

# Drivers in deadly crash booked on murder charge

## Police unsure if 2 were racing on Scottsdale Road

By DENNIS WELCH  
TRIBUNE

The two drivers accused of killing a former state lawmaker last week in a three-way car crash were driving at speeds of more than 100 miles per hour on a busy city street, according to court documents released Monday.

Robert Van Brakel, 42, of Phoenix and Travis Aronica, 25, of Canton, Mich., were each booked on one count of second-degree murder. Each was released on \$25,000 bail. Both are scheduled to appear on Friday in Maricopa County Superior Court.

Eyewitness told authorities the two men were racing north on Scottsdale Road near Eastwood Drive in Scottsdale on Friday afternoon when their cars hit a Chevrolet Camaro driven by Cal Holman.

Holman, 76, who represented Paradise Valley from 1975 to 1985, was making a left turn off Scottsdale Road when Van Brakel's Mercedes-Benz hit the Camaro on the passenger's side, according to court documents.

Aronica's Ford Mustang then hit the Camaro,



LISA OLSON, TRIBUNE

**CRASH SCENE:** Scottsdale police investigate a fatal crash involving three vehicles Friday afternoon along Scottsdale Road at McCormick Parkway.

the documents said.

The former lawmaker was thrown from his vehicle and died at the scene, according to the documents.

Although witnesses told authorities that Van Brakel and Aronica were racing each other, Scottsdale police have yet to make that determination. Officer Dave Pubins, a spokesman for the department, said the investigation is ongoing.

Van Brakel and Aronica were unavailable for comment.

But details about the lethal collision have fueled a heated online debate among self-proclaimed street car racers. In the days following Friday's crash, members of a Mercedes-Benz enthusiast Web site — MBWorld Discussion Forums — have made hundreds of com-

ments, speculating about what really happened and whose fault it was.

Many of the online statements expressed sympathy for the family and friends of Holman as well as the other drivers.

"An innocent person is dead ... so sad. What likely started as a quick thrill, ended with horrific tragedy," said a member identified as Rock.

Still, others admitted to racing on city streets at high speeds and questioned whether they should continue.

"Don't really know what to say, except it could have been a lot of us (if we are being honest with ourselves) and it is most definitely not worth it," said another member identified as FLYNAVY.

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