

Tow truck driver risks life to collar hit-and-run culprit

By STEVE PECAR
Staff

Tow truck drivers often get a bum rap. But that could change after the feat performed by Kevin Roberts.

The 32-year-old resident of Clarkson put his life on the line early Sunday as he chased down a suspect after two people were seriously injured in a hit and run accident on Dundas St. just west of Cawthra Rd.

In the chase, Roberts was knocked down by a car himself, but he managed to scramble to his feet and forced the driver to stop.

According to Peel Regional Police, the incident began when four friends were pushing their stalled car on Dundas at about 2 a.m.

"The car had run out of gas and they were trying to get it off the road," said Sergeant Peter Morgan. "But another vehicle came up from behind and rammed into them."

Morgan said one of the victims, 19-year-old David Nunez, was pinned between the cars while Hector Blanco was knocked to the ground.

According to Morgan, the driver of the vehicle then hesitated as he looked out of his window to survey the damage. He then sped off, driving over Blanco.

He said both men suffered fractured pelvises with Nunez also suffering a broken leg.

"Considering what happened, it could have been a lot worse," said Morgan. "The two are lucky to be alive."

Enter Roberts.

The driver for Competition Towing said he happened to be driving by when he saw the accident.

"At first a I turned my truck around to block traffic so the guys on the road wouldn't get hit again,"

Roberts said. "I took out my blanket to keep them warm but then I saw that the driver was leaving so I took off after him."

Roberts said he chased the car a short distance down the road and radioed the police for help.

When he caught up to the driver Roberts said he gave the car an nudge with his truck to get it to stop.

When it did, Roberts got out to confront the driver. But the vehicle came barreling down at him.

Bumps and bruises

"I could see what was happening so I kind of rolled with the hit," said Roberts. "I was hurt so I got up and by this time the guy and stopped, so I walked over, turned off his ignition, took out his keys and waited for police to arrive."

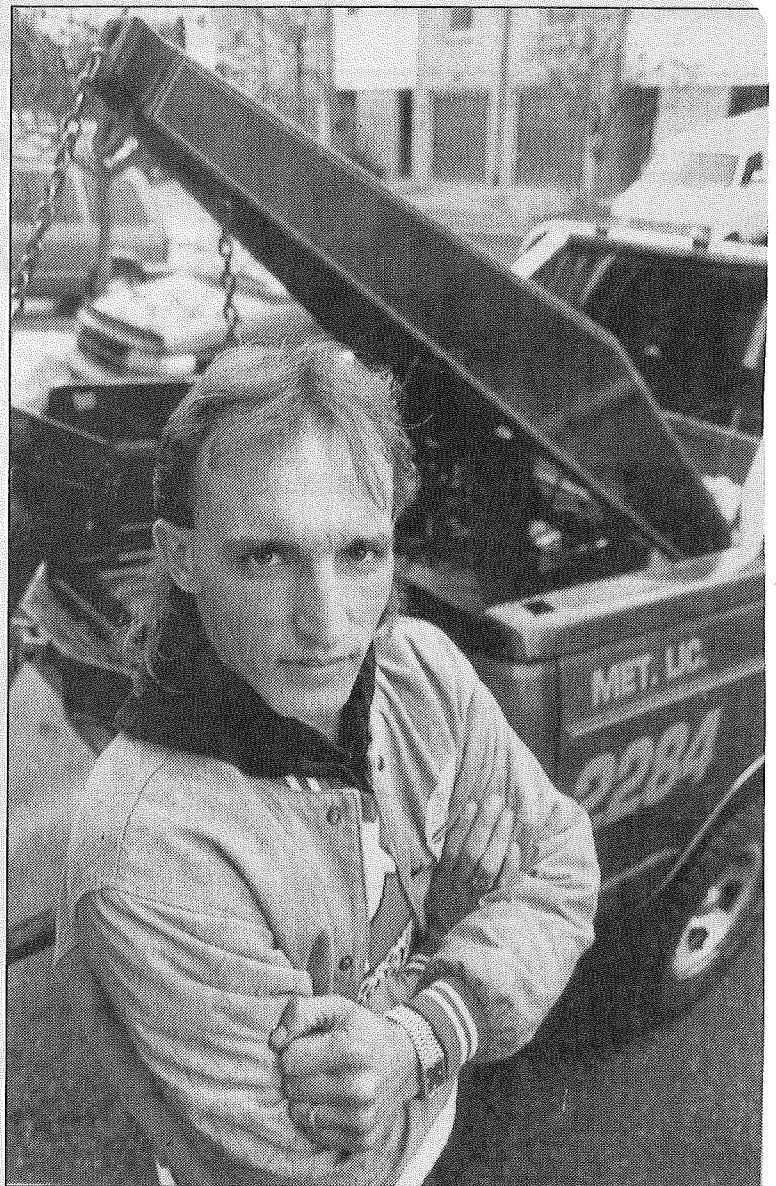
Although he did take some bumps and bruises, Roberts wasn't seriously hurt. He said that's because he's had a lot of on-the-job training diving out of the way of vehicles.

"I've been towing cars off of highways for 12 years, and you would be surprised at what happens," Roberts explained. "Passing cars are always driving up on the shoulder or swerving around you as you work. Over the years I've just gotten used to jumping out of the way."

Although he doesn't consider himself a hero, Roberts is being recommended by police for a civilian citation.

He said he would accept it but wants people to know that tow truck drivers are not just scavengers looking for broken down vehicles to be carted off.

He said he and others in his line of work also try to help out at accident scenes and often notify police



Staff photo by Rob Beinterna

Kevin Roberts says he just acted instinctively after chasing down a hit and run driver in his tow truck Sunday. The Clarkson resident, who was knocked down himself, said he is used to diving out of the way of cars.

when there are accidents.

"True, it's my job, but I always try to do the right thing," he said. "I know when my wife Belinda is out in the car with my daughter Kaytlin, that if something ever happened to them, someone would come to their aid."

Police have charged Zarko Radoja, 22, of Stoney Creek, with three counts of impaired driving causing bodily harm, and one count each of excess blood alcohol, failing to remain, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, and dangerous driving causing bodily harm.