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Driver Killed In Alleged DWI Wreck

Las Vegas man still had can of beer in his hand when he crashed SUV into tree

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Article Text:

A Las Vegas, N.M., man died with a beer can in his hand late Saturday in an alleged drunken driving crash that was preceded by a police chase, according to State Police.

The driver, Abel Herrera, 37, was killed in the wreck that left his male passenger injured.

Several open and unopened beer cans were found inside the white 1984 Ford Bronco that Herrera was driving, including the can of Budweiser that was in Herrera's grasp when police found him dead inside the vehicle, according to State Police Lt. Eric Garcia.

"He never let go of it," Garcia said of the beer can.

"He died with it in his hand."

Garcia said Herrera was driving on a revoked license at the time of the wreck and was out on parole for prior violations, which included his fourth DWI offense.

Garcia said he was unable to provide information about the crash earlier in the week because he had not received full details about it until Wednesday.

Police attempted to stop Herrera about 10:30 p.m. Saturday after he was spotted running a red light northbound on 7th street, travelling toward Dora Celeste Drive in Las Vegas, Garcia said. Herrera ran several stop signs as police tailed him through city streets before he continued north on the 8th Street extension at high speed.

At the intersection of San Miguel County Road A11A, Herrera lost control, and his Bronco skidded across the roadway, struck a tree and came to a rest in an embankment, according to the lieutenant.

The state Office of the Medical Investigator pronounced Herrera dead at the scene.

The passenger, Angelo Padilla, also of Las Vegas, who was not wearing a seat belt, was thrown from the passenger seat into driver's seat in the crash.

He received treatment for nonlife-threatening injuries at the scene.

Garcia said Padilla "appeared to be obviously intoxicated." He is expected to be cited for failing to wear a seat belt and violating open container laws, according to Garcia.

Herrera — a self-employed auto mechanic who liked artwork, according to his obituary — had been out on parole for his fourth DWI offense and convictions for aggravated fleeing of an officer and battery on a household member, Garcia said.

HERRERA: Out on parole for 4th DWI when he was killed in a wreck

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