

Three victims in June accident on I-35W sue trucking company

By SALLY ELLERTSON
Burleson Star Editor

Three of the victims from a chain-reaction accident on I-35W on June 13 have sued the trucking company and driver that was found at fault.

Mary Lynne Reutter, John Adam Reutter, and Donna Theresa Ferolito sued L&L Inc., United Petroleum Transports Inc., and Ismael Villarreal in district court in Johnson County.

A hearing had been slated for Friday concerning when and where the tractor/petroleum tanker driven by Villarreal would be inspected and who would pay for the mechanic, but William Berenson, who is representing the Reutters, said things were worked out Thursday night.

"We agreed to do the inspection next Friday (July 28) in Tye, Texas, west of Abilene," Berenson said Friday. "They (defendants) will pay for the mechanic."

The agreement was worked out among Berenson of Fort Worth, Robert Tier of Houston, and Karl Coen of Dallas. Coen represents United Petroleum Transports. Tier represents Ferolito.

On Tuesday, June 13, Mary Lynne was critically injured and flown to a Fort Worth hospital after the accident which involved multiple vehicles.

Mary was driving the Ford Mustang that was hit by the gasoline tanker truck. She suffered multiple fractures and a broken neck. Every rib

in her body was broken, one lung was punctured, and there are concerns that she could still lose an arm that was pinned in the wreck.

Ismael Villarreal, 41, of Abilene was driving the truck owned by L&L Inc of Abilene that was towing the tanker owned by United Petroleum Transports Inc. The collisions occurred at 3:14 p.m. in the 1100 block of I-35W South.

According to the accident report by Burleson Police Cpl. S. Bolton, the truck and tanker were southbound in the outside lane of I-35W when Villarreal saw the Mustang in his lane. According to the corporal, the driver tried to avoid the Mustang but hit it, then hit the Toyota RAV4 driven by
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—Driver is cited for following too close

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Ferolito. Ferolito's RAV4 then struck Burleson resident Diane Bogart's silver Jeep Cherokee, which then struck a white Ford F350 pickup driven by Salvador Mosqueda Lopez, 23, of Alvarado.

The Mustang, RAV4, Jeep Cherokee, and pickup were stopped because the highway was closed due to an 18-wheeler that was hauling hay that caught fire at 1:30 p.m., just north of the FM 917 exit. Officers had already cleared that scene but firefighters were still spreading the hay and dousing the flames when

the truck and tanker hit the stopped vehicles two exits to the north of the first incident.

Mary Lynne Reutter and Ferolito were transported by air ambulance. John Reutter, Diane Bogart, and Bogart's 3-year-old granddaughter Macy Benson, were transported by ground ambulance.

Villarreal, Lopez, and Lopez' passenger Gregory Alan Parker did not report injuries.

According to the lawsuit, Cpl. Bolton said Villarreal "admitted that he had reached down to pick up a soft drink from his ice chest and was not watching the road as required by law."

Villarreal was cited for following too close.

The lawsuit alleges that Villarreal was negligent, careless, and reckless. L&L Inc., the owner of the vehicle Villarreal was driving, is cited for negligent entrustment and retention, according to the lawsuit, because "L&L Inc. knew or through the exercise of reasonable care should have known that Villarreal was a reckless and incompetent driver.

United Petroleum Transports is the owner of the oil tanker. The lawsuit also cites United Petroleum as negligent.

The victims' attorneys are requesting damages from all three defendants to cover medical expenses and any other related expenses.