

When You Booze,

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On Dec. 14, 1983, a proud man with a promising career entered the Navy. On June 25, 2003—19 years, six months, and five days later—he was discharged under other than honorable conditions. He never will see a penny of his 20-year retirement, which, according to the 2003 Retired Military Almanac, is valued at \$361,838.

What happened? Between July 12, 1987, and Dec. 15, 2002, the Sailor was arrested and convicted **six times** for driving under the influence of alcohol. In one of those arrests, a police officer was sitting behind him at a stoplight. When the light cycled, the Sailor didn't move, so the police officer investigated and found the Sailor asleep, with a drink resting on the seat beside him.

On June 25, 2003, a judge in Escambia (Fla.) County Court sentenced him to 11 months and 15 days in the county jail, to be followed by three years of probation. The Sailor lost his driver's license for the next 10 years, and he was ordered to pay \$1,780 in fines and court costs. The judge said, "Son, alcohol has ruined your life."

In another local incident, a 24-year-old Sailor who lived in a base barracks consumed six glasses of wine and two shots of liquor at the Aces Club (housed in the barracks) between 2100 and 2400. He should have left the club, walked to his room, and gone to sleep, but he didn't. Instead, he decided to call his wife, but he first had to overcome a problem: He couldn't use his room phone to call long distance.

A phone-card machine was located in the lobby of his barracks—only 30 feet from the front door of the Aces Club—but the Sailor opted to drive to a Wal-Mart in Milton. He only made it to Highway



90 before Milton Police pulled him over for reckless driving. When he refused a breathalyzer test, the police arrested him for DUI.

A civilian court awarded the Sailor one year of probation (at a monthly supervision cost of \$50), a \$500 fine, \$293 court costs, and 10 days in jail (suspended). The court also impounded his car for 30 days and suspended his license for five years.

Adding to this Sailor's woes is the fact

his department has a standing SOP that prohibits alcohol consumption within eight hours of assuming a watch. He stopped drinking at 2400 and was scheduled to report to work at 0530, which means he would have reported to work impaired.

As it was, he still had a Captain's Mast—for being UA and disobeying a lawful order. His punishment included removal from all positions of authority, a reduction in rate (suspended for six months), 30 days of restriction (to the base), and 30 days of extra duty (to be served in two-hour increments after normal working hours each day).

Oh, and just about the time you probably thought this saga was coming to an end, another piece of info surfaces about the Sailor involved. He was allowed to enter the Navy on a waiver from a 1999 DUI. Now that he has completed an alcohol-treatment program, though, this Sailor cannot afford a second incident related to alcohol. If he has one, he'll end up like the first Sailor: discharged under other than honorable conditions.

The next time you have to consider whether to drink and drive, remember these two stories and make the responsible decision. Both your money and your freedom may be at stake. ■

You Lose