

Trial process rolls on

Advocacy group attends hearing for man charged with deaths of four motorcyclists

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For the Chronicle

The Sumter County man charged with four counts of vehicular homicide and DUI after a fatal collision with two motorcycles carrying four people — ultimately killing them all, including a Beverly Hills man and Hernando woman — was granted a continuance in his case Wednesday in Bushnell.

Criminal Court Judge William Hallman scheduled the second pretrial hearing for Paul A. Sermons for 9 a.m. Jan. 19, in his courtroom at the Sumter County judicial complex. Sermons was arraigned in July.

The 45-year-old Bushnell man is charged with the deaths of John Holmes, 55, Beverly Hills, and his passenger Patricia Beihayn, 52, Hernando, and William Barker, 54, Stuart, and his passenger Patrice Poole, 55, Mount Dora.

Because alcohol was involved and Sermon's driver's license was suspended, leaders of the motorcyclist advocacy group ABATE of Florida encouraged members to attend Wednesday's hearing. Approximately 50 members were among spectators in the courtroom.

Sermons appeared briefly in a red prison jumpsuit worn by inmates charged with homicide and looked on as assigned defense attorney Kevin Beck arranged the continuance with Hallman.

According to a Florida Highway Patrol report, the accident occurred when Sermons, traveling west on County Road 476 around 7 p.m., allegedly pulled into the motorcycles' path in the eastbound lane.

The report states Sermons attempted to pass a slower-moving pickup in his 1991 GMC truck and collided with the motorcyclists near the intersection of C.R. 476 and C.R. 629.

Sermon's truck collided



MATTHEW BECK/Chronicle

ABOVE: A motorcyclist drives past the Sumter County Judicial Building early Wednesday morning. Leaders of the motorcyclist advocacy group ABATE of Florida encouraged members to attend the hearing of the man charged with the deaths of four motorcyclists. ABATE is a nonprofit group of motorcycle enthusiasts that promotes motorcycle safety, training and political awareness. The group also lobbies and educates the general public to promote motorcycling in a safe image. **LEFT:** Bruce Staley's reflection is seen in a motorcycle mirror as he and others wait for court proceedings to begin Wednesday.

with the motorcycles, ejecting both drivers and both passengers. A female passenger from one motorcycle was thrown into the windshield of the truck Sermons was trying to pass,

the report states.

Sumter County Fire Rescue pronounced three of the motorcyclists dead at the scene. The fourth was transported to an area hospital, where she was pro-

nounced dead.

Sermons is charged with four counts of driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs/manslaughter, four counts of vehicular homicide and driving while

license is suspended.

Sermons was arrested following an investigation of the accident and placed in the Sumter County Detention Center with bond set at \$225,000.