

# MISTRIAL SPURS DEAL IN BRIDGE DEATHS

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Jurors struggled Monday to reach a verdict **in** the case of a man who crashed on the Blue Heron **bridge** and then fled the scene with two dead women **in** his wake.

The struggle resulted **in** a **mistrial**. But the end came moments later.

Adam Gaillard admitted to the crime **in** exchange for a **deal**: five years **in** prison followed by 10 years of probation, a permanent revocation of his driver license and a felony (leaving the scene of an accident involving **death**) forever on his record.

He had faced up to 15 years **in** prison for the September 2006 crash that left Linda Taylor dead, crumpled **in** the roadway, and Cynthia Andrews dead after she fell from the soaring span, landing 50 feet below.

"Are you pleading guilty because you are guilty?" Circuit Judge Sandra McSorley asked the defendant.

"Yes, your honor, I am," Gaillard answered.

It appeared to be a wise move on the part of Gaillard's defense not to gamble at trial again.

Jurors, said one, had been one vote from a conviction.

Juror MaryAnn Eberle of Wellington said she felt a tremendous sense of frustration that the panel did not reach a verdict. She said five of the six jurors, including her, were voting to convict Gaillard.

The evidence was there that he more than likely saw the women walking before the crash, she said.

"It was as clear as it could be without being sitting next to that person **in** that car," Eberle said. "The simulation the defense had ... clearly showed the people **in** the path."

After entering his guilty plea, Gaillard asked to be able to address Andrews' and Taylor's families and friends **in** the courtroom gallery.

The 35-year-old Palm Beach Shores man looked directly at them, crying as he apologized over and over.

"I don't know if saying it right now is going to matter, but I promise you that I did not know that I hit anybody on that **bridge** that night, and if I did, I would have stopped, called 911, and they would have been laying **in** arms until help arrived," Gaillard said.

The burden that Assistant State Attorney Ellen Roberts had tried to prove over the week of trial was that Gaillard knew or should have known that he had hit the women, both of West Palm Beach.

All along he has maintained that he was distraught over a girlfriend at the time of the pre-dawn crash and distracted by a phone call.

Gaillard said that while sitting **in** his trial and listening to witnesses, he realized that a normal person "probably should have known."

"If I was on the outside looking **in**, I would feel the same way," he said.

Andrews' brother Eddie and sister Pamela sat looking at Gaillard. Her lifelong friend Macqua "Yvette" Woodside was by their side, as she has been throughout the weeklong trial. They were a circumspect group - Pamela once saying she didn't know what to believe because she wasn't there - careful to listen to the evidence before opining.

Eddie Andrews remained thoughtful after Gaillard spoke. "I'm just saying you never know," he said.

"People can put on an act and get out of stuff. You never know."

Defense attorneys for Gaillard, David Roth and Richard Tendler, described him as the "best client" an attorney can have: respectful, thoughtful, undemanding.

Roth depicted Gaillard at trial as a caring, compassionate man, one who helped rescue swimmers while working on the beaches of Singer Island.

Roth said the decision to plead guilty came about on the spot after the **mistrial**. Gaillard wanted to resolve the case, Roth said, because emotionally he could not go through a trial again.

"Nor did he want the families of the victims to do so," Roth said.

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**Illustration:** PHOTO (C & B&W)

DAMON HIGGINS/Staff Photographer

1. (C) A teary Adam Gaillard exits the courtroom Monday to begin his sentence **in** the 2006 **deaths** of two women whom he hit on the Blue Heron **bridge in** Riviera Beach.

2. (B&W) Rhonda George, a cousin of Cynthia Andrews and friend of Linda Taylor's family, cries after driver Adam Gaillard's trial ended Monday.