

Driver, bar owners told to pay in woman's death

By **CHERYL CASWELL**
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A jury decided that a man involved in a fatal car crash eight years ago and the owners of a bar that he went to must pay nearly \$400,000 for the death of a Charleston woman.

Jurors decided Tuesday that Robert A. Lanham, the driver, was negligent and bore 70 percent of the responsibility for the death of Barbara Ray, 42, and must pay \$128,179 to her survivors for expenses and loss of income. They also awarded \$50,000 in punitive damages.

But they said the bar, Frank's Place, also was partially at fault and should compensate the family another \$220,000 for sorrow, anguish, emotional distress and loss of their mother.

Michael Landers of South Charleston filed a lawsuit against Lanham and James Frank Jarrett, the owner of the bar at 2630 Sissonville Drive.

Lanham was at the bar just before the head-on collision occurred but according to witnesses was already under the influence of alcohol and drugs when he arrived.

Ray was one of three people in the vehicle Lanham hit on

W.Va. 21 in February 2000. Her mother, Norma C. Brown, 60, was driving, and Ray's boyfriend, Kenneth Lee Lovejoy, 30, also was a passenger. All three died and Lanham was critically injured.

Landers' attorney, Samuel Hanna, said, "They shouldn't have served him and should not have even let him in the door."

According to the lawsuit, bar employees gave Lanham, 38, the keys to a car belonging to Joseph R. Asbury.

Lanham served eight years in prison after being criminally charged and convicted in that incident.

"He took responsibility for what he did," said John Einrenhofer, Lanham's attorney and court-appointed guardian. "But as horrible as it was, it was not murder. And this is not a criminal trial."

The bar owner's attorney, Tim Barber, said, "Nothing that happened in that bar caused this terrible fatal car wreck."

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