

Pond Crash Driver In Previous Fatal Wreck

Doctors Say Diabetes Disoriented Man

Reported By Nancy Amons

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- The driver of an SUV who died when his SUV landed in a Bellevue pond was the former MTA bus driver who killed two teenagers in a 1998 wreck.

It appears the same medical condition that caused that wreck 11 years ago proved fatal Monday for Jimmy Simmons.

Simmons' family said he was on his way to the doctor to get his blood sugar checked Monday when he crashed into the pond. They think his diabetes made him disoriented.

Just moments earlier, a motorist had called 911 to say Simmons almost took out two gas pumps and two people at a Dailey's market on Charlotte Pike.

"He's all over the place," said a 911 caller.

The caller, still on the phone, was following Simmons on Old Hickory Boulevard when Simmons hit the curb and went airborne.

"Uh-oh. Uh-oh. He crashed," said the 911 caller. "He's in the lake. Doggone-it ... He's in the lake. He went in. He went in."

Rescuers tried to reach him, but the water was too cold.

In 1998, Simmons was in another fatal crash: He was driving an MTA bus that ran two red lights on Broadway. Thirteen were injured, and two teenagers died inside a Volkswagen that was crushed by the bus.

The two were just about to graduate from the auto diesel college.

David Raybin was Simmons' attorney. He blamed the wreck on Simmons' low blood sugar.

"It was a tragic case," Raybin said. "Jimmy was a war hero. He'd gotten a medal saving people's lives in Vietnam, and the problem was his (condition) was an unregulated diabetic condition."

Simmons pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter. He got 90 days in jail and his license back in six months.

Simmons' daughter said Tuesday that her father had recently been having problems getting his diabetes under control.

"In one sense, it's ironic that that's the way he lost his life, given the criminal case that it was," said Raybin. "It's horrible and sad. He was a wonderful man, had so many friends and was really liked, but his diabetic situation got the better of him."

The state doesn't prohibit diabetics from driving. Tennessee does have a law that says the commissioner of safety can take away a person's license if they're not mentally or physically fit to drive.

But in Raybin's opinion, that law is just not enforced.

Simmons' daughter said funeral arrangements have not yet been made.