

Jury finds driver guilty

Let woman die in car in bayou

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Eight months ago, Christopher Nabors was riding high.

A successful LSU medical student with a nice sports car, Nabors was enjoying a night of drinking Feb. 16 when he drove off with an attractive woman he had just met at a Mid-City bar.

The evening turned into a nightmare when Nabors ran a stop sign and plunged his Eagle Talon into Bayou St. John, leaving Michele Haensel of Metairie to drown as he escaped through the sun roof.

Thursday Nabors was convicted of vehicular homicide after a four-day trial.

"He launched into that bayou like a bad stunt in a B-movie," prosecutor Sharon Andrews told the six-person jury in closing arguments.

Andrews painted a portrait of Nabors as an arrogant, irresponsible drunk who waited until he was safely ashore before he told rescuers that Haensel was still strapped into her seat belt at the bottom of the bayou.

A witness testified that Nabors was remorseless when asked about Haensel after his arrival at Charity Hospital, where he was a resident.

"I don't know the bitch's name. I just picked her up in a bar," Nabors was quoted as saying.

Despite the emotional and sometimes harrowing testimony, much of the trial hinged on scientific evidence. To convict Nabors,

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Driver: Blood test critical

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prosecutors had to prove he was legally drunk, even though a blood-alcohol test showed he was within legal limits.

But prosecutors argued that the blood test was inaccurate because intravenous fluids were being pumped into Nabors at the

Dec. 1, 1995 ed that the Charity doctor who treated Nabors was a friend who worked to lower his alcohol reading.

"That blood was doctored," Andrews told the jury.

Defense attorney John Reed hammered away at the state's contention, calling it "innuendo and guesswork."

"That blood was taken by the state, so there's the state's case — contaminated," Reed said.

Andrews used every opportunity to draw the jury's attention back to Haensel, describing her as "a dancer, a lifeguard, a 25-year-old full of hopes and dreams."

Nabors was expressionless through most of the trial, including the reading of the verdict by Judge Dennis Waldron. Haensel's family wept after the verdict was announced.

The victim's father, Bill Haensel, said, "Finally. It's taken a long time to get here, but justice was served. This man killed my daughter."

Nabors faces from two to 15 years in prison.