

Passenger in hit-and-run accident gets 30 days in jail

Pieri urged the driver to leave scene after hitting students crossing the street

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John "Jack" Pieri, the passenger who urged the driver in a hit-and-run accident to drive away after injuring two college students, was sentenced Wednesday to 30 days in jail.

One of the two injured victims said she got a life sentence.

Pieri told Amherst Town Court Judge Geoffrey K. Klein that he was "deeply sorry" and apologized for "my lack of actions involving this unfortunate car accident."

"I wish them all the best in the future," Pieri said.

But when Amy Stewart, who was severely injured in the 2009 accident on Main Street, had a chance to address the court, she was not impressed with the apology.

"I have been given a life sentence of recovery," said the 25-year-old woman whose numerous injuries included a traumatic brain injury and who spent more than two months in the hospital. "I feel my punishment is much worse.

"These are two people who had no care for anyone but themselves," Stewart continued, referring to Pieri and the driver, Andrea L. Glinski.

"I hope he takes his 30 days to think long and hard about what he's done to my life and Rachel's life."

The other woman who was injured, Rachel Baird, is doing well and teaching in the Syracuse area, according to Stewart.

Pieri, 38, of the Town of Tonawanda, pleaded guilty in July to a misdemeanor charge of criminal solicitation. Klein imposed the sentence he had said he would order. Pieri also faces three years of strict probation.

Pieri is the first person in state history to serve jail time as a car passenger in a hit-and-run accident.

Klein mentioned numerous letters to the court addressing Pieri's character — or lack of it.

"At times, I wonder if I was wrong in making the commitment," the judge said. But he reiterated that Pieri's lack of a criminal record figured prominently in his decision.

Pieri was a passenger in a sport utility vehicle driven by Glinski that hit the two young women the morning of March 7, 2009, on Main Street in Amherst, near Daemen College.

Several days after the accident, Amherst police learned that a Hamburg collision shop had placed an order for parts to repair Glinski's vehicle.

Glinski, 33, of the Town of Tonawanda, is serving a one- to three-year prison sentence after pleading guilty in August 2009 to felony charges of leaving the scene.

Pieri was arrested more than seven months after the accident. Last November, he was convicted following a bench trial before Amherst Town Justice Mark G. Farrell and sentenced to a full year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

But that verdict was appealed and overturned by an Erie County judge on a technicality: Farrell failed to get Pieri to put in writing his waiver of a jury trial, as required by state law.

Erie County Judge Thomas P. Franczyk ordered a new trial and directed the case be handled by Amherst's other town justice, Klein.

Pieri was handcuffed, led out of the courtroom by Amherst police officers and taken to a patrol car for the trip to jail.

Afterward, Stewart dismissed the comments he made in court.

"It didn't really mean anything to me because up until this point, he's never said anything to me," she said. "I don't really buy what you're saying — that you're sorry."

Pieri will be out of jail in 30 days, and Glinski could soon follow, Stewart noted.

Glinski was sent to the Beacon Correctional Facility in Dutchess County after her sentencing in November 2009. Her earliest possible release date is Oct. 29, according to state Department of Correctional Services records.

"Scary thought, that these two criminals will be on the streets," Stewart said. "It's very upsetting to think about."