

I Threw It



I killed my wife by driving drunk...



April 20, 1994, was my wife's 25th birthday, but it passed without a celebration. It's not that I don't love my wife; I killed her by driving drunk.

I'm writing this story from my jail cell. Besides the devastation of losing my wife, I was court-martialed. I received a bad-conduct discharge, one year of confinement, forfeiture of \$550 a month for 12 months, and a reduction in grade to airman basic.

Like many couples, we had a promising future. We had a beautiful marriage and satisfying jobs at Misawa Air Base, Japan. I had been selected for promotion to staff sergeant and was scheduled to participate in the annual Gunsmoke competition. *[The Gunsmoke competition tests fighter and bomber aircrews on their ability to strike targets while facing simulated ground-to-air and air-to-air threats.—Ed.]* Though we had been married

slightly more than a year, we had traveled to places others only dream about. We looked forward to a life in the Air Force and all the benefits that accompany it. However, on Nov. 7, 1993, I threw it all away.

I decided to drive my wife home after a night of drinking and dancing. "I'm not drunk" I thought, as I reveled in the bottle of wine, a couple of beers, and a soju-based mixed drink I had consumed the previous four hours. In reality, though, I was drunk—I had exceeded my limit.

On the way home, I foolishly tried to keep up with a friend who was speeding in another car. I lost control in a curve I knew like the

All Away

By Scott A. S. Willeke,
Former USAF member

back of my hand. My vehicle slammed into a concrete utility pole, completely demolishing the passenger side and ripping my wife from the front seat. She was thrown headfirst into the concrete pole.

Who was I to have played God with her life and the lives of others? She didn't deserve to die that way—no one does. If you ever had met my wife, you would have known she was full of life and happiness. She seldom was seen without a beautiful smile, but now, no one ever will see her smile again.

If there's a lesson to be learned from this tragedy, it's this: Driving requires your best judgment and reflexes, so don't drink and drive because you'll eventually get caught. If you're lucky, you'll only have to pay a fine or have your driving privileges revoked. However, there's a good possibility you may end up like me—a convicted felon with an uncertain future.

My wife is dead and so is my career. It virtually will be impossible for me to find meaningful employment and obtain credit after my release from jail. On the balance, my sentence is a small price to pay for the lives I destroyed.

Unfortunately, my wife never had a say in what happened, and she paid the ultimate price for my crime. For those of you who would shrug off this article and say, "It won't happen to me," I beg to differ. ❏

Reprinted courtesy of the April 2002 issue of The Combat Edge, published by Air Combat Command, HQ ACC/SEM, Langley AFB, Va.

The FY02 Authorization Act significantly changed DUI limits as of Dec. 28, 2001. Now, the legal limit for a military DUI matches whatever the limit is in the state where the offense occurs. The DUI limit in most states is 0.08 BAC.

Drinking and the Prom: A Dangerous Mix

By Alvin Poussaint, M.D.,
and Susan Linn, Ed.D.

Some see prom night as a drinking rite of passage for adolescents, and recent statistics only affirm parents' concerns about teenage consumption of alcohol:



- Ninety percent of all crime on college campuses, including rape and murder, is alcohol-related.
- Nearly a third of all high school seniors report binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row).
- Nearly a third of teenagers report regular drinking (drinking on more than two occasions in the past month).

Talk to your teens about the consequences of drinking—diminished judgment, becoming more uninhibited, nausea, vomiting, hangovers, irritability, and sleep disturbances. Drinking too much too rapidly can cause alcohol toxicity that leads to unconsciousness and sometimes death. ❏

For more information, visit <http://familyeducation.com/>.

Reprinted courtesy of the April 2002 issue of The Combat Edge.