

Woman charged in fatal boat crash

Police: Barbara Hummer lied to protect John Englert

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POSTED: November 16, 2009

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Barbara Hummer



RENOVO - One day after charges were brought against John E. Englert II for his alleged role in a boating accident that left a 12-year-old girl dead, authorities caught up with the second person charged in connection with the crash.

Barbara Jean Hummer, 41, who said she is living with a friend at 210 First Street in Lock Haven, was formally charged Saturday night on five separate counts, including criminal conspiracy, obstructing administration of law or other government function and false reports to law enforcement.

Authorities allege Hummer lied about being the operator of the boat that collided with another driven by George "Bart" Garlick the evening of July 10 on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

The boat was actually operated by Englert, 51, of 335 N. Water St., Mill Hall, who was arraigned Friday on 37 criminal offenses, ranging from homicide by watercraft while driving under the influence and other first-degree felonies to various summary offenses under Pennsylvania's boating laws.

A passenger in Garlick's boat, 12-year-old Valerie T. Heidt, a Bellefonte Middle School student from Hublersburg, was killed instantly in the crash. At least six others were injured.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Thomas Nunamacher, waterway conservation officer with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Hummer initially said she was operating Englert's boat, but later provided a written statement saying she had lied because she "didn't want anything to happen to John."

Police allege that, just after the collision, Hummer was "overheard by four separate witnesses 'conspiring' with Englert about who should take responsibility for operating the boat at the time of the collision. They decided that Hummer would falsely take the blame as the operator."

Moreover, according to witnesses statements, Hummer tried "to get one witness to dispose of her marijuana prior to the arrival of law enforcement authorities."

"Upon my arrival as the investigating officer, Hummer falsely stated to me, 'It was me, I was driving, I killed that little girl.'" Due to inconsistencies between Hummer's statement and witnesses' statements as to whom was the operator of the watercraft, both Hummer and Englert were placed under arrest" for suspicion of operating the boat under the influence, Nunamacher wrote in the affidavit.

In a video arraignment Saturday night just after 9 p.m., District Magisterial Judge Frank Mills in Renovo set Hummer's bail at \$50,000. Hummer was picked up earlier in the evening and was in front of a video camera at the Clinton County Correctional Facility in McElhattan for arraignment before

Mills, the weekend magistrate. Authorities intended to arraign Hummer on Friday but couldn't locate her.

During the proceedings, Hummer talked about her rather extensive criminal history, including an incident as recently as Nov. 6, when she claimed she "punched a girl five times for making my grandbaby cry." Just last Thursday, she received a summons that called for her to pay a \$200 fine for the incident.

According to Hummer, she was released from state prison on April 14, 2009, after she "did four years in Muncy (State Correctional Institution)."

Hummer said has served other prison sentences of 23 and a half months, 47 and a half hours, as well as 90 days' house arrest for offenses. Further, she told Mills she has been on Social Security disability since 2004, when she was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, psychotic disorders and as being a manic depressive.

Hummer's criminal history goes back to 1990 and includes two DUI's, unauthorized use of vehicles, simple assault and forgery.

Moreover, Hummer told Mills she had been married twice and some of the previous charges were filed under the names of Barbara Jean Gaines and Barbara Jean Yocum.

In all, Hummer is charged with criminal conspiracy, obstructing administration of law or other government function, false reports to law enforcement and two counts alleging possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

According to the affidavit, Hummer admitted the night of July 10 to Woodward Township police Officer Jeff Fritts that she had marijuana and directed him to the location of it inside of a cooler.

Mills set Hummer's preliminary hearing date for 8:30 a.m. Tuesday in central court.

Meanwhile, Englert's bail was set at \$750,000. He also is scheduled to appear for a preliminary hearing Tuesday morning in Central Court at the Clinton County Courthouse.

In asking for a significant bail amount at Englert's arraignment Friday, Clinton County District Attorney Mike Salisbury said Englert's criminal history with numerous DUI offenses places him at risk to the public and himself. Court papers indicate Englert had a blood-alcohol content of .22 percent the night of July 10, when his high-powered, Taylor LP motorboat and Garlick's powerboat collided on the river, about two miles above the Jay Street Bridge. Garlick was pulling a skier at the time.

Witnesses said Englert's boat was traveling up river just right of the center while Garlick was heading downstream, about 100 feet from shore, towing a water skier, Garlick's brother, Bill. Bart Garlick steered closer to the shore to avoid a collision, but while the boats were about 100 feet apart, Englert turned right and collided with the Garlick boat about 70 feet from shore, police allege. Four people in Englert's boat were ejected upon impact, with all four suffering injuries and requiring medical treatment. Hummer suffered serious injuries and was flown by helicopter to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, where she underwent emergency abdominal surgery. The other passengers in Englert's boat included Robert Jeirles, 34, of Howard, who was treated for a shoulder injury; Heather K. Allen, 25, and Todd Fowler, 44, both of Beech Creek.

Bart Garlick had four passengers, including Heidt and two children under the age of 12. Garlick was taken to Mount Nittany Medical Center in State College for treatment.