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Howard judge dismisses charges of violating probation in fatal-crash case

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A Howard County circuit judge dismissed charges last week against a 36-year-old Montgomery County man who was accused of violating his probation, which stemmed from a 1992 conviction for fatally injuring a Catonsville man in a car accident.

William Scott Marcellino of Germantown was convicted last year in Howard County District Court of violating his probation by forging attendance slips at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings -- and was ordered to spend three years in prison.

Marcellino appealed that verdict to Circuit Court. Judge Dennis M. Sweeney dismissed the charges Thursday because the state did not present sufficient evidence.

Former District Judge Lenore R. Gelfman, now a circuit judge, originally sentenced Marcellino to four years in jail, suspending all but 18 months. She later modified the sentence to one year in jail. Marcellino was ordered to attend AA meetings as part of his probation after his early release.

In November 1992, Marcellino's truck slammed head-on into a car driven by Saleem Alam Shah, 60, on Route 108, north of the Howard-Montgomery County line. Shah's family called the sentence imposed by Gelfman a "slap on the wrist."

Shah was a prominent psychologist and a senior scientist at the National Institute of Mental Health.

The sentence imposed by Gelfman played a role in the contentious 1996 race for two circuit seats. Diane O. Leasure and then-Circuit Judge Donna Hill Staton questioned the sentence in television ads. Leasure and Gelfman won the two open seats.

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