Drunk Driving Fatality Report



The Carrollton Crash

The crash occurred around 11 p.m. when a drunk driver in a pickup truck was traveling on the wrong side of the interstate and slammed into the oncoming school bus.

Ten-year-old Patty Nunnallee was among the 24 children killed, and Chuck Kytta, one of the chaperones on the trip, was one of three adults who died.

His wife, Janet Kytta Hancock, said she later learned that he had been standing in the stairwell at the front of the bus when the crash happened, and he burned to death.

At first, when she arrived at the First Assembly of God Church that night after receiving a call about a problem with the bus, there were lists of names posted that divided up the passengers into injured and missing. Her husband’s name was on the missing list.

“I couldn’t figure out why he would be missing. He was an adult, he had a wallet,” she said. “The fire was so fast, and it was so hot that Chuck actually burned to death. He didn’t die of smoke inhalation. It was horrible. It was just unimaginable.”

Don Karol, a senior highway accident investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, told ABC News that he believes that no one died as a direct result of the collision, but rather from the fire and smoke inhalation in the aftermath.

The truck “hit the bus in the right front, and it was enough to basically damage the suspension, and the whole front end of the bus got pushed rearward. The fuel tank that is right behind that area got punctured,” Karol said.

The bus was filled to capacity, Karol said, with 66 passengers and a driver, and because the front exit was inaccessible due to the crash, all 67 adults and children were trying to get out of the one rear exit.

That one rear exit was partially blocked by coolers that had been pushed toward the back of the bus, which Karol said “exacerbated the problem.”

The layout of seats was also a factor, as the bus’s “very wide” rows of seats left only left 12 inches for the aisle, Karol said.

Two other safety issues that reared their dangerous heads that night were a lack of guard frames around the fuel tank, which could have prevented it from being punctured in the crash, and the toxic, highly flammable material in the bus seats.

Autopsy reports showed Patty Nunnallee had certain toxins in her system which indicated she was the last one to die, her mother said.

“I was honestly hoping that the immense heat would have killed her instantly,” Nunnallee said. “But the autopsy showed that because of the gas in her blood, she had to have breathed it in and she was the only one” to have such toxins in her system.