

A Pittsburgh-area man apparently bent on killing himself and...

PITTSBURGH -- A Pittsburgh-area man apparently bent on killing himself and his wife was charged Wednesday with deliberately causing a four-car pileup that took the life of a college football star on the eve of his wedding.

Police said Lawrence Rodgers, 43, of Etna, charged with 20 offenses including criminal homicide, apparently plowed his car into oncoming traffic on Route 28 near Etna Friday night in a murder-suicide attempt.

Rodgers' stepson, who asked not to be identified, said the man drove north into the southbound lane because his wife had asked him for a divorce.

Killed in the wreck were Geneva College quarterback Edwin Hartman, 22, of Gibsonia, and his roommate, Keith Myers, 22, of Butler Township, Butler County.

They were returning with four others from Hartman's wedding rehearsal dinner when the crash occurred. Eight people were injured, including Rodgers and his wife.

In an affidavit filed in the Allegheny County coroner's office, Rodgers' wife, Nellie, 51, said she had pleaded with her husband to slow down just before the wreck.

She said Rodgers told her, 'I'm going to kill both of us,' then smiled and steered the car over the dividing line into the opposite lane where it hit Myers' car and triggered the pileup.

Hartman was to marry his high school sweetheart Saturday morning.

In addition to two criminal homicide counts, police charged Rodgers with criminal attempt to commit homicide, driving while intoxicated and eight counts each of aggravated assault and recklessly endangering another person.

'Our belief and our contention is that he did this deliberately,' said county police Sgt. Michael Stowell.

A blood-alcohol test on Rodgers gave a reading of .27 percent, nearly three times the .10 percent level at which a driver is legally considered intoxicated, authorities said.

Rodgers, described as an unemployed boilermaker, was ordered held at the county jail without bond. He faces hearings June 10 on the homicide charges and June 9 on the 18 other counts.

Mrs. Rodgers said in the affidavit her husband threatened her several times with death in the past and once fired a shot at her in a tavern where she worked.

Police said the Rodgers, who have been married about four years, were arguing about Rodgers' drinking when he steered into oncoming traffic.

Rodgers was released Wednesday from St. Francis General Hospital, where he was treated for a broken jaw, broken hand, broken ankle and cuts. His wife was listed in satisfactory condition at St. Margaret Memorial Hospital.

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