

# JURY SELECTION BEGINS IN FATAL HIT-AND-RUN

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Tragic crash or crime?

A jury will soon decide. Jury selection began Tuesday in the case of Adam Gaillard, the 35-year-old Palm Beach Shores man who ran over two women on the Blue Heron Bridge then drove away. Gaillard faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of the one charge of leaving the scene of an accident involving a fatality.

The two women, friends Linda Taylor and Cynthia Andrews, died at the scene of the predawn tragedy in September 2006.

Gaillard told an investigator nearly 13 hours later that he was unaware he struck the women, that he had been out most of the night and was distraught over problems with his children's mother. He said he had thrown down a cellphone and inadvertently swerved his GMC Suburban off the road and onto the sidewalk.

Taylor and Andrews were exercising together, walking up the bridge about 6 a.m.

Taylor, 56, was left crumpled in the roadway, a piece of her blinking red safety light found underneath her body.

Andrews, 49, was catapulted over the bridge's railway, falling five stories to the beach below.

Gaillard left the scene driving on rims, his passenger-side tires flat after the impact, the front-end of the Suburban damaged as well. He stopped to inspect the truck at the bottom of the bridge, saw "no blood, no body, no nothing" then drove away, he told an investigator, because his license was suspended.

"I just took my eyes off the road and I threw the phone down, and I hit the steering wheel as I did it, which is when I went over," Gaillard said. "I didn't see anybody. My head was down. And if I did, I would've stopped. I swear on Jesus."

Shortly after the accident, during the hunt for the driver, a deputy found the Suburban nearby, the damaged area shoved next to bushes concealing it.

It is what Gaillard was thinking at the time that is the key issue in the courtroom.

Prosecutor Ellen Roberts seeks to prove that he knew or should have known that he had struck the women, that common sense says so.

Defense attorneys for Gaillard, David Roth assisted by Richard Tendler, are expected to present a video reconstruction of the accident. A professional engineer called by them will probably testify about the forces of the impact and their effect on Gaillard's awareness of things.

The lawyers and Circuit Judge Sandra McSorley on Tuesday questioned potential jurors, many of whom had seen news accounts of the accident, about pre-trial publicity. "I remember thinking that person was a horrible person to leave them. It made it sound like an open-and-shut case," said one.

Jury selection continues this morning. The trial is expected to last through the week.

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**Illustration:** PHOTO (3 C)

1. DAMON HIGGINS/Staff Photographer

Adam Gaillard is escorted into Palm Beach County Circuit Court by deputies on Tuesday morning. Jury selection began in his trial.

2. Linda Taylor (mug)

3. Cynthia Andrews (mug)