

Suspect in Smith River hit-and-run arrested

February 21, 2020



The California Highway Patrol arrested Flaviano Tovar Soltero on Feb. 13 for the hit-and-run incident that killed Patrick McConkey on Jan. 2 in Smith River.

According to CHP officials, around 9:30 p.m. Jan. 2, McConkey was walking on the west shoulder of Highway 101 just north of Timbers Boulevard when he was struck by a van.

CHP Cmdr. Larry Depee called the subsequent investigation “tedious” due to no physical evidence left by the suspect vehicle at the scene of the crime.

Depee credited the hard work of CHP officers, Josh Cook, as the primary investigator, and Ted Luna, who did the majority of followup, which led to tracking down Soltero.

“There was no physical evidence left at the scene. There was a pretty extensive amount of followup to find him,” Depee said. “With so little to go on, it required a lot of tedious work to go through the evidence presented to ultimately track down the vehicle and ultimately to the suspect.”

Their investigation led to the questioning and subsequent arrest of Smith River resident Soltero, 29. According to findings, Soltero failed to stop after striking McConkey with a grey Honda Odyssey van then continued southbound on Highway 101.

The Del Norte County Sheriff's Office online booking records incorrectly lists Soltero's first name as "Flavano."

Soltero was booked into the Del Norte County Jail and was charged with hit-and-run resulting in death, vehicular manslaughter and obstructing a public officer. His bail was set at \$100,000 bail. Depee said the obstruction charge stemmed from Soltero's attempts to cover up the crime.

"He was not completely forthcoming when we interviewed him at first," Depee said. "He took extensive measures to try and cover up his involvement in the collision."

Depee added he couldn't go into further detail about the obstruction measures Soltero took before the case goes to trial.

"We're obviously relieved to be able to find the person who did this and hold him accountable for what he did," Depee said. "You never want a hit and run suspect out and about in the community."

McConkey was a father of four who worked at a lumber mill in Roseburg, Oregon, according to his sister Jeannie Sutherland's Facebook page. He was originally from Del Norte County.

Soltero was arraigned in court Tuesday, according to the CHP.