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Subject: FW: Little girl killed by car on Volusia beach
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Child struck and killed by car on the beach

By ANNE GEGGIS , Staff writer

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John Langlands leans on his car after a family outing to the beach turned tragic when his 4-year-old great niece was hit and killed by a vehicle in Daytona Beach Saturday. N-J | Nigel Cook

[cid:C86FFC93-ADE1-4172-8192-054F96089B49@local]

Barbara Worley of Georgia sits in her Lincoln while tents cover the body of a 4-year-old child she struck and killed on the beach in Daytona Beach Saturday. N-J | Nigel Cook

[cid:0965F4F0-710F-431A-99F2-2829D0D3C038@local]

Florida Highway Patrol investigators investigate examine the Lincoln passenger vehicle involved in the fatality of a 4-year-old child on the beach in Daytona Beach Saturday. N-J | Nigel Cook

Beach driving deaths

Another child was killed by a vehicle on the beach 22 years ago.

The News-Journal reported Aug. 20, 1988, that a 2 1/2-year-old boy from Winter Park darted out from between parked cars and was struck by a van driven by a New Smyrna Beach man. The boy's mother was sitting beside her car about 3 feet away and rushed to try and drag her son from beneath the van. Emergency personnel arrived soon after but couldn't save him. The driver was going below the speed limit and was not charged.

The boy's death in New Smyrna Beach was the last in a rash of traffic-related beach deaths in the 1980s, according to News-Journal archives.

Five adults were killed from 1983 to 1987: three pedestrians, one who fell out of a van and another who was killed when his truck overturned. Four of the deaths were in New Smyrna Beach; one was in Daytona Beach Shores.

Newspaper files show only one traffic-related beach death since 1988.

In January 1996, a 57-year-old Ocala woman was killed and her friend injured in Ormond Beach when a drunken driver going 40 mph in a rented car hit them. The 41-year-old Pennsylvania man had a blood-alcohol level five times the legal limit and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, later reduced to 17 years.

DAYTONA BEACH -- A 4-year-old British girl vacationing here was struck and killed by a car Saturday afternoon as she walked toward the ocean holding hands with her great-uncle.

Yellow police tape surrounded an abandoned sandcastle at the scene behind Sun Splash Park as investigators questioned witnesses and relatives were left to contemplate a shattered vacation. Charges in the crash are pending, according to the Florida Highway Patrol. A search of News-Journal archives show it's the first beach traffic fatality since 1996.

"She was beautiful," said Ellie Bland's great-uncle John Langlands of Nottingham, England, as tears streamed down his face, "a princess."

He had been holding his little niece's hand just before 3 p.m. as they waited for northbound traffic to pass with southbound cars behind them in the busy section of beach. In the next instant, a northbound silver Lincoln, driven by Barbara Worley, 66, of Elberton, Ga., clipped the little girl and sent her flying from her uncle's grip and into the sand, authorities said.

Worley stopped, but then panicked and hit the accelerator, rolling over the girl as the car lunged about 22 feet, according to a report from the Florida Highway Patrol.

Ellie was killed instantly.

Her great-aunt and great-uncle were taking Ellie on her sixth trip to Florida from Nottingham with her 5-year-old sister and some family friends this week. Saturday they stood on the beach, alternately sobbing into cell phones and staring blankly. Her parents, in England, learned of their daughter's death by phone.

Today, her great-uncle and great-aunt had planned to take her to Disney's Magic Kingdom, so she could dress up as the Frog Prince's Princess Tiana because she'd had so much fun dressing up as Belle from "Beauty and the Beast" last year.

Her great-aunt Karen Langlands, 44, also of Nottingham, said the girl had struggled bravely through a number of medical issues, such as a heart murmur and digestive tract problems.

"She was a quiet little girl," she said, holding her head in her hands. "She'd play in activities at nursery, but she'd rather go off and read a book or a newspaper."

The great-uncle, 53, said Ellie had walked a step in front of him when suddenly the Lincoln was "barreling down" on them. The FHP report did not indicate the car was speeding.

But before he could grab her back out of the car's oncoming path, the car hit her.

"She darted into the lane of traffic," said Holly Harding, 18, of Altamonte Springs, who had been sitting in front of her car, watching as the scene unfolded. "She was hit in the center of the car. Everyone panicked. Everyone started screaming."

Luke Nason, a family friend of the Langlands, also from England, said the driver, Worley, seemed unaware she had just hit a child: "She just carried on, going," he said, shaking his head.

But another onlooker, who was driving south when the accident happened, said she thought panic caused the fatal crash: "It was a fast jolt forward," said Judy Smith of Toronto, Ontario.

Worley, sitting in her car with her face raw and red, declined to comment after the accident.

Alcohol is not being considered a factor, FHP spokeswoman Kim Montes said.

The scene shook up veteran police and Beach Patrol officers. Witnesses said it was apparent the child's head had been run over. Some officers left their shift early because of the emotional impact of the scene.

Yellow-and-blue umbrellas were used to shield the body from people milling on the beach before personnel from the Medical Examiner's Office took it away.

"It's the hardest thing I've ever had to look at," said Capt. Rich Gardner, who's been on the Beach Patrol for 26 years.

-- Staff Photojournalist Nigel Cook contributed to this report.
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