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Wrong-way driver gets 6 years for 2 deaths

March 09, 2011 | By LARRY WELBORN

SANTA ANA – An Anaheim woman **who killed two sisters when she crashed into their truck** after she got drunk and drove the wrong way on the 91 freeway in 2009 was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison.

Jessica Lynn Shekell, 23, **pleaded guilty in October, 2010 to two counts of vehicular manslaughter** and felony drunk-driving causing injuries for the Oct. 26, 2009, crash that killed Sally Miguel, 49, and her sister Patricia Miguel, 30, both of San Bernardino.

Superior Court Judge Robert Fitzgerald handed down the six-year sentence after he considered reports from the Orange County Probation Department and the California Department of Corrections. Both reports recommended prison for Shekell.

Deputy District Attorney Susan Price argued for a 13-year sentence, while defense attorney Rudy Lowenstein asked for probation.

Several members of the Miguel party, who wore T-shirts memorializing the two sisters, were upset after the sentencing that Shekell did not receive a stiffer sentence.

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The Miguel sisters were returning from an outing at Knott's Berry Farm with several relatives when they were struck head-on by Shekell's pickup as it was speeding in the wrong direction on the 91 near Gypsum Canyon Road.

Shekell was driving with a blood-alcohol level of 0.26 percent – more than three times the legal limit of 0.08 – at the time of the crash on the 91, according to police reports.

Witnesses reported that Shekell barely missed several cars that darted out of her way before she crashed into the Chevrolet pickup driven by Sally Miguel, who died at the scene. Patricia Miguel, her younger sister, who was riding in the passenger seat, was pronounced dead several hours later.

Two nieces, 15-year-old Mary Miguel and 11-year-old Sara Miguel, suffered serious injuries in the 2:45 a.m. crash, but survived.

Shekell was transported to UCI Medical Center in Orange for treatment of facial trauma and fractures to both arms.

When Shekell pleaded guilty in October, several relatives of the victims gave victim-impact statements.

"We don't have a normal life anymore," Mary Miguel said. "They weren't just my aunts, they were my role models. Now they are not here anymore ... I can't believe they are gone because of drunk-driving, something ridiculous that could have been prevented."

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