

Vehicular homicide trial starts

Man charged with death of Samaritan

By DAVID CULLIER
The Columbian

A black leather jacket is one piece of evidence Richard G. Jenkins hopes will help convince a jury he isn't guilty of vehicular homicide.

The trial of Jenkins, 49, 7006 N.E. 131st Ave., began Tuesday in Clark County Superior Court and is expected to continue until Friday.

He is charged with driving while intoxicated and killing a Milwaukie, Ore., man who was helping two teen-agers push a disabled truck along Northeast Fourth Plain Road in Orchards Jan. 11.

Jenkins, who had a 0.20 blood-alcohol level that night, was impaired by his condition when he rear-ended the truck in the 13200 block of Fourth Plain Road, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Tom Duffy said.

But, Defense Attorney Steven Thayer said, the disabled truck didn't have its lights on and the two men pushing the truck wore dark clothing, including a black jacket. Therefore, he said, anyone, drunk or not, would not have seen the truck in time to stop.

Glen A. Savage Jr., 25, was killed in the 8:30 p.m. accident.

Savage, who drove buses for Laidlaw Transit Inc., was waiting to drive a group home once they finished celebrating at a Fourth Plain tavern. While he was waiting, he noticed two teen-agers trying to push a 1978 Datsun pickup about a block from one parking lot to another lot.

"He saw we were having trouble so he came over to help," said Nikolai Lukenovich, 18, of 10200 S.E. 10th St. Lukenovich was pushing the truck and his friend, Joshua L. Bolin, 16, was steering.

Lukenovich testified that they stopped the truck to look for traffic before pushing it onto Fourth Plain Road. He said they didn't see any cars coming so they started pushing again.

About five seconds later, a car driven by Jenkins hit the left rear side of the truck, killing Savage.

Lukenovich said Tuesday he thought the pickup's lights were on before they started pushing. But a few weeks ago Lukenovich told attorneys that he wasn't sure, defense attorney Thayer said.

Lukenovich wore his black leather jacket on the witness stand. Both he and Savage wore dark clothing, he said.

"Our theory is that (Jenkins) is guilty of driving while intoxicated," Thayer said. "But the superseding cause was that the truck was pushed onto the road without its lights on.

"This would have happened to anyone whether they had been drinking or not."

Thayer said Jenkins had gone with a friend after work to a tavern where they drank a couple beers. They then went home to have a couple more beers, then went to another tavern for a few more beers, he said.

Yet, Jenkins did see the truck before the collision and swerved. His speed at impact, after applying his brakes, was estimated at 15 mph, Thayer said.

But Jenkins had time to avoid the truck, prosecutor Duffy said. It wasn't raining at the time of the accident and there would have been enough light from the nearby storefronts, he said.