney Arnis Tolks, who is heading up the prosecution, sought the opinion of Dr. Carley Ward, who founded the Biodynamics Engineering Inc.

Wilkins said Ward's business specializes in determining the extent of bodily injury as a result of auto collisions.

In the case of Shlensky, Wilkins said Ward concluded Hulseys vehicle was traveling 20 mph when she struck the man.

Wilkins said Ward based her conclusion on pictures of Hulseys vehicle, which sustained a dent on the hood as well as a dent on the roof area.

At 20 mph, Wilkins testified that Ward told him a body being struck by a vehicle could hit the hood, slide up the windshield and hit the roof before it falls to the ground.

Wilkins said at 15 mph the body would slide off the hood onto the ground, while at 30 mph a body would likely fly over the car.

Tolks said the April 5 arraignment will allow Hulseys to make another plea to the four felony charges and four infractions she faces.

George Orozco and Julie Jensen, both investigators for the Sheriff's Department testified yesterday.

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