

# The South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of South Carolina Jury Verdicts

May 2026

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

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### Civil Jury Verdicts

Timely coverage of civil jury verdicts in South Carolina including court, presiding judge, parties, attorneys and results.

**Premises Liability - The plaintiff stepped back and fell (breaking her wrist and hip) while placing trash in a county dumpster – in this lawsuit she alleged the design of the area, a concrete pad next to an uneven area of dirt, was unreasonably dangerous and caused her to fall**

*Severino v. Horry County Solid Waste Authority et al*, 2022-CP-26-02569

Plaintiff: Dorsey W. Strickland and W. Coleman Lawrimore, *The Derrick Law Firm*, Conway

Defense: J. Alexander Hooks and H. Thomas Morgan, Jr., *Smith Robinson, Camden* for Solid Waste Authority Weldon L. Coates and Samuel F. Arthur, III, *Aiken Bridges*, Florence for Horry County

Verdict: \$500,000 for plaintiff against Solid Waste Authority;

Defense verdict for Horry County

Court: **Horry**

Judge: David P. Caraker, Jr.

Date: 4-2-26

Mary Ann Severino came to a trash drop-off facility in Conway on 8-28-20 that is operated by the Horry County Solid Waste Authority (SWA). While SWA manages the facility, Horry County owns the property. The so-called “convenience center” has several self-serve



*The scene at the Solid Waste Authority dumpster where the plaintiff fell*

dumpsters. They are located on concrete pads. The pads are surrounded by dirt.

Severino (she was with her grandchildren) stood on the side of the dumpster (feet on the concrete pad) and dumped in her garbage. A moment later she stepped back off the pad and lost her balance. She fell into a small gravel hole.

Severino broke her wrist and hip in the fall. She was transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital. She underwent a hip repair surgery and remained in the hospital for several days. Her medical bills were just under \$100,000. She continues to complain of pain and other

limitations.

Severino filed this Tort Claims Act lawsuit against both SWA and Horry County. She argued the design of the dumpster set-up was dangerous. Her engineer expert, Bryan Durig, Columbia, identified an unnecessary fall hazard, and that by the very design of the set-up, patrons had to walk in the unlevel dirt to reach the dumpster.

SWA moved for summary judgment and argued that, (1) the condition was open and obvious, and (2) there was no notice of a defect. That motion was denied on 4-15-25 and the case proceeded to trial. Both defendants denied fault.

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**May 2026**  
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*Mills v. Prisma Health Richland Hospital*, 2023-CP-40-05937

Plaintiff: Joshua P. Cantwell and Eliza H. Cantwell, *Cantwell Law Firm*, Charleston

Defense: Brittany T. Bihun, Alan R. Belcher, Jr. and Allison E. Malone, *Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani*, Charleston

Verdict: \$315,000 for plaintiff

Court: **Richland**

Judge: Milton G. Kimpson

Date: 4-24-26

Jack Mills, age 86 at the time of these events, was one of the most prominent citizens in South Carolina. His business, Mills Communications, was involved in cable contracting and installation. He was also very involved in sports. Mills headed the state tennis commission (USTA-SC) and was involved also in the national organization. He worked closely with the construction of the national

tennis center in Flushing, NY and worked with Olympic tennis in 1996 in Atlanta. Mills was a friend of Presidents (Clinton), sat in the Royal Box at Wimbledon, and while not directly involved, his sporting acumen and connections led to deep involvement with NASCAR. He counted NASCAR star, Jeff Gordon, and then-TV show host, Donald Trump, among his friends. His accolades were almost without peer in the Palmetto state.

Turning to the facts of this complex medical malpractice case, Mills underwent an aortic valve replacement on 4-28-22 at Prisma Health Richland Hospital. Following the surgery he spent the night as the anesthesia wore off. He was still confused, loopy and delirious. Mills was discharged that day. When Mills returned home, his altered state did not improve. His family returned him to Prisma Health that evening as he suffered from confusion and shortness of breath. Mills was admitted.

As a part of the admission, a hospital nurse evaluated Mills as a fall risk. She concluded he was at risk and she checked the room for trip hazards, lowered his bed, provided a slip-resistant sock, gave him a call alarm and left the door open. Mills got out of bed around 2:30 a.m. to use the bathroom. He lost his balance and fell. Mills broke his hip in the fall.

The fracture was repaired the next day. Mills remained in the hospital for another nine days. Thereafter he went to a rehabilitation hospital for two more weeks before being discharged. Thereafter he underwent a long course of physical therapy.

In the interim in November of 2023, Mills filed a malpractice

complaint against Prisma Health. His expert, Tracy Pourmoghadam, RN, Charleston, was critical of the hospital’s fall risk prevention protocols and opined Mills was not properly assessed for risk. She also alleged his hospital room was not cleared of trip hazards, and she raised a fact dispute, that he was not provided anti-slip footwear.

Prisma Health answered the personal injury medical malpractice claim. It cited an affidavit from the nurse who cared for Mills that she had properly responded to the fall risk. This was echoed by a retained expert, Dr. Mieke Perez, Internist, Orangeburg. She noted all the things (described above) that the nurse had done to prevent a fall.

The case took a turn in May of 2024. By this time Mills’ orthopedist indicated he would need a hip replacement or he’d no longer be able to walk. The surgery was performed on 5-24-24. As he was recovering in the hospital, his wife (Erin) spoon fed him sweet potatoes. Mills aspirated on the food and developed aspiration pneumonia. This led to his demise on 6-8-24. Mills, age 88, was survived by his wife and two children, one of whom is a doctor in Beverly Hills, CA.

The litigation shifted at this time. The plaintiff filed an amended complaint and the personal injury case had two new counts, survival and wrongful death. The theory was that the broken hip in the first fall necessitated the hip replacement which in turn led to the aspiration complication and Mills’ death. The causal chain from death back to the fall, the plaintiff argued, was unbroken.

The wrongful death damages were in five categories, loss of life

### Notable Settlements

**Wrongful Death** - The plaintiff, a retired cop, was a regular bar patron at Tattooed Brews in downtown Rock Hill and drank six beers on the night in question – he had a tense conversation with a fellow ex-lawman (that lawman was served 25 drinks in 90 minutes) and they had a dispute – later that night the bartender walked the plaintiff home to his nearby apartment, the lawman followed the plaintiff inside and brutally murdered him – the plaintiff’s estate alleged the bar was negligent in training and supervising the bartender – on the eve of trial, the bar settled with the plaintiff for \$100,000 of its \$2,000,000 policy limits

*Vaughan v. Tattooed Brews,*  
2024-CP-46-02941

Plaintiff: Ryan P. Alderson, *Alderson Law*, Greenville

Defense: Kevin W. Mims and W. Chase McNair, *Luzuriaga Mims*, Charleston

Verdict: \$100,000 for plaintiff

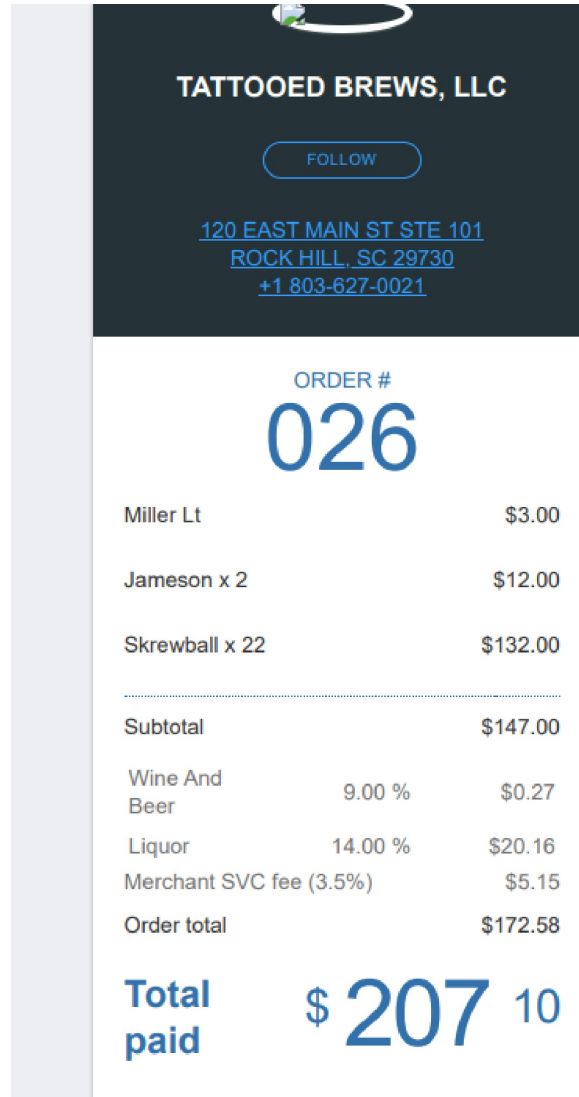
Court: **York**

Judge: William A. McKinnon

Date: 4-22-26

Larry Vaughan, age 54, was a recently retired lieutenant with the Rock Hill Police Department on the evening of 7-22-1. He lived in a downtown apartment building known as The Anderson. It was near his favorite bar, Tattooed Brews. Vaughn, a beloved local figure known as LV, was a bar regular.

This night Vaughan took a spot at the bar and had six Miller Lites. A second customer that night, Evan Hawthorne, was deep into his drinking. Hawthorne had a law enforcement history too, but it



*The tortfeasor’s bar tab at Tattooed Brews*

wasn’t quite as distinguished. He’d been a deputy in Chester County but a DUI ended his police career.

Hawthorne was drinking away his sorrows this night. He had six beers and two Mojito cocktails even before he got to Tattooed Brews.

Hawthorne was on a bender. In the course of just 105 minutes, he had 22 shots of Skrewball (peanut butter flavored whiskey), two shots of Jameson and he topped it off with a beer. It was a stunning bit of binge

drinking.

Vaughan and Hawthorne, who didn’t know each other previously, struck up a conversation apparently in part because of their shared law enforcement experience. Things took a turn when Hawthorne indicated he had service-related PTSD. Vaughan brushed off that suggestion and Hawthorne became angry. They either scuffled or had some physical contact as they both fell down.

Vaughan decided to leave the bar. A bartender he knew well, Adam Pelowich, walked Vaughan home. It was just a block away. Hawthorne followed too. Vaughan and Hawthorne were clearly drunk (there was surveillance video) as they came to the door. [See the link to that video below.]

Vaughan walked inside and Hawthorne followed. Sometime after that (no one saw it), Hawthorne beat Vaughan to death. Vaughan was found the next day. Hawthorne was convicted of murder (he’d pled self-defense at trial) in September of 2025 and sentenced to life in prison.

In this lawsuit Vaughan’s estate alleged negligence and a violation of the state’s Alcohol Control Act. The presiding trial judge at the summary judgment stage (Jessica Salvini)

## Historic South Carolina Verdict

A look back at older South Carolina jury verdicts (sometimes more than 100 years old) both historical and occasionally historic.

### Aviation Negligence - An aviation student at Bob Jones was making a cross-country flight as part of his education when he died in a crash in rural Kentucky during stormy conditions – his estate alleged negligence by the school in permitting him to fly in these conditions – Bob Jones countered that the student was FAA certified and the crash was solely because of pilot error

*Baker v. Bob Jones University*,  
6:91-2276

Plaintiff: Barney O. Smith, Jr.,  
*Parham & Smith*, Greenville and  
Richard E. Steck, *Steck & Spataro*,  
Chicago, IL

Defense: Richard B. Watson and M.  
Clifton Scott, *Nelson Mullins Riley &  
Scarborough*, Columbia

Verdict: \$120,000 for plaintiff less  
60% comparative fault

Court: **Greenville(Federal)**

Judge: Henry M. Herlong, Jr.

Date: October 22, 1992

Dayne Baker, age 21 and of Mattoon, IL, was a student at Bob Jones University in August of 1990. He was studying commercial aviation. As part of that education he made a cross-country flight from the school to his home in Mattoon, IL on 8-5-90. Baker was piloting a Cessna 172 aircraft. His instructors at Bob Jones had made a flight plan for his journey.

As Baker flew through rural Eastern Kentucky (the area is

## Two women find wreckage of plane and dead pilot

Staff wire reports

**HYDEN** — A single-engine plane that had been missing since Aug. 5 in Leslie County was found yesterday 3 miles south of Hyden off U.S. 421.

Lt. Col. Jim Depew of the Kentucky Civil Air Patrol said two women hunting for ginseng found the wreckage and its dead pilot, 21-year-old Dayne Baker, about 11:30 a.m. on the ground near Upper Double Branch near Short Creek.

Baker was flying home to Mattoon, Ill., when the Cessna disappeared from radar during a storm about 2:30 p.m. Aug 5. He was supposed to stop at the London-Corbin Airport for fuel but never showed up.

The Civil Air Patrol had made daily searches of the area, Depew said, but could not find the wreckage. Fog and heavy clouds had hampered initial searches.

The Federal Aviation Administration in Louisville was en route to the site yesterday to begin its investigation. State medical examiners also went to the scene to make positive identification of the body.

Baker was traveling alone. He was flying home from Greenville, S.C., where he attended Bob Jones University, a Christian liberal arts school.

mountainous), he was planning to stop in London, KY to refuel. He ran into heavy storms and crashed in a remote area near Hyden, KY. His plane was not found until 18 days later. Baker had died of injuries sustained in the crash. There was no defect in the plane.

Baker's estate sued Bob Jones and alleged negligence by the school in permitting him to fly a route that included rough weather. Bob Jones replied that Baker was FAA-licensed and flew into bad weather after being told to turn back.

The estate's aviation expert was Richard Taylor. Bernard Geier served as the expert for Bob Jones. Each party also relied on damages experts to value Baker's estate.

The case was tried for three days before Judge Herlong in October of

1992. The jury deliberated six hours and was apparently struggling with damages. A report at the time indicates the judge "prodded" the jury to continue.

The jury reached a verdict. It was mixed on fault. The jury assessed the fault 60% to Bob Jones, and the remaining

40% to Baker. Kentucky's substantive "pure" comparative fault governed. The jury valued the damages at \$120,000. After a reduction for comparative fault the final judgment was \$48,000.

The estate moved for additur. Bob Jones moved for a new trial. While both motions were pending in February of 1993, the parties entered a settlement agreement and the case was dismissed.

**Case Documents:**  
[Defense Trial Brief](#)

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