

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



## DRIVER IN FATAL CRASH SET TO TURN HIMSELF IN

Former Mission Viejo man expected to turn himself in Tuesday to face murder charge for wrong-way crash that killed RSM mother of three last May.

A man with a history of alcohol-related arrests is expected to turn himself in today to face a murder charge in connection with a wrong-way crash that claimed the life of a mother of three more than eight months ago.

William Joseph Carroll, 47, formerly of Mission Viejo, had been a free man, living in his native New York, after recovering from serious injuries following the May 7 crash that killed Ana Martinez, 36, of Rancho Santa Margarita. Carroll faces 15 years to life in state prison if convicted.

A warrant for Carroll's arrest was issued Jan. 16 for him to face charges of second-degree murder. Since then, police in New York, working with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, have been trying to locate Carroll and arrest him.



*Pedro Pleitez, 32, sits with his family, from left, Pedro Jr., 7, Victoria, 2 and Carmen, 15, in their Rancho Santa Margarita condo. Pleitez's common law wife Ana Martinez was killed by a drunk driver May 7, 2013, five days before Mother's Day.*

Monday, a sheriff's spokesman said Carroll's attorney has informed law enforcement officials that Carroll will be turning himself in to police in Albany, N.Y. He is expected to be extradited to Orange County.

Relatives of Martinez, as well as an acquaintance of Carroll interviewed by the Register, have questioned why it has taken more than eight months for charges to be filed against Carroll, whom sheriff's investigators had suspected of drinking before the violent, late-night collision.

Carroll was driving his red Ford 250 truck the wrong direction on Santa Margarita Parkway in Mission Viejo when he slammed into a white Sienna minivan driven by Martinez, according to sheriff's investigators.

Martinez was driving to pick up her father after he'd finished his shift at a restaurant in Foothill Ranch.

The District Attorney's Office has had the Carroll case for about three weeks.

Lt. Jeff Hallock, a spokesman for the Orange County Sheriff's Department, said every DUI investigation is different and the time it takes for a case to be turned over to the district attorney for possible criminal charges can vary.

In Carroll's case, he was injured in the crash and hospitalized and, as a result, was not immediately arrested or booked, Hallock said.



*Ana Martinez, 36, of Rancho Santa Margarita was on her way to pick up her father when her white minivan was hit by a wrong-way driver on Santa Margarita Parkway in Mission Viejo, May 7, 2013. Martinez died instantly.*

Carroll also was not considered a flight risk and sheriff's investigators have tracked his whereabouts, Hallock said.

Toxicology reports also took longer than expected, Hallock said. Test results typically are known within four months.

Details of the pending criminal complaint were not available Monday.

## **SUICIDE MISSION?**

Several people who know Carroll said they've heard a voice message he allegedly left several hours before the crash, telling a former girlfriend he was drunk and weaving all over the road and that he was "going to die tonight."

An attorney working for Martinez's survivors says Carroll was trying to kill himself in the crash.

"This tragic and unnecessary accident has left a dark, empty hole from the loss of a wife, mother and daughter," said Keith Bremer, a Newport Beach attorney who is representing Martinez's common-law husband, Pedro Pleitez, and her children, Carmen, 15, Pedro Jr., 7, and Victoria, 2 at the time of the accident.

A former acquaintance of Carroll, Paula Sharp, 77, of Mission Viejo, said she has heard the voice mail. She said she knew Carroll because they both frequented Peppino's restaurant in Mission Viejo. She said he'd seemed increasingly depressed over a recent romantic breakup.

She said Carroll had been sharing a house with several roommates and working odd jobs, including woodworking.

Court records show that before the fatal crash, Carroll had been arrested at least three times following alcohol-related incidents.

Carroll pleaded guilty in 2008 to driving in Orange County with a blood-alcohol level over the legal limit. At the time, he initialed a form that included the following statement:



*William Carroll of Mission Viejo.*



*Ana Martinez, 36, of Rancho Santa Margarita was killed by a drunk driver May 7, 2013.*

“If I continue to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or both, and as a result of that driving someone is killed, I can be charged with murder.”

That acknowledgment became the “implied malice” that makes it possible for prosecutors to charge Carroll with second-degree murder rather than the less-serious charge of vehicular manslaughter.

Tyler Offenhauser, an associate of Bremer’s, said their law firm is working pro bono with Pleitez so he can adopt Martinez’s oldest daughter, Carmen. The younger siblings are the biological children of Martinez and Pleitez.

Pleitez has helped raise Carmen since she was a little girl.

“He’s been the only father figure she’s ever had,” Offenhauser said.

Offenhauser also said a wrongful-death lawsuit has been filed on behalf of the Martinez family against Carroll.

GREG HARDESTY / STAFF WRITER

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