

Man who crossed median not guilty in fatal crash

By Sheila McLaughlin

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LEBANON - A jury took less than an hour Wednesday to acquit 19-year-old Jerad Rushlow in a crash that killed a Georgia woman and her 3-year-old twin daughters.

His lawyer, Jay Clark, applauded the quick verdict, calling the crash that killed Nancy Hinkle and her daughters, Elizabeth and Emily, a "tragic accident."

"Jerad's greatly relieved it's over. If there was anything he could do to change it, he would," said Mr. Clark, who spent two days pointing out errors in the state patrol's investigation.

"Hopefully everyone involved can go through the process of getting on with their lives."

Mr. Rushlow, who faced three counts of misdemeanor

vehicular homicide and the possibility of 18 months in jail, stood surrounded by family members who had supported him throughout the two-day trial. He declined comment.

Members of the Hinkle family, including Gary Hinkle, who lost his wife and children, left the Lebanon Municipal courtroom quickly. Mr. Hinkle, of Peachtree City, Ga., was accompanied by a civil lawyer throughout the trial, indicating that he may file suit over the crash.

"Mr. Hinkle wanted a conviction. But he didn't want to see him serve any jail time," City Prosecutor James Whitaker said.

"He said, 'I just want him to look at me and say I'm sorry it happened - I was



Rushlow

responsible.'"

Mr. Hinkle wept as he testified earlier Wednesday that he had no memory of the June 4 crash that occurred after Mr. Rushlow's 1996 Explorer went out of control on northbound Interstate 75 near Ohio 63 and slid across the grassy median into oncoming traffic.

Mrs. Hinkle, 48, and the children died at the scene. Mr. Hinkle was seriously injured.

Mr. Rushlow, a cosmetology student who was attending a seminar in Cincinnati, was returning home to Newport, Mich. at the time. He sustained minor injuries.

The trial pitted state troopers - who said Mr. Rushlow was traveling 68 mph when he lost control - against an accident reconstruction consultant who calculated Mr. Rushlow's speed at 45 to 53 mph.