

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Notice of Conviction
Woodstock Man Found Guilty of all Charges in November 2020 Fatal Traffic Crash
State vs. Patrick Emerson Thomas

June 21, 2024 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on June 20, a Cherokee County jury found Patrick Emerson Thomas, 69, of Woodstock, guilty of homicide by vehicle in the first degree (reckless driving), homicide by vehicle in the first degree (DUI less safe, drugs), reckless driving, and driving under the influence (less safe, drugs). Sentencing was set for June 27.

The defendant was charged with these crimes after a Cherokee Sheriff's Office investigation of a fatal crash in the Eagle Watch subdivision in the Towne Lake area of Woodstock.

CSO deputies determined that shortly after 4 p.m. on November 17, 2020, Thomas drove his black 2018 Ford Mustang through the neighborhood at speeds exceeding the posted speed limit and crashed into Justiniano "Papi" Pirir-Pirir, 59, killing him on impact. Pirir-Pirir was part of a landscape crew working at a home on Eagle Watch Drive.

The crash occurred on the right side of the road behind a large Isuzu landscape truck, which was parked legally and had its hazard lights flashing. Pirir-Pirir was behind the truck attempting to start a leaf blower. After striking Pirir-Pirir, the Mustang crashed into the truck, pushing it forward and causing the car's airbags to deploy.

Thomas told law enforcement that he was unable to see the truck because the sun was in his eyes. However, evidence showed that the sun was not a factor for other drivers and that Thomas was accelerating at the time he struck and killed the victim. The Mustang was traveling at least 13 mph over the posted speed limit at the time of impact.

Prior to the crash, Thomas was seen speeding through the neighborhood and tailgating another driver. Multiple people witnessed the crash, and a home surveillance camera captured the entire incident.

Thomas was not injured but showed signs of impairment. He admitted to taking a prescription medication, which is known to cause sleepiness and blurred vision. Cherokee Sheriff's Office deputies conducted field sobriety tests on scene, and blood drawn hours after the crash showed the medication was still in his system.

During the four-day trial, 10 witnesses testified for the State, including law enforcement officers, drug recognition and forensics experts, and eyewitnesses. The State also presented more than 100 exhibits, including scene photos and the home surveillance video footage showing the crash. Senior Judge Walter J. Matthews presided over the trial.

The jury deliberated for approximately three and a half hours before finding the defendant guilty of all counts.

Pirir-Pirir lived in Acworth at the time of his death. He is survived by a wife, children, and grandchildren in Guatemala.

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Pete Lamb, with the assistance of Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Geoffrey Fogus, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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