

Man gets life in death of four bikers

Posted Jul 15, 2011 by  [Larry Clifton](#)

An Oxford, Florida man convicted of four counts of manslaughter in the death of four bikers killed last year was sentenced to life in prison.

A jury in Bushnell, Florida sentenced [Paul Sermons](#), 46, to life in prison last week for killing four motorcyclists in a collision that occurred March 13, 2010, while he was attempting to pass a slower-moving pickup truck on a rural county highway in Sumter County.

Sermons received four concurrent life sentences Wednesday, July 6, when he appeared for sentencing before Circuit Court Judge William Hallman III at the Sumter County judicial complex. Sermons, also charged with driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, was [convicted](#) by the jury in June.

Sermons was traveling west on County Road 476 in the mostly rural central Florida county driving a 1991 GMC pickup when he attempted to pass a 2003 truck being driven by Melissa Pike, then 27, of Floral City, Florida.

[Sermons'](#) vehicle struck two oncoming motorcycles carrying four motorcyclists, killing everyone on the bikes.

All four riders were ejected from the bikes and one, a female passenger, crashed into the windshield of the truck that Sermons attempted to pass.

Three of the [bikers](#) died at the scene and the fourth, a woman, was flown to a local hospital where she died of her injuries a short time later.

[Killed](#) in the accident on a 2003 Harley-Davidson were its operator, John Holmes, 55, of Beverly Hills, and his passenger, Patricia Biehayn, 52, of Hernando County. Aboard the other bike, a 2005 Harley-Davidson, was the driver, William Barker, 54, of Stuart, and his passenger, Patricia Poole, 55, of Mount Dora.

Sermons was arrested following an investigation of the accident and placed in the Sumter County Detention Center with bond set at \$225,000. Sumter [court records](#) state that prior to the March collision Sermons' driving record includes a handful of minor traffic infractions since December 1999 including four citations for speeding. In each case, the fine was paid.

The driver and a passenger in the slower moving truck that Sermons attempted to pass both received minor injuries in the accident according to a Florida Highway Patrol accident [report](#) at the time.

Because alcohol was involved and Sermon's driver's license was suspended at the time of the accident, leaders of the motorcyclist advocacy group ABATE of Florida encouraged its members to attend all court hearings, the trial and sentencing to "promote awareness of motorcycles," according to "Doc" Reichenbach, the club's president.

Following the sentencing, state prosecutor William [Catto said](#) he believes the sentence was justified.



Sumter County
Detention Center

Paul Sermons, Oxford, Florida was sentenced to life in prison for killing four motorcyclists in Sumter County Florida.

"I feel it was a fair sentence under the circumstances," he said. "It's a tragedy but it's fair."