

**I'm Eric and I'm writing to tell you how a drunk driver changed my life forever. That drunk driver is me.**

On February 20, 1993, I got behind the wheel of a car drunk. I killed Mr. Charles Hayes in a car crash. I took this man away from his children, grandchildren, friends and so many other people he was in contact with. The destruction to his family goes on and on. More than I can even tell you.

For me, I will have to live with killing Mr. Charles Hayes for the rest of my life. Yeah, suicide looks like a good option at times. I wake up every morning and have to look myself in the mirror, which is awful hard at times.

Yes, on January 21, 1994, I was sentenced to three years in prison, I should have gotten fourteen years which is the maximum sentence for reckless homicide. Prison is a living hell. Rapes, murder, fights, and riots at any time could happen. The Devil's playground, they call it. I deserved to be there.

<p>I got into recovery from active alcoholism and drug addiction a month after the crash happened, after trying to get sober on my own. Today, I am only alive by the grace of God and a twelve-step fellowship group.

The message I would like to get across is that you don't want to have to tell a family you are sorry for killing their loved one - if you don't want to go to prison - if you don't want to be suicidal - if you don't want to live with destroying a family. This is something I said would never happen to me. I drive better intoxicated. Lies I told myself to continue to drink and drive. Don't lie to yourself - this will and can happen to you if you continue to drink and drive. I am living proof of that.

Please think before you drink. Call a cab, designate a driver, I wish I would have. I want to thank AAIM for allowing me to share my story and speak at Victim Impact Panels.</p><p>Eric is a DUI defendant speaker at Victim Impact Panels in DuPage Co. He's been speaking for AAIM since he was released from prison. The sorrow and pain that he feels from killing Mr. Charles Hayes sends a strong message to the court ordered defendants attending the panel.