



## New London County Today

# Bus company settles lost leg suit

■ Southeastern Area Transit pays thousands to an impaired rider.

By GAIL ELLEN DALY  
*Norwich Bulletin*

**EAST LYME** — Geraldo Ferriera, 72, who lost a leg after it was crushed under the rear wheels of a Southeastern Area Transit bus, settled his lawsuit against the com-

pany for \$850,000 Monday. "Mr. Ferriera is elderly and suffers daily with his disability," attorney Robert I. Reardon said. "He's pleased he does not have to face a long trial and relive the horrible experience he went through."

A trial had been scheduled to begin May 28.

The June 12, 1996, accident took place after Ferriera, a retired ferryboat worker, had spent the afternoon in a New London bar.

"He told the bus driver he

had been drinking and wished to go home," Reardon said.

After Ferriera stepped off the bus at the intersection of North Bridebrook Road and Route 156 in East Lyme, he slipped and fell. Driver Thomas Poirer pulled away from the curb, not realizing Ferriera was not clear of the back wheels. His leg was crushed under the wheels of the moving bus.

A few days later, doctors amputated Ferriera's leg just above the knee.

"Mr. Poirer was quite disturbed by the accident and is still disturbed," Reardon said. "He said he looked in the mirrors and didn't see him."

Connecticut law says operators of common carriers are expected to exercise extra care when dealing with disabled or intoxicated passengers, Reardon said, adding the driver knew his passenger was elderly and drunk.

"What he did was legal and we encourage people

who have been drinking not to drive," he said.

Reardon said the bus company agreed to a settlement, recognizing it had a responsibility to impaired passengers.

No SEAT spokesman could be reached for comment.

Ferriera said he is looking forward to having enough money to order the proper prosthetic leg and pay for physical therapy and a new wheelchair.

"I just want this to be

over with," he said.

Medicare had paid for a prosthesis. Ferriera has been in a wheelchair because the leg did not fit and caused pain, Reardon explained. His Medicare benefits had reached their limit.

"He's in good health, considering what he's been through," Reardon said. "Now he wants to get out of the wheelchair and walk again."

Under Connecticut law the settlement must be paid within 30 days.