

CARELESS TRUCKER CAUSES HORRIFIC CRASH

Inspirational community leader suffers massive injuries in crash

On the evening of April 6, 2000, Bishop Anthony L. Williams was driving east on Albemarle Road near Charlotte, North Carolina. He was not speeding and he was well within his proper lane on the road. The Bishop was on his way to a local church to serve as chief judge for a municipal election to be held that night. Bishop Williams was a strong and independent man of 53 years of age. He and his wife, Lavern, had been married for 24 years and had two children. The Bishop was the pastor of the Blessed Assurance Faith Center in Charlotte. He was also chaplain for the State Correctional Department, and worked with the Board of Elections for Mecklenburg County. He was an inspirational leader in his community, and worked diligently at his church's mission to build schools in Haiti. He also met with numerous dignitaries and heads of government in the Middle East, in Africa, and in Haiti, working to broker peace within volatile regions. Bishop Williams was a man that would always be there for people in need.



Bishop Anthony L. Williams

On this same evening, a tractor-trailer truck owned by Dye Trucking Company was heading west on the same road, carrying a load of steel boxes containing heavy industrial supplies under shipment by Century Contractors. The steel boxes were on castors and only secured to the truck by a chain around the base. As the two vehicles passed each other, one of the steel boxes, weighing approximately 2,000 pounds, broke loose from the truck and flew across the roadway, slamming into the driver's side of the Bishop's car. The incredible impact crushed the left side of Bishop Williams' car, and crushed the left side of his body. The car spun around and came to a stop at the side of the road. The Bishop was trapped inside the crushed car with life-threatening injuries that included a crushed left arm and chest, and a significant loss of blood.

An investigation of the accident revealed an astonishing level of gross negligence on the part of Century Contrac-

tors, Dye Trucking, and its driver. Century, as the shipper in this case, carelessly loaded the wheeled boxes onto the truck, failed to ensure that the boxes were secured properly, and failed to provide state- and federally-mandated documentation for the shipment. Further, Century failed to ensure that the carrier they selected for the shipment was competent and professional. Quite the opposite: Dye Trucking was almost insolvent at the time of the accident, and their driver had a history of traffic violations. The driver appeared to be unaware of, and clearly not in compliance with, the federal regulations governing interstate hauling. He maintained no log-books showing his hours of driving and rest, and told the police at the scene that he had driven 80 hours in the past seven days, a violation of the limits on driving time. He had no interstate trucking license as was required for a shipment of this kind. The trucking company had no documentation in its personnel files of the driver's driving test results, nor any documentation of annual physical examinations required for drivers. The trucking company was not in compliance with either state or federal highway regulations.

At the scene of the accident, paramedics noted that Bishop Williams suffered 90% amputation of his left arm, and deformity of his left chest. He was taken to the Carolinas Medical Center for intensive care where they treated the crushed arm, and found that he had also suffered multiple rib fractures, a punctured lung requiring a chest tube, and had lost about one liter of blood. The Bishop underwent complex surgical procedures in an effort to stabilize his substantial wounds and contain the massive contamination of the wounds. He was placed on a ventilator for several days during which numerous additional surgical procedures were performed. Every few days for the rest of April, the Bishop endured further surgeries, debridements of the wounds in efforts to combat infection, and reconstruction of his crushed left arm. Following extensive rehabilitation at the medical facilities, Bishop Williams was released to his home for ***(Continued on next page.)***

Confidential Settlement

GROSS NEGLIGENCE AGAINST CONTRACTING AND TRUCKING COMPANIES

(Continued from previous page.) further rehabilitative care by his loving wife and visiting nurses. He remained under constant antibiotic treatment as well.

Throughout May, into June and July, and well into the spring of 2001, the Bishop suffered further hospitalizations to treat infections, and endured other surgical procedures in an effort to rebuild his arm. The plates, screws, wires, and grafts that were applied in numerous efforts to save his left arm involved repetitive surgeries, persistent treatment for infections, and constant pain medication. The Bishop suffered considerable depression and frustration due to his inability to carry on his earlier active life as a community leader. He also suffered a substantial loss in earning capacity. His wife, Laverne, suffered a substantial loss as well. She faced far greater responsibility in caring for his medical and personal needs, and suffered the loss of their shared hopes and dreams.

“His family, his community, the state of North Carolina and this nation lost an active, vibrant, caring citizen.”

The couple filed an action against the contracting company and trucking company, seeking punitive damages for their gross negligence. Attorneys Chris Searcy and Darryl Lewis represented these wonderful people. Mr. Searcy and Mr. Lewis teamed with Charlotte, North Carolina attorneys Michael Bailey and Allen Bailey of the Bailey Law Firm, and William Sittar. Chris Searcy and Darryl Lewis, during the final day of the trial in Charlotte, North Carolina, were able to reach a settlement with all of the defendants. The amount of the settlement is confidential.

The settlement, however, could not cover the biggest loss yet to come. Shortly after the settlement, Bishop Williams passed away. His family, his community, the state of North Carolina and this nation lost an active, vibrant, caring citizen a man who reached out to others around the world in a very personal effort to improve their lives. The entire SDSBS legal team attended the funeral services for Bishop Williams. Chris Searcy moved the entire congregation with some very powerful words in memory of the Bishop, who was an inspiration to us all. His memory remains in our hearts and his family remains in our prayers. ■

EIGHT SDSBS ATTORNEYS NAMED FLORIDA SUPER LAWYERS



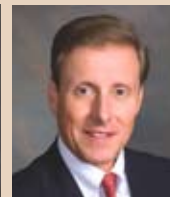
Chris Searcy



Earl Denney



Jack Scarola



Greg Barnhart



John Shipley



David Sales



Sean Domnick



Darryl Lewis

Chris Searcy, Earl Denney, Jack Scarola, Greg Barnhart, John Shipley, David Sales, Sean Domnick, and Darryl Lewis were named *Super Lawyers in Florida Super Lawyers 2006*, the annual consumers guide published by *Law and Politics Magazine*.

Chris Searcy was named to the list of Top 10 Super Lawyers in Florida, and both Searcy and Greg Barnhart made the guide's Top 100 list. The Super Lawyer selection process is a combination of balloting, blue-ribbon panel review, and independent research. Only 5% of the attorneys in Florida have been selected as Florida Super Lawyers. ■



TWO SDSBS ATTORNEYS IN TOP 1.8% OF FLORIDA LAWYERS



Chris Searcy



Greg Barnhart



Chris Searcy and Greg Barnhart were chosen for *Florida Trend's "Florida Legal Elite,"* a select group comprising the top 1.8% of lawyers practicing in Florida. ■