



Alcohol Abuse

By Steven Saldivar

BECAUSE of great personal loss, I have chosen to live an alcohol-free life and hope others will choose the same—or at least drive sober. A few years back my dad received a phone call that his cousin had been involved in a fatal car accident earlier that morning. At that point we did not know all the details, all we knew was that he was headed to his sister's house, had lost control of his vehicle and hit two power poles which caused the car to catch fire. He had been killed on impact. Needless to say my entire family was devastated by the news, especially because he was only 21.

Eventually, we learned the facts about the accident: and alcohol was involved. This really was no surprise and was what we had suspected all along. My dad's cousin and his entire family have had a long history of misusing alcohol. In fact this young man's brother, many years earlier, had also been involved in an accident—due to alcohol—that also almost took his life. Even after that incident, their family continued with this same lifestyle and ended up paying a very high price.

After the funeral we went to his parent's house. Everyone was walking around in disbelief of what had hap-

pened. As I think back on that day it seems like everything was in slow motion. The house was packed with family and friends. Some people were crying, some were recounting the last moments that they had shared with him, and others were retelling the details of the accident. His brother said that the morning of the accident he had been on his way to work and saw his brother's car but did not recognize it. The car was actually still on fire; it was completely mangled and had a power pole sticking out of it. He thought to himself, "There is no way that person made it out alive," all the while not knowing it was his brother's car.

Everyone mourned in his own way, but the thing that I remember most was that everyone there was drinking. I didn't understand this! They had just lost their son because he had made the decision to drink and drive and yet people would come, drink, and drive home. Everyone just blamed fate instead of the lifestyle that he had chosen to live, and the lifestyle that even now they were continuing to live. The thing that caused their sorrow was the very thing they were using to heal their pain. To me it was unbelievable that they could be drinking at a time like that,

especially under the circumstances.

I was able to see the pain that just one person's reckless behavior could cause for so many. It made me think about how the decisions I make not only affect me but also affect everyone around me, especially the people I love the most. Since this Incident, my sister and I have both made a decision to steer clear from this type of lifestyle. I do not want my life to be cut short. I want to live out the life I was intended to live.

This family has continued to live their life as usual. The tragedy really has not affected how they view alcohol and its negative effects. I question if they have learned anything at all from the death of their son, brother, friend. As far as I can tell, they have not made any changes where alcohol is concerned. I do believe some good came from the accident. I for one have learned a valuable life lesson that I will never forget. I have made a personal decision to abstain from alcohol completely and avoid places where I might be tempted or persuaded to drink. His car has been donated to the local police department. They placed what is left of the burned mangled piece of metal, on a trailer along with a poster that tells his story. The car is taken to different places, events and schools around the Treasure Valley to warn of the dangers of drinking and driving.

As you read this, I hope it will make you think twice before you ever make the decision to drink and drive. He had to learn the hard way, but you do not have to. Learn from this young man's mistake so that your loved ones will not have a tragic story to tell. If this story helps even one person make the decision not to drink and drive, then some good has come from the tragedy, and his death is not completely in vain. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Steven Saldivar is a recent high school graduate from Oregon. *Alert Magazine* congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.