

My first DUI:

I thought I could make it home. It wasn't that late, and it wasn't that far. I was okay a little bit loaded.

This huge red light fills all my rear view mirror. I pull off the road and start to open my door and a P.A. system that sounds like God says, "Stay in the car." The cop comes up and asks for my license, tells me to take it out of the little plastic holder, asks for my registration, shines his flashlight in my face, asks me to step out of the car and touch my nose and walk ten steps - heel to toe - and turn around and come back and recite the alphabet. Then he tells me I'm under arrest and explains my rights and I get cuffed and put in the back of the patrol car and half-sit, half-lie there for a half hour and I really need to find a bathroom and then a tow truck comes and my car goes somewhere and I get taken to the station and they give me a breath test twice that says I'm drunk and I'm photographed and fingerprinted and get my watch and my wallet and my shoelaces and other stuff taken away from me and I'm put in a holding cell with a couple dozen really messed up people-dopers and drunks and enough crazy, scary people to last me a lifetime. Then, about three hours later I'm taken out of the cell and asked if I know why I'm there, and I tell them "for driving drunk" which is the winning answer. One guy couldn't tell them why he was there, so he stayed. They give me my stuff back, and a citation that says I'm losing my license for four months starting a month from now, a court date two weeks from now, and a temporary license so I can drive for thirty days, and a receipt for my car and let me go.

Its five thirty Tuesday morning, the first day of the rest of my DUI. And, you know what? That was the easy part.

I got to work late that first morning, told everybody I had "car trouble", tried to get my car back from the impound man on my lunch hour. Two hours and \$187 in cash later, I'm back at work -late- and my boss is really ticked at me now. I tell him I'm sorry. Somehow I know I'm going to be saying that a lot.

I spent all day Saturday at the DMV. I can apply for a restricted license. It cost \$100, and you have to prove that you're insured. You need a letter from your insurance

company, so when the insurance company finds out about the DUI, my premiums go from \$1,400 a year to 4,100.

I get a restricted license for five months that lets me drive to and from work and my DUI classes. That's it. (If they catch you driving anywhere else, they take your car.) The classes cost \$500 and last 15 weeks. Every week for fifteen weeks

for two hours. If you liked traffic school, you'll love the DUI program. There are classes and group and individual counseling and three one-on-one personal interview sessions where they decide if you're serious drunk or just a screw-up.

Well, that's pretty much it.

Until the trial.

It's a criminal trial. With a first offense and a guilty plea, I get off easy-with a \$480 fine plus a special assessment for the county court system-another \$816.

I get 48 hours of jail time, but the judge waives jail if I'll spend two Saturdays picking up trash on the highway. And pay them for the privilege. \$22 a day. ("No problem, your honor!" I'm never going back to jail.)

I owe the court \$156 for the cost of booking me. And a \$100 fee that goes into a fund for victims of drunk drivers. And another \$50 for an alcohol abuse education fund. And a fee to support the night court: \$1. And - for another \$20 - two nights listening to DUI victims and their families. That was the worst.

I don't have that kind of money so I arrange to pay in installments. There's a \$35 charge for that.

I said I was through with the DMV. I wasn't. They send me a bill for \$10 for updating my file, and a notice that driving drunk was worth two points on my driving record that stay there for seven years. And I'm on probation for 3 years.

My boss called yesterday. He said I probably ought to start looking for another job. I wanted to argue, but there wasn't much point to it.

You want to guess how much my DUI cost? I'll do the math for you.

The fees, fine and assessments added up to \$5,249.

You can get a lawyer if want. There wasn't much mine could do, and she cost me a couple thousand bucks.