

Judge won't drop charge in Summit Road death case

3-24-89
SANTA CRUZ — A judge has refused to dismiss criminal charges against Brett Erickson, a Summit-area man who was driving a pickup truck from which a buddy allegedly forced another man to jump to his death.

Erickson is accused of failing to stop the truck to render aid to Ernie King, who died from injuries incurred when he hit the pavement.

Erickson's buddy, Robert Spedding, is charged with murder for allegedly forcing King out of the back of the truck after trying to rob King, who had no money. King reportedly had asked the pair for a ride from a commuter turnout on Summit Road to Soquel last June 25.

Deputy Public Defender Steve Wright argued that since Assistant District Attorney Christine McGuire has charged Spedding with murder, she can't therefore argue the act was an accident. "He (Erickson) can't leave the scene of a murder and violate the vehicle code," Wright argued.

Wright argued that this kind of charge usually pertains to someone who flees a collision.

McGuire argued that she could proffer two theories in the case. "The law requires certain humanitarian duties of drivers, even if no other vehicle is involved," she said.

Court report

"This law applies to a driver whether any injury is intentional or not."

Superior Court Judge Tom Black agreed. He pointed out that testimony at the preliminary hearing for Spedding indicated that Erickson knew that King had gone out of the back of the pickup truck and still kept on driving.

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