

In These Arms...

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“Home is just a short drive from the bar, and I’ve had only a few drinks.” Drunks often use this and similar excuses as they grab their keys and get behind the wheels of their cars. They aren’t concerned about getting stopped for a DUI, losing their license, or killing themselves. They’re not even concerned about maybe killing someone else.

My younger sister, an EMT, was enjoying a slow afternoon of work. She rides with a local transport service that takes mostly elderly patients to and from routine hospital appointments. She is trained to deal with extreme circumstances, but nothing could have prepared her for what she would see this day.

She was part of an ambulance crew driving to their next appointment when, a few blocks away, a young mother was pushing her 2-year-old son in a stroller down the sidewalk. The woman and her child had stopped at a major intersection to wait for the traffic light to change. As they waited, a car approached, with a driver who had had a few too many drinks. He lost control of his car and hit another one in the intersection—no big deal, right? Wrong!

The other car spun out of control, jumped the curb where the mother was standing with her son, hit the stroller, and sent the child flying into the street. My sister and her fellow EMTs arrived moments later, purely by accident. Realizing what had happened, my sister ran from the stopped ambulance to where the boy had landed. He still was breathing, but his skull was split from ear to ear. My sister wrapped his head with bandages to slow the bleeding. The little boy died in my sister’s arms.

Was grabbing the keys really worth it in this case? Let’s look at the results: a mishap, a child-

less mother still standing on the corner, and a little boy who won’t see his third birthday. How about the 23-year-old EMT who never will be able to erase the images of that child, covered in blood, who died in her arms? Meanwhile, the drunk driver walked away from the accident with no injuries.

Unfortunately, similar scenes play out again and again. Consider this account from a Kentucky State Police sergeant.—Ed.

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Years ago, when I was an EMT with an ambulance service, I had to hold a 22-year-old girl while the rescue squad cut her from a vehicle. A DUI driver had hit her head-on. She died in my arms, and I always said if I ever became a state trooper, I’d put all DUI drivers I stopped where they belong.

I’m proud to say that during 18 years of service, I’ve arrested about 2,500 DUI drivers. For about 10 of those years, I led the state of Kentucky in DUI arrests. Despite all these experiences with drunk drivers, I still don’t know why they don’t have better sense.

I remember a nighttime DUI incident that occurred Aug. 29, 1992, on the Daniel Boone Parkway in southeastern Kentucky. I was six miles from the accident scene and just had arrested another DUI driver when I answered the call.

The parkway incident involved a DUI driver who was speeding in a 1991 Chevrolet, with two passengers. The subject was traveling eastbound, and, when he came upon other cars, he would turn off his lights and pass them. Everything went OK until he approached a steep curve in the unfamiliar road and tried to get back in his own lane after passing another car. He met a 1979 Cadillac traveling westbound.

The Chevrolet started skidding sideways, and its left side hit the Cadillac. Five people died in this mishap.

When we drink, even “a little too much,” and get behind the wheel of a car, we risk more than our lives and careers. We risk the innocent lives of others. Think before you drink, and always have a designated driver. 

Thanks to Sgt. Richard Brown of the Lanett, Ala. Police Department for allowing me to use some info from his website at www.duipictures.com for this article.—Ed.

