



COUNTY of GALVESTON
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**JURY SENTENCES WOMAN TO 20 YEARS FOR
INTOXICATION MANSLAUGHTER**

October 2, 2015

GALVESTON – Today a jury sentenced Darcie Louise Spillers, 45, to 20 years in the Institutional Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for the felony offense of Intoxication Manslaughter. Spillers was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Kayla Allen and Kacey Launius in the 405th District Court, with Judge Michelle Slaughter presiding. Winston Cochran represented the defendant.

During the two week jury trial, the State presented evidence that on August 28, 2013, Darcie Louise Spillers was the driver of a vehicle that was involved in a one car collision, resulting in the death of Brion Vaughn, her passenger. The State's evidence also showed that Spillers was intoxicated at the time she drove her vehicle, crashing it into a ditch in a San Leon neighborhood.

A witness testified that Spillers knocked on the front door of her residence and stated she needed help. The witness said Spillers appeared drunk, smelled of alcohol, and had a head wound that was bleeding. Spillers told the witness that she wrecked her truck and was in an accident. After calling 911, the witness and her husband took a flash light and tried to get Spillers to take them to the accident location because Spillers stated her friend was hurt. The witness explained that it became apparent that Spillers could not assist in finding the accident site, so the witness and her husband decided to return home. As they approached their home, the witness testified that EMS and police were arriving. Spillers, seeing the emergency lights, told the witness and her husband to turn off their flashlight and to not say anything to the police because she did not want to get into trouble.

Galveston County Sheriff Deputy Jacob Manuel, testified that he was dispatched to a residence in San Leon, after a 10:46 p.m. 911 call regarding an intoxicated person at a residence. Deputy Manuel stated he

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arrived, along with EMS, and spoke to Spillers, who he determined was intoxicated. Spillers told Deputy Manuel that she was a backseat passenger in a vehicle involved in an accident. When asked about the location of the accident, Spillers could not give any specific information. Deputy Manuel explained that when he and Spillers were about to leave to attempt to go find the accident site, the San Leon Fire Department, informed him of the accident location. Deputy Manuel and Spillers then went to the accident site, where Spillers' car was found, having crashed in a ditch. Deputy Manuel testified that Spillers again said she was in the back seat of the vehicle at the time of the accident. Deputy Manuel also testified that Spillers gave differing accounts of who the driver of the vehicle was. During Deputy Manuel's investigation of the accident and assessment of the vehicle, Spillers asked for her personal items (wallet, cell phone, identification) which Spillers said would be found in the center console.

Deputy Manuel testified that based on the position of the steering wheel and the position of the driver's seat, which were both adjusted to accommodate a driver of small stature consistent with Spillers' five feet and three inches height, along with the Spillers' personal items being found at the front of the vehicle, he determined that Spillers' was the driver. Deputy Manuel went on to explain that in addition to Spillers' height being a factor, he also found that the head injury Spillers sustained was consistent with the windshield damage on the driver's side, which contained traces of blood and hair. Deputy Manuel also testified to the jury that he found Spillers' statement that she was a backseat passenger to be inconsistent with the state of the vehicle and the backseats being in a folded position, preventing someone from sitting in the backseat. After determining that Spillers was the driver and was intoxicated, Deputy Manuel testified that he requested Spillers give a sample of her blood to be tested for alcohol. Spillers consented to the blood draw and the State presented evidence that analysis of the blood sample showed that on the night of August 28, 2013, Spillers' blood alcohol level was 0.240 mg, three times the legal limit. Deputy Manuel explained to the jury that based on accident reconstruction and the location of the vehicle when found, Spillers ran a stop sign before running into a ditch.

An EMS worker testified that once at the scene, the victim was evaluated and found to have no pulse nor was he breathing and the upper portion of his body was purplish in color. EMS performed CPR, getting a weak

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pulse, and transferred the victim to the hospital. The Medical Examiner testified that the hospital placed the victim on life support, because he was an organ donor, and officially pronounced deceased a few days later, when organ recipients were identified. The Autopsy Records presented by the State, along with testimony of the Medical Examiner, showed the victim suffered two spinal fractures.

Assistant District Attorney Kacey Launius, in closing, told the jury that the victim, Brion Vaughn was the type of guy who helped others even when they had nothing to give in return and that even in the end he continued to do what he had always done, help others.

After two weeks of trial, the jury took less than an hour to find Spillers guilty of Intoxication Manslaughter. The jury also found the vehicle driven by Spillers to be a deadly weapon. The Defendant faced a sentencing range of 2 to 20 years in the Institutional Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

During punishment, the State presented evidence of Spillers' prior criminal history, which included a felony conviction for possession of cocaine in Harris County in 2000; a 2004 conviction for assault causing bodily injury with a family violence enhancement in Galveston County; a 2009 conviction for failure to ID in Galveston County; and a 2010 conviction for reckless driving in Galveston County. The State also presented evidence showing that on July 5, 2013 Spillers' was cited for public intoxication after she was involved in a car crash in Dickinson, Texas, when she drove her vehicle into a ditch. Evidence showed that when officers arrived Spillers, who had already exited the vehicle, claimed that she was not the driver and due to no other witnesses on the scene to identify her as the driver, Spillers was charged with public intoxication. The State presented evidence and argued that Spillers intoxicated and was the only person who could have driven the vehicle because vehicle belonged to her, she gave differing statements about who was driving the vehicle when it crashed, and there was no one else on scene with her.

The State also presented to the jury evidence that, while on bond for the present case, on February 15, 2015 Spillers was arrested for driving while license invalid. Evidence showed that the vehicle Spillers was driving was not equipped with an interlock system, a condition of her bond. The State went on to show that on

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September 2, 2015, less than a month before the start of trial, Spillers was arrested in Jefferson County for driving while intoxicated and that her alcohol level was found to be twice the legal limit.

At the close of punishment, the jury returned a sentencing verdict of 20 years in the Institutional Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Because of the deadly weapon finding, Spillers will be required to serve at least half of her sentence before being eligible for parole.

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