

## Jensen: The costs of driving drunk are high

Contributed by Wendy Jensen  
Wednesday, 26 November 2008

Last month I wrote an article titled, "Collision was a turning point on Nov. 18, 2007." I received a lot of positive feedback from my readers and I thank you for that.

Since the holidays are coming up and my collision took place around the holidays I decided to elaborate a bit more on the consequences I had pay for the poor choice I made to drink and drive.

On Nov. 18, 2007, I was involved in a head-on collision on Highway 4 in Martinez. I chose to get behind the wheel of my car after a night of heavy drinking, got onto the freeway driving the wrong way.

"What idiot drives the wrong way on the freeway?" A question you may ask yourself. I did, it could happen to you or your mother, your father, sons or daughters, if you choose to drink and drive.

After the collision I was placed under arrest and charged with felony driving under the influence, driving on the wrong side of the road and causing injury. I spent Thanksgiving in the hospital and a few days later I was taken into custody where I spent the next seven months at West County Detention Facility in Richmond.

Christmas was approaching and I couldn't be there to see my daughter open her Christmas gifts or see her little face when she saw that Santa had been there the night before. Instead I was in jail where it was just like any other day. No decorations, no tree, no gifts, no Christmas carols, no family, no special dinner, no hugs and kisses.

What you get on Christmas Day from the jail is a warm TV dinner meal, being surrounded by strangers, the sounds of the deputy sheriffs shouting over the loud speaker and the sounds of your crying family over the phone wishing you were there with them.

Imagine talking to your children on the phone from jail and them asking the questions: "Why can't you be here? Why did you drink that bad stuff and wreck the car? When are you coming home?" These are very hard questions to explain to a 5-year-old.

My husband at the time, whom I had been together with since high school and married to for 11 years, had enough of my drinking; this was the straw that broke the camel's back for him. He filed for divorce, custody of our daughter and temporary ownership of our home.

This was not very easy to deal with while I was in jail. But it was me who made the choice to drink and drive. These are just a few of the consequences I had to pay for my actions. Others include three years' probation; three months of DUI classes which you have to pay for; one year suspended driver's license with no restrictions, which means that you also have to pay a lot of money when you do get it back; thousands of dollars in medical bills, court fines and fees; and, most importantly, the mental trauma I went through, knowing the pain I have caused to so many people.

The man I hit suffered severe injuries that included two broken femurs, punctured lungs, lacerated liver, a torn aorta, a crushed right hand and lacerations to his face. Imagine yourself being the cause of all that. He had to miss out on the holidays with his family as well. He had to go through countless surgeries and intense therapy. The pain he had to endure as a result of my actions was unnecessary.

In the blink of an eye, many lives were changed forever. Is it worth it? Seriously, think about how much you have to lose. Family, home, job, physical and mental health, possibly your or someone else's life, everything you have worked so hard for.

If these things mean anything to you, don't drink and drive or get into a car with anyone who has. If these things don't mean anything to you, then expect to do some jail time, then you'll have plenty of time to think of how much they do mean to you. Take it from someone who has to live with this everyday.

Don't get me wrong in any of the things I have shared with you. I'm not looking for sympathy or trying to make it sound like, "Oh, poor me." I got what I deserved and paid the price dearly for my actions. It's what I do from here on out that really matters to me.

I joined Team DUI in the hopes of making a difference, to help educate our youth and adults about the dangers of drinking and driving. I hope by sharing my personal experience with you that it will help you make the right choice about drinking and driving.

I hope you all have a safe and fun holiday season!

Wendy Jensen is a member of Team DUI, a group of local individuals and officials working to prevent underage drinking and drinking and driving.

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