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Beer profitable at OH county fair, despite critics

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MANSFIELD, Ohio (AP) — Officials say an Ohio county fair's first-ever beer sales were profitable and problem-free, despite criticism.

Religious leaders and others had objected to the beer garden that was part of this year's Richland County Fair. Its weeklong run ended Saturday in north-central Ohio.

Fair manager Dean Wells tells the News Journal of Mansfield that the beer concession made a net profit of about \$6,000. He says there were no incidents related to the beer sales.

A group called the Richland Community Family Coalition led opposition to the beer sales, thought to be a first in the fair's 160-year history. Coalition spokesman Ben Mutti (MYOO'-tee) says several businesses won't sponsor next year's fair over the issue.

Wells says the fair benefited from free publicity over the controversy.

Fatal accident driver blames sun

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Written by
Mark Caudill
News Journal

MOUNT GILEAD -- A 40-year-old man accused of aggravated vehicular homicide said the accident happened because he was blinded by sunlight.

George Maschke, of 2007 Pleasant Valley Road near Lucas, took the stand Wednesday on the third day of his trial in Morrow County Common Pleas Court.

Prosecutors say the August 2010 accident happened because he was driving under the influence. Maschke, who admitted on the stand he had consumed nine beers that day, had a blood-alcohol content of 0.177, more than twice Ohio's legal driving limit.

Michelle Golden, a 39-year-old mother of two, had stopped her car on County Road 37 near Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course to take a photograph of the sunset when she was struck. She died of blunt force trauma.

Dr. Dorothy Dean, a forensic pathologist with the Summit County Medical Examiner's Office, said Golden suffered a 10-inch tear in her scalp and two fractures to her skull. She also had several broken ribs and a tear in her lung.

Maschke, wearing a gray-striped shirt and dress slacks, testified for nearly two hours. On the day of the accident, Maschke said, he went for a job interview, then played golf at Wooldridge Woods with a friend. He said he had four beers there.

Afterward, Maschke said, he went to Steam Corners Road, near Mid-Ohio, to visit another friend. Maschke said he consumed five more beers there.

According to Maschke, the setting sun was an issue as he drove home. He said he realized he left his sunglasses at his friend's house and headed back to get them.

"When I pulled onto Steam Corners Road, the sun was starting to come down over the horizon," Maschke testified. "I was looking right into the sun. It was very, very difficult to see."

Maschke said there were no obstructions on County Road 37, but he did not see Golden or realize he had hit someone.

"The windshield caved in some. There was glass all over the passenger seat," he said. "My first thought was someone had launched a bottle from their car."

Maschke said he did not stop and continued to his friend's. When he got there, he saw a dent in the front fender and went back to the accident scene.

"As I came upon the area, I saw someone laying there," Maschke said.

On cross-examination, Assistant Prosecutor Jocelyn Stefancin asked the defendant why he didn't mention the sun to authorities at the scene.

"They didn't ask me," Maschke said.

Stefancin then played a video from the trooper's cruiser of Maschke taking a field sobriety test, which he failed. Maschke told her he did not have trouble following the trooper's instructions.

In the video, Maschke twice asked officers if Golden was OK.

Maschke was on probation for possession of drugs at the time of the accident. Under terms of his supervision, he was not allowed to drink or leave the county.

Judge Howard Hall allowed jurors to submit questions for Maschke. One asked why he drank that day; Maschke said it was a bad idea. Another asked if he was hesitant to drive after drinking nine beers.

"I didn't feel I was under the influence," Maschke said.

When the trial resumes today, defense attorney Bob Whitney is expected to call one more witness. The jury should get the case before noon. If convicted, Maschke could get eight years in prison.

mcaudill@nncogannett.com
419-521-7219



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The Reformers Unanimous Program in Mansfield is changing lives in a positive way.

Reformers Unanimous is a Christ-centered, faith-based addiction recovery program that uses a unique spiritual approach by working with hundreds of thousands of addicts of any kind.

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The program starts off with prayer, followed by testimonial time between the participants who then break up into groups and ends with a message from the word of God.

The Reformers Unanimous Program meets at 7 p.m. on Fridays at Peoples Baptist Church at 223 Vanderbilt

Road.