

Witnesses say street racers caused deadly crash in Scottsdale

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Scottsdale police arrested two drivers for the death of an elderly Scottsdale man, killed in a three vehicle crash. Witnesses tell 12 News the crash was caused because the two drivers were street racing.

Robert Van Brakel, a 42 year old business owner from Phoenix, and Travis Aronica, a 25 year old restaurant worker from Michigan were booked into jail Friday night, after they were released from the hospital. Police say they were speeding in separate cars when they slammed into a car driven by 76-year old Calvin Holman of Scottsdale. Both men face a single charge of second degree murder.

Police say shortly before 1pm Friday afternoon, Van Brakel was driving a white Mercedes sedan north on Scottsdale Road just south of Shea. Aronica was in the lane to the left of him driving a black Ford Mustang. Police say the two were speeding in excess of 70mph in a 45mph zone when they approached Eastwood where Calvin Holman was making a left turn across their lanes in a 1973 Chevrolet Camaro.

Investigators say Van Brakel's Mercedes hit the Camaro on the passenger's side door, and a split second later Aronica's Mustang slammed into the Camaro's rear quarter panel. The impact knocked Holman out of the car killing him at the scene.

The Mercedes stopped 75 feet from the intersection, and the driver suffered only minor injuries. The Mustang flew off the road and landed upside down in the ditch. The driver suffered a broken arm, and a female passenger in his car suffered minor injuries.

Calvin Holman, 76, lived on 72nd Place in Scottsdale, and prior to that lived on 53rd Street in Paradise Valley. Not much is known about Holman, however he was a plaintiff in a lawsuit supporting a Paradise Valley town council member's re-election effort in 1995.

Robert Van Brakel, 42, owns a home near I-17 and the Carefree Highway, and is listed as the president of Van Brakel Electronics in Phoenix. He has been cited four times since 2004 for traffic violations in Scottsdale and Mayer, Arizona. He is also listed on a drag racing website for racing a 2007 Mercedes Benz E63 AMG at 112 mph in a 1/4 mile drag at Firebird Raceway.

Little is known about 25 year old Travis Aronica, the Michigan man arrested in this crash. However, a Myspace.com webpage indicates he is a Michigan State University alumnus from 2004, recently worked as a kitchen manager at Houston's Restaurant in Orlando, and may be working for another company in Arizona.