

Casino Bus Weaving Before Bronx Crash, Witnesses Testify

Written by Administrator
Friday, 05 October 2012 03:45 -

Just over an hour before his tour bus crashed, Ophadell Williams was swerving, straddling lanes, and speeding up and slowing down, another driver testified on Thursday.



Robert Stolarik for The New York Times

Robert and Sonia Varley testified Thursday that they saw a casino bus being driven erratically before it crashed, killing 15. Its driver is on trial for manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide.

“I was afraid to be near him,” the driver, Robert Varley, told the jury during the third day of Mr. Williams’s [trial](#) in State Supreme Court in the Bronx. Mr. Varley said he grew alarmed and honked at the bus.

But Mr. Williams’s lawyer, Patrick L. Bruno, sought to suggest in his cross-examination that Mr. Williams had changed speeds along a stretch of Interstate 95 in Connecticut as he passed construction zones and potential speed traps. “So you didn’t work that into your equation?” Mr. Bruno asked Mr. Varley, trying to shake his testimony.

Mr. Williams, 41, is being tried on charges of manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide as a result of a [crash](#) on March 12, 2011, on I-95 in the Bronx. The crash killed 15 passengers and sheared the top off a World Wide Travel bus returning from the Mohegan Sun casino in Uncasville, Conn.

Mr. Varley, a field-service engineer from Old Saybrook, Conn., and his wife, Sonia, both testified that they had just started driving south on I-95 for a vacation in South Carolina when they noticed the brightly colored bus weaving alongside them around 4:15 a.m.

Casino Bus Weaving Before Bronx Crash, Witnesses Testify

Written by Administrator

Friday, 05 October 2012 03:45 -

Ms. Varley recalled that she initially believed that it was a “party bus” and that the driver might have been intoxicated. “It was swerving — it wasn’t staying in its lane,” she told the jury. The National Transportation [Safety Board concluded](#) that Mr. Williams was sleep-deprived and fatigued, but the prosecution has said that he was not intoxicated or on drugs.

Ms. Varley said she looked up several times and saw a black man driving the bus, though she acknowledged in court that she would not be able to pick out the man on the street and had not noted the bus’s number.

Mr. Bruno raised questions about Ms. Varley’s description of the driver by suggesting that she had not testified until now that she had seen a black man driving the bus. She denied that, and Marc Eida, an assistant district attorney, responded by pulling out a law enforcement interview in which Ms. Varley stated the race and sex of the bus driver.

In his testimony, Mr. Varley said that he was using his cruise control, at speeds ranging from 63 to 73 miles per hour, and that the bus would periodically pass him, only to slow down, and that he would then pass it. “I maintained constant speed,” Mr. Varley said. “His speed was erratic.”

Finally, after several more encounters, Mr. Varley said, he became so concerned that he accelerated, to leave the bus behind, near the New York State line.

Ms. Varley said that the next time they saw the bus was on television news in South Carolina, and that afterward she called the New York City police to report what she and her husband had seen.

Ms. Varley flatly rejected Mr. Bruno’s suggestion that the bus might have been slowing down for construction zones. “That I recall vividly, because we weren’t slowing down,” she said. “There was no reason for us to get off the cruise control.”

Read more <http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNHHzV3cA2FhrAMxEW8RTkqloQWejg&url=http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/05/nyregion/casino-bus-w>

Casino Bus Weaving Before Bronx Crash, Witnesses Testify

Written by Administrator
Friday, 05 October 2012 03:45 -

[eaving-before-bronx-crash-witnesses-testify.html](#)