

America's Deadliest Drunk Driving Crash

Carrollton, Kentucky

May 14, 1988

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Chapter 1

America's Deadliest Drunk Driving Crash

On a warm Saturday night, the 14th of May just after 11 pm, 67 teens and adults from the First Assembly of God Church in Radcliff, Kentucky, were traveling home from Kings Island Amusement Park when they were hit by a truck heading the wrong direction on Interstate-71

(see Figure 1). The bus immediately rose up in flames and produced a thick, black smoke that trapped the patrons of the bus inside. Witnesses of the crash tried to help as many of the teens escape before they burned alive, but after a few minutes the whole bus was engulfed in a fiery surge (Schmidt). When the police and emergency rescue vehicles arrived at the scene, victims of the crash were quickly rushed to the hospital and

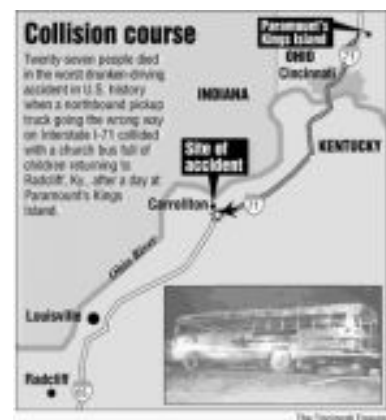


Figure 1: Depiction of Collision Course, <http://www.gendisasters.com/kentucky/4072/>

the driver of the truck was detained. The police identified the truck driver as Larry Mahoney, a factory worker from Worthville, Kentucky. Tests showed that Mahoney had a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .24 percent which was .14 percent over the legal limit in Kentucky at the time of the accident (Schmidt). Reports said that Mahoney drank on two different occasions earlier that day before he decided to get behind the wheel of his black Toyota pickup truck. When he hit the bus at speeds exceeding 55 mph, the truck was totaled but Mahoney only received minor injuries. The next day, he woke up in the hospital with no recollection of the crash, and was charged with 27 accounts of murder and sentenced to 16 years in prison. The gruesome 1988 drunk driving crash that killed 27 people was the first of its kind, and shed light on the problem

that thousands of Americans struggled with: drunk driving. With the support of victims' families and anti-drunk driving organizations, there was a new awareness for unsafe bus standards and insignificant drunk driving laws. Passionate survivors caused a "no drunk driving deaths on our nation's roads" movement that still resides in our society today.

During the years leading up to the crash, roughly 25,000 people died every year due to drunk driving crashes (Nunnallee). After World War II, urbanization caused an enormous increase in automobiles on the road and led to the creation of interstates that connected the continental United States. With a surge in motorists, driving under the influence seemed to plague the nation at this time in history. Statistics from 1986 claim that 23,987 people around the U.S. died from driving under the influence (DUI) accidents. In Kentucky alone, 44,484 people were arrested for DUI that year (Walder). As the Cold War was still an eminent part of everyday life for citizens of the United States, an analysis of alcohol sales stated that consumption had increased by three times since the start of the war (Hanson). Along with this, there was increasing pressure from the media that stated driving under the influence was not an issue. A Long Island opinion article titled "Drinking and Driving Can Mix," written by Philip Linker detailed how his experience of driving drunk for the past 25 years gave him a sense of responsibility. He claimed that millions of Americans like himself, are responsible when they drink, and even though they may be over the legal limit to drive, they are able to make it home. He believed that the laws that were set in place threatened many people's lifestyle, and rather than having government regulation, Americans should teach children to drink more responsibly. He pointed to the fact that most drunk driving incidents involved teenagers, so making it a social responsibility for parents to teach their children about the dangers would better suit this nation

(Lerner). Whether this is an invalid argument, arrogant statement, or plausible suggestion, the opinions presented by Linker resonated with many people at the time.

To fight the increasing problem of alcoholism and driving related accidents, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was established. This was an organization of mothers who had been directly affected by fatalities in drunk driving related crashes to raise awareness and stop the heinous crime. In a similar sense, the Commission on Drunk Driving was signed into order by President Ronald Reagan in 1982. This Commission was composed of anti-drunk driving advocates, politicians, police, insurance company executives, and alcohol companies meant to heighten awareness of the serious drunk driving problems (Lee). Just ten years before the crash, the federal government revised three of the bus safety standards and created three new laws. These laws included replacing highly flammable seat material from inside the bus, increasing the requirements for emergency exits, and installing a steel cage placed over the gas tank so that it could not be damaged in a collision (Thum).

The primary issue with the crash in Carrollton, Kentucky, was that Mahoney believed he could make it home safely. Furthermore, many of the standards for bus safety weren't implemented on the First Assembly of God Church bus because it was privately owned, creating the perfect storm for the disaster that occurred at 11 p.m. on May 14, 1988.

Chapter 2

The Catastrophe

It was a warm Saturday morning, a calm breeze filled the air as the flowers started to bloom. Just past noon Larry Mahoney had awoken from a long sleep after a 12 hour shift at the local industrial factory. He spent the afternoon at a friend's house socializing and drinking a few alcoholic beverages. One of his friend's mentioned that Mahoney seemed excited to see everyone and was very responsible with his consumption. After dinner Mahoney went to another friend's house where he decided to drink more alcohol, enough to get him heavily intoxicated. At one point his buddy decided to take away his keys, only allowing him to have them back if he promised to drive straight home (Kunen). He agreed, and left at approximately 10:30 p.m. in his black Toyota pickup truck. He did not drive straight home, instead he stopped at a gas station where he purchased more alcohol. Then he proceeded to enter the southbound lanes of Interstate 71, traveling north at speeds over 55 mph.



Figure 2: Scene of Carrollton bus crash, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news>

Mahoney drove a little over two and a half miles in the wrong lane before he hit the bus and his black Toyota pickup truck rolled four times before it came to a stop on the side of the interstate (see Figure 2).

Mahoney hit the bus on the front right side and within 1.94 seconds the church bus caught on fire. His vehicle finally came to a stop 80 feet to the right of the bus and he suffered minor injuries (Epperson). Witnesses of the crash claim that the bus driver could not have

avoided the crash because it was within seconds between the time that the driver saw Mahoney's headlights to the time the collision occurred. One of the survivors, Thomas Hertz, who was sitting three rows behind the driver claimed he saw motorcycle headlights racing the black Toyota pickup truck before it hit the bus (Gil). Almost instantly after the crash, the fire began in the front of the bus, blocking the doorway which created a situation where there was only one exit at the back of the bus. Children received burns on their hands from vinyl melting, burns on the backs of their ears from the paint dripping off the ceiling, and smoke inhalation from the toxic fumes generated by the fire.

When police and emergency response vehicles reached the scene the bus was completely engulfed in flames and victims were scattered around the bus. Firefighters extinguished the fire as the EMTs treated those in immediate need of medical care. Many of the young victims were taken to Norton Children's Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky, and others were brought to the burn unit at the University of Louisville Hospital. Here they underwent painful operations to clean burns and remove dead skin. This process known as "debridement" is a painful task where doctors use scalpels to cut out dead skin to aid the recovery of healthy areas (Norton). Ciaran Madden received 3rd degree burns over 67% of her body and said that the procedures gave her the most intense pain she has ever felt. Another survivor, Harold Dennis, said "the treatment was grueling" as he spent three months in the hospital after the crash. Dennis was an unusual case because he was severely burned in the face and had to have several skin grafts to reconstruct his facial complexion. When he was able to see himself in a mirror, Dennis was wretched, he could not recognize himself. This was not the worst part, Dennis carried a permanent scar and remembrance of the tragic night (Epperson).

Medical examiners claimed that the only cause of death in the bus collision was smoke inhalation or burn wounds, none of the victims received serious injuries from broken bones or impact damage (Yetter). Once the fire was doused, the examiners used a crane to load the bus onto a flatbed and deliver it to a temporary morgue that had been set up at the National Guard Armory in Carrollton (Gil). Investigators stated that the survivors were the people who decided to sit at the back of the bus or were the bigger and stronger males who were able to break the glass or push aside bodies (Epperson).

A number of funeral services began a few days after the crash. On Thursday, May 19, 1988 a service was held for most of the victims that took place at the North Hardin High School in Radcliff. Over 5,000 people gathered on the football field to share their condolences for the families of victims. Reverend W. Don Tennison, the pastor at the First Assembly of God Church in Radcliff, led the service with presentations from



Figure 3: Carrollton Bus Crash Memorial,
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12894909>

Kentucky State Troopers, survivors, and family members of victims that lasted over three hours. They pleaded that people take the time to comprehend what happened and accept the fact that they must move on and endure the strife (Cazares). In addition, the Ford Motor Company wished to provide their sympathy for the families involved. They purchased a memorial with the names of all 67 of the people aboard the bus during the crash engraved on black stones. They surround a statue of a man releasing doves that was donated by members of the *Courier Journal* who covered news of the crash. I believe that the man represents the crash and the death and the

doves flying away represents the victims being freed from their pain and suffering. The memorial is placed in the center of the North Hardin Memorial Gardens in Radcliff, Kentucky (see Figure 3). Along with this, a sign was placed on the side of Interstate-71 at the exact spot of the crash. The Kentucky Department of Transportation provided the funding for this memorial that states, “Site of Fatal Bus Crash May 14, 1988” (Epperson).

Chapter 3

27 Counts of Capital Murder

Larry Mahoney was raised with three siblings on a small family farm in northern Kentucky to parents Mary and John. Mahoney was not a talented student and spent most of his time in the outdoors hunting and fishing. As a freshman in high school he dropped out and instead decided to start a job at the local industrial factory. He was a good-natured boy and always wanted to do well. When his early marriage did not work out, he still made an effort to maintain a connection with his ex-wife and support his children. As his second marriage failed and he was plagued by medical bills he struggled with depression, but still managed to work hard. Friends said that Mahoney occasionally drank alcohol and had some incidents with law enforcement, but never meant to do any harm (Walder). He lived a fairly normal life that is why the news of the crash was so surprising to everyone who knew him (see figure 4).



Figure 4: Larry Mahoney spending time with his dogs on family farm, Ed Lallo/The LIFE Images Collection/

The crash from Larry Mahoney’s perspective, based on artifacts from the *People Magazine* archives titled “Driver Larry Mahoney Gets 16 Years for the Kentucky Bus Crash That Claimed 27 Lives” by James Kunen and “ Bus-Crash Driver Larry Mahoney: Some Say It Could Have Been Anyone” by Joyce Walder is depicted below.

* * * * *

“ I guess I did not plan for it to be this way, does anyone plan for it to be this way?”

While I don't really remember the night or crash, I vividly recall the morning of May 15th. As I awoke from a daze, I opened my eyes to see a room full of people. This was not normal for me, as my girlfriend was out of town and I had the house to myself. When I sat up my sisters greeted me with the news. The news that I never wanted to hear, news that made my stomach drop, eyes water, and head throb. My older sister, Judy, who is normally quiet and monotone, started by saying, "Larry, what were you thinking?" Then my other sister joined in claiming, "Larry you just took the lives of 27 innocent people. Teenagers that will never get to go to college, get married, have kids. Parents that will never be able to watch their children grow." Then they proceeded to tell me what had happened the night of May 14, 1988.

At first, I was reluctant to believe them, *how could I do something like this...it has to be a dream*, but as they explained the night in grave detail I knew. I knew that this was reality and I immediately started crying. Then moments later I was met by an officer who started to explain what would happen to me when I was out of the hospital. I was to face prison time or even death for my actions.

* * * * *

After Mahoney was let out of the hospital, law enforcement vigorously questioned him to find any motives behind the crime. Prosecutor Paul Richwalsky mentioned that Mahoney insisted that he did not regularly drink and drive, and that it was never his plan to hurt anyone. He was trying to become a better father and person by working long shifts at the local industrial factory. Mahoney claimed that on the morning of the 14th he was in a good mood and did not believe that he had consumed an exceedingly high amount of alcohol from what he could remember. He knew that he had made a poor choice to drink and drive, and that he would never

be able to change the actions of that night. The last words that Mahoney said to the prosecutor were addressed to the families involved in the crash, stating, “I’m really sorry, I know it is not going to make you feel any different towards me, but it is all I know to say” (Kunen).

Almost instantly after the news of the crash reached the public, people began to forgive Mahoney for his actions. Among them were family, friends, co-workers, community members, and some survivors of the crash. They all rallied behind the same idea, Mahoney was a good ole country boy with a strong heart, who made a mistake. In an interview with one of his co-workers, they stated “Larry was a hard worker. He was a good person, soft-hearted and went out of his way to help you when you asked for his help” (Epperson). Throughout the city of Worthville, where most of the victims and suspect lived, posters stating, “We’re with you, Larry” hung. People were quick to forgive Mahoney because they believed that it could have happened to anyone.

Those who initially condemned Mahoney for his actions believed that he needed to experience some of the pain and suffering that victims and their families dealt with in order for them to feel tolerance towards him. They were stuck on the fact that he deserved consequences, and the natural tendency to feel incredible despise against an offender. Personally, I believe that I would originally act the same way as the condemners, but would hope that I could forgive him because at the end of the day he is a fellow human: an imperfect individual just like myself.

On July 22, 1988, Judge Charles Satterwhite set bond for Mahoney at \$270,000 requiring him to attend a scheduled court date in November 1989. The bond was quickly paid and he was released, which sparked major arguments over a fair bond amount. Prosecutors believed that bonds over one million dollars would not suffice for the damage Mahoney had done (Associated

Press). Regardless, the case was taken to the Carroll County Courthouse and began on November 8, 1989 when a jury composed of six males and six females listened to the pleas of crash victims' families for Larry Mahoney to face a life sentence or even death (see Figure 5). Here Mahoney pleaded not guilty to 27 accounts of murder, arguing that the children and parents would not have died if the bus had met safety standards. Testimonies showed the heinous facts from the night of the crash, and prompted uncontrollable amounts of emotion from both sides. On December 22, 1989, the jury came to the conclusion that Mahoney was guilty and charged him with 27 counts of manslaughter in the second degree, 16 counts of assault in the second degree, and 27 counts of endangerment in the first degree. He was sentenced to 16 years in prison, with parole eligibility after eight years (Johnson).



Figure 5: Mahoney escorted into courtroom following Carrollton bus crash, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article>

While Mahoney sat in his jail cell at the Kentucky State Reformatory in Lagrange, community members and survivors tried to make sense of the disastrous night. One of the survivors, Ciaran Madden, visited Mahoney at the reformatory after he responded to a letter that she wrote. Like many others, she stated “He was very apologetic and remorseful” (Yetter). After a few years of dialogue between the two, Mahoney stopped responding to her letters. On September 1, 1999, Larry Mahoney was released from prison at the age of 46, after serving nine and a half years on a 16 year sentence (Deadliest Drunk Driver Freed). During his time in the reformatory he was acknowledged for good behavior and attained his GED. Today, Mahoney is 65 years old and lives with his wife in a small house in Owen County, Kentucky. He is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and has had little contact with survivors, their families, or the media

since his release. He shunned requests from Harold Dennis, a crash survivor, to be interviewed in the 2013 documentary “Impact after the Crash.” Dennis explained how he felt about the denial saying “If you are truly sorry, you would make an effort to make sure something like this doesn’t happen again. Speak to groups, schoolkids.” Another survivor, Tammy Darnell, stopped by his house and had a conversation with Mahoney. She said that he was very polite and surprised to see her, but did not appear interested in resuming contact (Yetter). He seems like he is very remorseful, but he will probably never share his story with others. One thing is for sure, he will live with the story for the rest of his life.

Chapter 4

Living Through the Crash

Personal account from Carrollton bus crash survivor, based on facts from “Carroll County Bus Crash Survivor Hopes to Change Minds with Moving Tribute” by Kaitlin Rust and “Survivors Still in Agony over School Bus Crash That Horrified a Nation” by Deborah Yetter.

* * * * *

“Hi, I am Quinton Higgins. I thought that I would take some time to share a vivid memory that I have been trying to forget for more than 30 years. A memory that has changed who I am today and has taken so many freedoms away from me and the 66 others involved. It only seems fitting to honor the 27 that passed and let me tell you a story that they aren’t here to be able to tell.”

It was a warm spring day, and our youth group at the First Assembly of God church was on our way to Kings Island Amusement Park. It was a two hour bus ride from Radcliff, Kentucky to Cincinnati, Ohio, and we were making good time on Interstate-71. You could feel the excitement in the bus as it was a day that all of us had been looking forward to for a while. I was invited by one of my friends who attended the church and it was my first time ever going to the park. We were planning on what roller coasters we would dare to ride and how many funnel cakes we could consume. When we reached the park, my buddies and I headed straight to the tallest ride in the park, right after our leader mentioned that we would have to be back on the bus at 9:30 pm when the park closed. I remember convincing my buddies to go on every ride in the park and overcoming our fear of the King Cobra. When we entered the bus at 9:30 pm, right on

time, we all fell fast asleep from the fun and exhausting day at the park. The nap must not have been longer than an hour because I will never forget what happened next.

I awoke as my head smashed the seat in front of me and I could hear the sound of metal scraping the side of the bus. Then screams of terror, and people frantically trying to figure out what happened. As I quickly stood up I could feel blood gushing from my arm that had been pierced by the metal bracket of the seat in front of me, and I looked around to see people displaced all over the bus. The smell of smoke and the intense heat started to overcome me as flames engulfed the bus that all 66 of my friends and I were in. I yelled to my friends, "Fire, Fire, get out of the bus!" as I was so overwhelmed by the event that I fainted and fell into the aisle of the bus. It must've not been more than a few seconds before I heard a voice that told me I needed to get out of the bus. So I abruptly got up and pushed my way through the already deceased bodies, as my skin felt like it was being charred off from the flames. It felt like an eternity before I reached out the back window for something, anything. I was met by a strong grip that yanked me out of the bus and carried me over to the median where I was met by a lady who tried her best to comfort me. I remember her saying that she would find my parents and that I would be alright. When I looked back, I saw remnants of the bus immersed in flames and instantly thought of all my friends that were still in it. The idea of them, hopeless, being cremated by the fire, was too much for me to handle as I fell in and out of a state of shock. The next thing I remember is the bandages covering my face and my dad crying as I looked up at his face. My dad never cried so I knew that something terrible had happened. After four days in a hospital bed, I was finally able to eat, but I spent the next few weeks on and off of my oxygen tube. I was finally able to leave the hospital after a month or so and my outlook on life had completely changed by then.

When I was first asked if I would ever ride on a bus again, I would have told you not in a million years. The day I was laid off from my civilian job at Fort Knox and my daughter was heading off to college soon, I knew I was in need of a steady income to provide for her. That's when I accepted a position as a bus driver for the Hardin County Public School system. After a while I began to enjoy the job, but I still had a lot of emotions from the crash that I felt I needed to share. I felt like it was the perfect break when one of my friend's pointed me to a used bus for sale on Craigslist. I decided to purchase the bus, and over time I turned the bus into a memorial for the 27 that died on the night of the crash. Today, I drive the bus to public speaking events where I tell teenagers and children my story. Then they get a chance to go on the bus and look around, a sobering experience for many.



Figure 6: Quinton Higgins sitting on his memorial bus,
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news>

Do I ever wonder why I survived and my best friends, Richard, Josh, and Anthony did not? Of course, not a day passes by when the idea crosses my mind. I used to think that I would be better off if I was among them. But it was my family, friends, and church members that made it clear to me why I am supposed to be here today. It's not because I had any bigger dreams or aspirations, it was because I had the potential to share my story and their stories so everyone could know what it was like. So everyone can know how a simple decision can change the course of someone's life. My purpose is less of a great story of power and victory because I made it, its a chance to make an impact so others do not make the same choice that Larry Mahoney did.

Chapter 5

Are Buses Safe Enough?

On the night of May 14, 1988, Larry Mahoney's black Toyota pickup truck hit the front of the First Assembly of God bus. During the impact, the truck punctured a 2.5 inch hole in the 60 gallon gas tank that sat under the chassis at the front of the bus just to the right of the driver.

Within three minutes the whole bus was engulfed in flames and 27 people collapsed dead on the bus. Reports from the lead medical examiner on the case, George Nicholas, stated that nobody would have died if the bus did not catch on fire. That all of the kids on the bus either died because of significant burns or smoke inhalation



Figure 7: First Assembly of God Church Bus after the crash,
<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news>

(Kunen). This was a monumental statement and turned much of the blame on the companies that manufactured the bus, Ford Motor Company and Sheller Globe Corporation.

The bus that was involved in the drunk driving crash was built on March 23, 1977, just nine days before national standards to improve bus safety were released. When this news reached the families who were directly affected by the crash, they were furious. Many of the families decided to take Ford Motor Company and Sheller Globe Corporation to court. They claimed that these companies knew about potentially lethal defects and failed to correct them before they were permitted to be in service. It was stated that tens of thousands of buses with possible defects were in service at the time of the crash (Kunen). After just a few weeks of discussion, Ford Motor Company settled with 64 of the families. They promised roughly a million dollars each to

families who lost a loved one and 750,000 dollars each to families with a member who was injured in the crash. In addition, Ford vowed to contribute 500,000 dollars to support drunk driving awareness (Kunen). For many of the families accepting the settlement was necessary because they had become burdened by all of the medical bills. The question that haunted others was the fact that the company could place a dollar value on a human life. For two of the families, the settlement was not enough and they offered Ford and Sheller a one dollar settlement if they recalled all of the buses that did not have a metal guard around the gas tank and were in service. Ford refused because they believed that their buses were not defective. While these families were never able to come to an agreement with the bus manufacturers, it did not stop them from bringing bus safety standards to national attention (Epperson).

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) is in charge of establishing the standards for bus safety. They figured that there were three problem areas in the manufacturing of buses that Ford failed to address when they built the First Assembly of God Church bus. These issues included seats that were made from very flammable material, placement of the gas tank that was prone to puncture during a collision, and an absence of emergency exits.

The standards established on April 1, 1977 are still in place today, and all buses registered in the United States have to comply with them (see Figure 8). The standard, FMVSS-301, addresses the need for a metal cage to be built around the gas tank so that it would have more protection against puncture. In 2003, the standard was upgraded and required that the tank be placed at the rear of the bus between the metal chassis. Along with this, school buses use less flammable diesel gas to ensure that a collision would not spark a fire similar to the flames on

closer than those in passenger vehicles making collisions less abrupt and destructive (Lee).

Personally, I rode on a school bus almost every week to hockey and lacrosse games throughout my high school career. Not once did we have a collision, and in most cases I felt safe on the bus.

The only time that I could see an issue with safety is if the bus was to roll over or students were to stand on the seats or in the aisles while the bus moved. After all of the research I have conducted and experiences I have had, I believe school buses to be the safest vehicle on the road.

Chapter 6

The Need for Change- Drunk Driving Laws

In the early 1980's legislation that addressed drunk driving was insignificant for the amount of people that consumed alcohol and decided to drive. Leading up to this decade, the U.S government did little to raise awareness yet alone take control of the problem. According to the book: "One for the Road: Drunk Driving Since 1900" the period between 1950-1979 was known as the golden age for drunk driving. Cars were fast and comfortable, roads were smooth, and drunk driving penalties were light. Often policeman would drive the intoxicated motorist home and tell them to "go easy next time." Jurors, many of which have driven drunk before were reluctant to convict DUI suspects (Lerner). The first action of the government to step in on the problem occurred in 1984 when congress passed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act (see Figure 9). This was a measure that required states to raise their minimum purchase and public possession of alcohol age to 21. If they did not comply they lost a large sum of funds to enhance the highways in their respective state (Hanson). Many states did not initially respond to this act because a lot of the revenue on the purchase of alcohol came from individuals under the age of 21. In addition, states began to require sobriety checkpoints on highways that inspected people for impaired driving. They would stop people at a random interval (ex. every 10th car), but this demand was in great controversy because it violated state constitutions.



Figure 9: President Reagan signing the 1984 National Minimum Drinking Age Act, www.youthrights.org/issues/drinking-age

When the drunk driving crash in Carrollton, Kentucky, caught recognition from the national news, many people questioned the value of the laws that were in place at the time. After the suspect, Larry Mahoney, was sentenced to prison, the government turned its attention to fixing the laws that were in place in an effort to end the battle with drunk driving. In the year of 1990 the U.S Supreme Court upheld Security Checkpoints as constitutional and they spread across the nation. A few years later in 1995, the federal government passed the Zero Tolerance law which declares that it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drive with any amount of alcohol in their system. By 1998, all 50 states adopted this law which was a crucial step in the right direction because alcohol consumption was an increasing problem among teenagers at this time. By the change of the century DUI related deaths decreased by roughly 40%, but most people believed this was not sufficient (Nunallee). It was nearing the end of Bill Clinton's second term as president, and he was working with MADD representatives to decrease the acceptable BAC levels for motorists. In 2000, he signed into law an act that lowered the limit level of BAC from 0.10% to 0.08%.

Today, there has been a push by many federal government agencies and awareness organizations for individuals to plan a safe ride home before consuming alcohol. This has become very simple with new rideshare programs like Uber and Lyft, in which people can call for a ride home with the push of a button. Programs like these have been particularly effective on college campuses, like the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities. In the cold winter months when people can't walk home from parties, Uber provides a quick and safe way to find a ride. Every state has different regulations and penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol. In Kentucky, 1st time offenders face 2-30 days in jail and a 500 dollar fine in addition to 30-120

day license suspension and 6 months with an ignition interlock device. On the other hand, repeat offenders spend anywhere from 1-12 months in jail, pay a 1,000 dollar fine, have a license suspension of 1-3 years, and 1-2 years with an ignition interlock device. According to Kentucky's DUI laws, drivers under 21 years of age can be convicted of an underage DUI for driving with a BAC of .02% or greater. A conviction does not carry jail time but does result in a 30 day to six-month driver's license revocation, a substance abuse program, and either a fine of up to \$500 or 20 hours of community service (Kentucky DUI & DWI Laws & Enforcement).

What is the difference between a DUI and a DWI? This was one question that prevailed throughout my research. It seems as though both are used to describe someone who has chosen to drive drunk, but they differ in the level of intoxication. Some states choose to use only one of the terms to delineate drunk driving, but in states that use both, a DUI would mean a lesser charge than a DWI. This is quantified in terms of blood alcohol content, with a 0.1-0.18% being a DUI and 0.18% and over considered a DWI. Recently, the term DUID has entered the scene and is used to depict a driver under the influence of drugs. Based on the state each offense carries its own fine, jail time, or suspension.

The ignition interlock system is a device that is installed in a motor vehicle that detects alcohol and will not let the driver start the car if there are any traces of alcohol found. Along with this, the system periodically prompts drivers to use the device while driving to make sure they are not under the influence. Almost all 50 states have passed laws that require repeat offenders to use these devices as part of their conviction. In addition to the device, drivers are required to obtain a new "ignition interlock license." This serves as their ID during the period with the device and if the driver is found in a car without the device or has removed it they are subject to

an extended time with the device, fines, and imprisonment (Ignition Interlock Device (IID) Law and Legal Definition).

“Whiskey plates” or other sources of identification for drunk driving offenders are becoming required in most states (see Figure 10). In Minnesota, repeat offenders have a WK in front of their license plate numbers that signify that they are drunk driving offender. This helps police and other drivers easily identify people with a higher probability of drunk and distracted driving. In other states, drunk driving offenders have plates that are bright yellow and red, and have a serial number that is easily recognizable by police (Minnesota Special License Plates).



Figure 10: Minnesota Whiskey Plate, <https://www.barrysedwardslaw.com/2013/08/whiskey-plates>

Chapter 7

MADD Fights Back

Founded in 1980, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is the largest U.S anti-drunk driving nonprofit (see figure 11). It began a few months after a 13-year-old girl, Cari Lighter, was struck by a drunk driver when she was walking to a church carnival. Cari became the face of the organization that sparked a movement that has spread awareness for the crime and reduced drunk driving fatalities by roughly 50% over the past 38 years (Nunnallee). Before the crash in Carrollton occurred, MADD played a significant role in the process of passing a law that decreased the allowable BAC from 0.15% to 0.10%. They also had an influence in the act that required states to change the minimum drinking age to 21. By 1988, all states passed laws and MADD was deep into a designated driver campaign.



Figure 11: Mothers Against Drunk Driving Logo, brandingsource.blogspot.com/2011/04

The drunk driving crash that occurred in Carrollton, Kentucky, on May 14, 1988 granted many survivors and people affected the chance to spread awareness. In 1998, Karolyn Nunnallee, the mother of a 10 year old girl that was lost in the crash, became the face of MADD as the national president. Nunnallee recognized the importance of drunk driving awareness and used the emerging internet platform to spread her message. That year Madd.org was created and is where the organization began to share stories and provide resources to victims of drunk driving crashes. Much of the early 2000's were focused on the hard-fought battle of getting all 50 states to pass the 0.08% BAC law. Through great persistence, MADD helped all states enact the law by

2004 (Nunnallee). MADD understood that they needed to reach all ages of people in order to effectively spread awareness for drunk driving crimes. They also acknowledge that most people consume alcohol at social gatherings like sporting events, concerts, and parties. In 2010, MADD partnered with the National Football League (NFL) to create a designated driver pledge program where stadiums promote the importance of having a designated driver. Popular players would be on the display board and TV during intermissions, asking people to pledge to be a designated driver or find one. Starting with just two teams, the program has grown to 14 teams who spread the awareness (Nunnallee).

Over the past 38 years MADD has changed to meet the needs of a dynamic society. A few of the major changes include advancing drunk driving awareness on a diverse media platform, introducing victim services, and meeting with government officials to increase anti-drunk driving legislation. In 2016, MADD changed its mission statement, it now declares, “The mission of Mothers Against Drunk Driving is to end drunk driving, help fight drugged driving, support the victims of these violent crimes and prevent underage drinking” (Nackers). The battle is now being fought on the same landscape but involves a new array of opponents: distracted drivers, drugged drivers, and careless teenage drivers. Distracted driving encompasses all forms of multi-tasking while in an automobile. Some of the most common are texting and driving along with eating and driving. These type of drivers amount to approximately 400,000 injuries and over 3,000 deaths on United States’ roads each year (Teensafe). In addition, drugged driving accounts for 43.6% of all driving related accidents. This problem is on the rise as drugs are becoming more prevalent in communities across the nation. Much of this is due to the legalization of marijuana and addiction of opioids.

To combat these issues MADD has teamed up with the NHTSA and police officers from all over the United States to research and develop better ways of recognizing drugged driving. MADD uses its vast amounts of supporters to financially reinforce programs that educate police officers on drugged driving. One in particular is the Drug Evaluation and Classification (DEC) program that is a 12-week course that trains police officers on how to identify a driver under the influence of drugs. This is in an effort to not only help our police officers be more observant, but make our roads safer (Nunallee).

Chapter 8

Will It Ever End?

It is apparent that our society still struggles with drunk driving today, as two in every three people in the United States are impacted by drunk driving in their lifetime: whether it be immediate involvement or knowledge of a loved one affected. Every 51 minutes someone on the highway dies from a drunk driving crash, and every two minutes someone is injured (Nunallee). It is also evident that our roads are congested and not safe. More than 26,000,000 students ride on school buses each day, add in extracurricular activities and the school bus system is the single largest mode of public transportation in the United States (American School Bus Council).

If you asked me if drunk driving crimes will ever end I would give you a rather blunt answer with a great amount of emotion attached. "I hope so." As time has passed, awareness and activism for these crimes has dramatically increased. In addition, prevention technology, legislation, and societal awareness has changed. However, consuming alcohol has become a social norm, drug use and other forms of distracted driving have been introduced, and more than 300,000,000 automobiles are found on the road in the United States (American School Bus Council).

The problem taking place is that laws do not stop intoxicated people from making poor decisions, technology does not prevent flawed judgement, and awareness is rarely accompanied by action. Research shows that a person has reached the legal limit BAC of 0.08% after 3-4 drinks (12 oz beer, 1.5 oz shot, or 5 oz glass of wine) in an hour (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). After this a person is considered legally drunk and judgement, perception,

decisioning making and attention are all altered. At this time an intoxicated individual cannot make a rational decision, and there is little to prevent a poor decision from being made. The best way to reduce the problem is to have conscious discussion between sober individuals before drinking occurs to decide who will be the designated driver. Technology has tried to stop the problem, but it has malfunctions and many loopholes. So unless we, as a nation, take action to prevent our friends, family, and peers from getting behind the wheel while they are intoxicated, the statistics will remain unchanged.

Safety is the feeling of being secure and protected from danger or hazard. There are many different methods to acquire a safe state of being, but in the end we will never be able to obtain a complete sense of security. The only thing we can do lies in our moral responsibility: to look after others' well-being and be aware of how our actions have consequences. In an ever changing and imperfect world, stricter drunk driving laws and safer buses have attempted to help resolve the problem. Now it is up to individuals to make the right choice when they get behind the wheel, this is the only way to prevent a tragedy like the one in Carrollton, Kentucky, that took 27 lives.

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