



Raymond Ragen, left, 45, of Mineola, was sentenced to 5 to 15 years in prison Thursday, July 3, 2014, for the crash on July 23, 2012, pictured right, that killed mini-school bus driver Jorge Guevara, 45. Credit: NCPD; Howard Schnapp

By **BRIDGET MURPHY**

bridget.murphy@newsday.com

July 3, 2014

LONG ISLAND / **NASSAU**

Cement truck driver Raymond Ragen sentenced to prison for deadly crash in Locust Valley

The oldest son of a school bus driver killed in a Locust Valley crash two years ago told a judge Thursday that his 4-year-old brother can't understand that he won't see their father again.

"He still believes he's alive, and it's really hard to explain to him that he's dead," Jorge Guevara, 19, said at cement truck driver Raymond Ragen's manslaughter sentencing in Mineola.

Citing the "horrific consequences" of the head-on wreck, State Supreme Court Justice William Donnino sentenced Ragen to 5 to 15 years in prison.

Ragen's truck struck a railroad overpass on Oyster Bay Road at about 3:15 p.m. on July 23, 2012, before barreling into the bus bringing autistic children home from summer camp.

The bus driver, also named Jorge Guevara, died at the scene. He was a 45-year-old father of four from Locust Valley.

Bus monitor Louis Kragouras, 66, of Bethpage, needed a hip replacement and a steel rod in one knee after surviving the wreck. Four special-needs children aboard the bus also were hurt, including a 6-year-old boy who suffered a broken jaw and a detached lip.

A jury in April convicted Ragen, 46, of Mineola, of second-degree manslaughter and second-degree assault. Jurors acquitted him of the top charge of aggravated vehicular homicide, along with vehicular manslaughter and another assault charge.

Nassau Assistant District Attorney Brendan Ahern told the judge Thursday that the heft of the vehicle Ragen was driving "tragically magnified his recklessness."

Of the victims, Ahern said: "They and their families paid for his crimes."

Prosecutors alleged during the trial that Ragen was high on Valium and using a cellphone when he hit the railroad bridge that GPS records showed he knew was too low for his truck. Authorities said he backed away from the overpass earlier that day when his truck didn't fit under it.

Defense attorney David Besso, of Bay Shore, argued that two police officers who talked to Ragen after the crash didn't find him to be impaired and that there was only a trace of Valium in the defendant's blood.

Besso told jurors that a sport utility vehicle sideswiped or cut off Ragen, causing him to hit his head and lose consciousness, before the cement mixer struck the bridge.

Besso said after the verdict that it was obvious that jurors didn't believe Ragen was impaired.

He told the judge Thursday that his client was remorseful but had shown "no reckless conduct."

Ragen was silent in court and showed no visible emotion as the sentence was imposed.

"I'm confident that the case will be reversed by the appellate division," Besso said afterward.

District Attorney Kathleen Rice said in a prepared statement that the "damage caused by Mr. Ragen's reckless actions will never be erased," and that the prison sentence would hold him accountable for the pain and suffering he caused.

Fighting back tears, the bus driver's former wife, Claudia Guevara, left court with her oldest son, saying she'd be able to sleep now.

"We believe in justice," she said.