

# Tucson Region

## Bicyclist killed in collision was teacher, veteran

By Jamar Younger  
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A Tucson bicyclist killed in a collision with a pickup truck Thursday was a teacher and retired Air Force pilot who pedaled to and from school each day.

Charles W. Nystrom, 54, an East Side resident, was riding out of Morris K. Udall Park northbound when he was struck by an eastbound 2000 Ford F-150, according to Sgt. Fabian Pacheco, a Tucson Police Department spokesman.

The driver of the truck — a 20-year-old woman — was changing from the curb lane to the median lane and did not see Nystrom as he tried to cross East Tanque Verde Road, Pacheco said.

It appears that Nystrom failed to yield to the truck, he said. No citations have been issued, and the case will be presented to the Pima County Attorney's Office for review. Teresa Nystrom said her husband had just gotten off a bus and was riding his bike on his way to meet his wife and one of his daughters at a nearby restaurant.

Charles Nystrom would ride his bike and catch two buses to his job as a teacher at Accelerated Learning Laboratory, a charter school on the West Side, Teresa Nystrom said. It took him about two hours to get to school, she said.

"A lot of it had to do with wanting to keep fit and keep exercising," said Teresa Nystrom, when asked why her husband rode his bike to work.

Charles Nystrom always had been careful to follow bike laws, but he had several close calls with vehicles, she said. "People wouldn't give him space" on the road, she said. Nystrom served in the Air Force for more than 30 years after graduating from the Air Force Academy in 1975, she said.

He was an F-111 pilot who flew mostly at two bases in England. He also served in the Persian Gulf War, she said. Nystrom retired from the Air Force two years ago, she said. "He was very dedicated to whatever he was doing," she added.

Nystrom taught science to middle school students at the school and was set to teach psychology this year as well, she said. "I could tell that he really enjoyed the challenge of working with kids. They were very fond of him," she said.

In addition to his teaching duties, Nystrom coached the swimming and girls volleyball team at his school and he was active in his church, she said. He was scheduled to preach at church this Sunday, she said.

Nystrom enjoyed meeting people from different backgrounds, said friend Ted Prezelski.

"He enjoyed being around different kinds of people and talking to different kinds of people," Prezelski said.

Prezelski and Nystrom played pool on a team together, Prezelski said. "He was a very nice guy," he said. "His faith was really important to him, and I think he wanted to be friendly to everybody."

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## Tucson Bike Lawyer

### Faith Quick Sentenced Today in Charles Nystrom Fatality

Erik Ryberg, June 11, 2010

As most of my readers know, Charles Nystrom was killed while riding his bicycle on Tanque Verde Road last year. He was a retired Air Force pilot, a bicyclist, father of two daughters, and was working as a school teacher at the time of his death.

I never met him, but he sounds like the kind of person anyone would be proud to know.

The evidence is pretty strong that he was riding his bike eastbound and merging across Tanque Verde in order to turn left (north) where he was to meet his family for dinner at Zona 54 Restaurant. He had taken the curb lane (that's the far right lane) and he was merging into the middle lane, which was free of traffic at the time he merged. But Faith Quick, a 20-year old woman and, apparently, frequent drug user, was impatient with the car in front of her that had slowed to let Charles merge. She did not see Charles.

Ms. Quick sped around the car in front of her and entered the middle lane at the same moment that Charles did. She hit him from behind in her pickup, and ran over him. He died at the scene, in the arms of a bystander, while asking the bystander to call his wife. Ms. Quick plead guilty this morning in Tucson City Court to one count of misdemeanor DUI, for being under the influence of marijuana while driving. She received a sentence of five days in jail and one year of probation.

Just prior to the proceeding, Judge Cranshaw pointedly asked the prosecutor what this case, which involved a fatality, was even doing in Tucson City Court. Why was this not charged as a felony? The answer: Pima County refused to take the case, based on the police report, which concluded that Charles was at fault in this accident. The Nystrom family and I have all but begged Pima County to accept this case for prosecution, but

they refused to do so, and pointed to the police report to support their position that Charles was at fault.

The police report takes every opportunity to suggest that Charles Nystrom at best rode his bicycle erratically into traffic, and at worst threw himself into traffic from the curb. It gives little credence to the statements of the one witness who saw the accident clearly, and the only witness who saw the entire event. Instead it relies on badly scattered recollections of a few witnesses who did not see the event directly, but only pieces of it. Adding to the insult was the media response. Take this passage from the Arizona Star article:

The driver of the truck — a 20-year-old woman — was changing from the curb lane to the median lane and did not see Nystrom as he tried to cross East Tanque Verde Road, Pacheco said.

It appears that Nystrom failed to yield to the truck, he said. No citations have been issued. Nystrom failed to yield to a truck that struck him from behind? Since when do you have an obligation to yield to people behind you?

It is my strong suspicion that if Charles Nystrom had been in a car when he was rear-ended, the entire investigation would have been different, and there would be little doubt who was at fault. But he was on a bicycle, and that makes all the difference.

At the sentencing hearing today Charles's widow, Teresa Nystrom, spoke of her hope that Ms. Quick, so young, will take this opportunity to reflect on the loss she has caused to this family, and adjust her behavior. Mrs. Nystrom spoke very eloquently about her loss, and about her hopes for Ms. Quick. She stated that she knew Ms. Quick had not set out to kill anyone that day, but that her behavior was not acceptable in this community, and had costs that were borne far more heavily by Charles's two daughters, his brother, his grandchild, his students, and his widow than by Ms. Quick and her five day sentence at the Pima County Jail.

Please, everyone, we are so fragile out there! Those of you in cars, pay attention! There are others on the road, and you have a duty to look out for them. If a driver slows in front of you, it is most likely for a reason, and someone's life may be depending on you to act courteously and cautiously. And those of you on your bikes have duties too: think of the pain you will cause your families if you are hurt or killed, and use lights, helmets, and good sense when you ride.