

## Two men charged in I-40 death case

Written by By Mia Rose Poris & Babette Herrmann Sun Editors  
Friday, 30 November 2018 08:19

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### Victim's co-workers booked for tampering with evidence, homicide

As a New Mexico Department of Transportation road crew worked along the I-40 corridor the afternoon of Nov. 20, with the scenic Hogbacks in the backdrop, they stumbled upon a grisly discovery near the highway shoulder.

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Close to mile-marker 24, south of the eastbound lanes, laid the body of man, who has been identified as Gary Bennett, 46, of Pinedale, N.M.

Gallup Police Department officers arrived at the scene shortly after 1 pm, and diverted traffic to Highway 66 as detectives combed the scene looking for clues into the man's death, which they deemed suspicious.

Around 6:30 pm the same day, the GPD received an anonymous tip "that a person by the name of Kendrick Murillo was responsible for the death of the male," according to an arrest warrant for Murillo, who had been arrested for DWI by state police at the same spot on I-40 Nov. 16.

On Nov. 21, Gallup police tracked down Murillo and Jones Begay — the passenger in the car when Murillo was arrested for the DWI. Both men were arrested in connection to Bennett's death.

According to his arrest warrant, Murillo told police during an interview about the incident that he had gone out to Sports Page Bar with Bennett and Begay, 51, his coworkers, on the night of Nov. 16.

Murillo reportedly said during the night they had a lot to drink and left the bar at about 2 am.

Murillo said he blacked out from drinking, but remembered Begay being in the passenger seat and Bennett in the rear seat of the vehicle.

Murillo reportedly said he did not remember driving off, but remembered being parked on the side of I-40, east bound. He said at that point, he saw Begay in the passenger seat but did not see Bennett in the vehicle.

He told police he put the vehicle in drive and went forward, when he noticed the vehicle steering wheel "was hard and strange," according to the warrant.

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Murillo said he thought the vehicle might have a flat tire.

Murillo reportedly said he got out of the car and looked in the trunk for a jack using the light on his phone. When he looked further behind the car, he noticed a shadow, he said. He checked the shadow, and saw it was Bennett laying facedown.

Murillo said he tried to wake Bennett up, but the victim did not respond.

He told police he got back into the driver side of the vehicle and told Begay that Bennett was laying there and not moving. Murillo said Begay did not react to his words.

At this point, Murillo started to drive away on the flat tire, but decided to go back and check on Bennett again.

He said he eventually grabbed Bennett's legs and pulled him away from the highway and left him there, according to the warrant.

When he got back in his vehicle, Murillo told Begay that Bennett was dead. When he began to drive again, he was pulled over by a State Police officer and arrested for DWI.

According to the warrant, Murillo said he wanted to tell the officer what had happened but he was scared no one would believe him. Murillo was booked on charges of homicide by vehicle and tampering with evidence; Begay was booked for tampering with evidence.

The investigation is ongoing.

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