

Missouri Lawyers WEEKLY

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Passenger recovers \$600,000 in collision case

Defendants included plaintiff's then-husband, who was driving



Brian McChesney



Craig Ortwerth

Aug. 12, 2004. Paul Buckley, her 44-year-old husband, was driving the car southbound on U.S. Highway 61.

Darrell Cammon, 39, was driving his Ford Escort northbound on Highway 61. Buckley attempted to make a left turn from Highway 61 onto state Highway 80 but turned directly in front of Cammon's car. It was dark, and there were no lights at the intersection.

Cammon's car broadsided Buckley's car on the passenger side, where Bridges was sitting. She was airlifted from the crash scene and transported to Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis with multiple orthopedic injuries, including fractures of the right hip, pelvis and both arms.

Bridges underwent several surgeries, including an open reduction internal fixation of her right hip. Her medical expenses totaled \$197,000.

Bridges recovered and returned to full-time work. Before the accident, she had been working as an ice cream truck driver, making about \$24,000 per year, said St. Charles defense attorney Reginald Bodeux. She now works a sit-down job as a desk clerk at a hotel, making about \$17,000 per year.

Bridges testified that she has substantial residual permanent injuries including scarring from the surgeries and insertion of metal pins and screws in three of her limbs, Bodeux said. Bridges' doctor testified that she

would have arthritis for the rest of her life, and she may need a new hip.

Bodeux said Bridges and Buckley were married at the time of the accident but divorced at the time of trial. The parties lived together for several months after the divorce, he said.

In her lawsuit, Bridges claimed that Buckley and Cammon were both at fault for the collision. She alleged that Buckley failed to keep a careful lookout and failed to yield the right-of-way. Buckley admitted liability, Bodeux said.

Bridges alleged that Cammon drove at an excessive speed and failed to keep a careful lookout. She settled with Cammon for the \$22,000 balance of his policy limits before trial.

At trial, Buckley testified that he never saw Cammon's car before impact and suggested that Cammon's headlights were not on. The Missouri State Highway Patrol officer who investigated the crash testified that he inspected the filaments in the bulbs of Cammon's headlights and found "hot shock" indicating that Cammon's headlights were on before impact, Ortwerth said.

After a one-day trial, the jury deliberated about 45 minutes before concluding that Buckley was 100 percent at fault for the collision. The jury awarded Bridges \$600,000 in damages.

— Anne C. Vitale

\$600,000 jury verdict

PERSONAL INJURY/VEHICULAR

- **Court:** New Madrid County Circuit Court
- **Case Number/Date:** 07NM-CV00425/Oct. 30, 2008
- **Judge:** Fred W. Copeland
- **Plaintiff's Expert:** Dr. Robert Poetz, St. Louis (family medicine)
- **Special Damages:** \$197,000 past medical expenses
- **Last Pretrial Demand:** \$25,000
- **Insurance Carrier:** Shelter Insurance Co. for Buckley
- **Caption:** Kathy Bridges v. Paul Buckley and Darrell Cammon

- **Plaintiff's Attorneys:** Brian S. McChesney and Craig M. Ortwerth, McChesney & Ortwerth, St. Louis
- **Defendants' Attorney:** Reginald Bodeux, Niedner, Bodeux, Carmichael, Huff, Lenox & Pashos, St. Charles, for Buckley