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Street racer apologizes

20-year-old pleads guilty in hero trucker's death on Hwy. 400 last June, tells family he's a 'murderer'

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BARRIE—It was a deadly game of cat and mouse. And David Virgoe — an experienced and innocent truck driver — paid with his life.



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Gertrude Virgoe holds an urn containing the ashes of her son, David, outside the courthouse in Barrie on April 14, 2008.

Virgoe, 48, a husband, father and grandfather, wasn't playing the game. In fact, his quick thinking may have saved many lives. Witnesses praised him for avoiding other vehicles after he was cut off, steering his truck into an embankment instead.

"He was my hero," Virgoe's daughter, 29, said, weeping as she read a victim impact statement yesterday.

In a Barrie courtroom, one of three Toronto men charged in the June 18, 2007, incident pleaded guilty to criminal negligence by way of street racing causing death, driving without insurance and having forged insurance documents.

"I am ashamed and embarrassed. I call myself a murderer, a sinner," Nauman Nusrat, 20, told Justice Gregory Regis after pleading guilty.

Co-accused Prabhjit Multani and Ravi Badwhar are awaiting trial.

Nusrat apologized to Virgoe's wife, Debbie, and her family, who were in the courtroom.

"I attempted to rescue him. I climbed on the truck," he said. Admitting his actions were "stupid," Nusrat said he made a regretful mistake and begged for forgiveness. He vowed never to drive again.

In her victim impact statement, Debbie Virgoe told court her husband was her best friend. He was kind, always wanting to help others.

"David has been ripped from me. He was the man I was supposed to grow old with," she said. "I feel beaten, lost and unsure of myself."

She asked the judge to send a message with his sentence, to deter others from street racing. "David paid with his life and I will pay for the rest of my life," she said. "... This was no accident. It was a reckless and senseless act."

According to an agreed statement of facts, Nusrat was one of three drivers taking 12 friends to Wasaga Beach via Highway 400. Witnesses speculated the trio of cars was driving as fast at 180 km/h as they weaved through traffic.

Just south of Highway 89, Nusrat struck a jeep and lost control. One of the other vehicles in the race cut in front of Virgoe's truck. The truck struck a guard rail, spun clockwise and landed on its roof in the ditch.

Virgoe was killed instantly.

Outside court, Virgoe's mother, Gert, wept, telling reporters she is pained by the loss of her eldest son. Clutching a small urn with his ashes, she said, "I brought it because I wanted David to have his day in court."

Nusrat – who has been in jail since the collision – will be sentenced May 15. The crown asked that he spend another two years in jail. Nusrat's lawyer asked that he be released and kept under strict house arrest for two years followed by three years of probation. Both parties agreed Nusrat should be prohibited from ever driving again.