

My Selfishness And Irresponsibility

My name is Pete W. I am 28 years old. I am writing this story because I am a drunk driver and, because of my selfishness and irresponsibility, my friend is dead.

March 1, 1997 began like any other day. At 2:30 pm, a friend came over and, while watching the Blackhawks game; we had a couple of beers. At 5:30 pm, I went next door for a birthday party and had a couple more beers. At 7:30 pm, I called two friends, Keith and Michelle. Keith and I coached gymnastics together, so we all decided to meet that night. Shortly afterward, Michelle called to see if Erin could come as well. Erin was a high school senior and on the gymnastics team. Immediately, I should have said, "no way". Instead I said sure, we just can't go to any bars. On my way to Keith's house at 9:00 pm, I stopped and picked up a case of beer. Once there, we decided to just hang out. About 12:30 am, we cleaned up and got ready to leave.

I was driving with Michelle in the front seat, Erin behind me and Keith behind Michelle. The road we were on narrowed. However, I was slow to react. We drove into a shoulder of gravel and I turned the wheel sharply to the left. Because I was drinking, my reaction time was off. As a result, I came out too far into the road. I turned back to the right, traveling 40 mph. The back end of the car whipped out and slid across the road, sideways.

I don't even remember hitting the telephone pole. I just remember being jarred. My first reaction was, that I looked to my right and saw Michelle standing in the street, unhurt and unscathed. I also, was unharmed. Then I heard Keith screaming about his hand. He cut it pretty bad and was bleeding horribly. I never thought for a second, that Erin might be hurt. I got out of the car and went to the back seat. That's when I saw Erin. She was bleeding profusely from her head and gasping for breath. When we slid across the road, we hit the telephone pole on the driver's side, rear door. Erin collided with the telephone pole and her skull was crushed. Michelle and I held Erin - told her to hold on - told her we loved her and listened to her gasp for life. She stopped breathing in our arms before the paramedics arrived. Erin was pronounced "dead on arrival" at the hospital.

Two weeks before the crash, Erin picked out her senior prom dress. Days later, she would be buried in it. Erin left behind a younger brother, Greg, a younger sister, Katie and two wonderful, loving parents. At the end of May 1997, Erin was scheduled to graduate from high school. Instead, Katie walked across the stage to accept her older sister's diploma. Erin was enrolled at Augustana University for fall. She would never earn one credit because of my selfishness and irresponsibility.

I don't have children, so I hope I will never know what I did to Erin's family. The closest I can come to, is my brother. If I ever lost him, it would be unimaginable. I cannot even begin to understand how they must feel. The pain and suffering I caused them is unbearable, all because I chose to drink and drive.

This crash will be with me everyday, for the rest of my life. I don't go one day without thinking of Erin and the future I took from her and her family. I lost my friend because of my selfishness and irresponsibility. I lost my friend because I chose to drink and drive.

Pete W.