

## POINTS OF VIEW

# Why allow drunken drivers to repeat crime?

**T**he incalculable suffering imposed on our society by drunken drivers must stop.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), over 20,000 people die each year in alcohol-related traffic accidents. More than 300,000 people are injured annually in crashes that involve alcohol. About 85,000 of those injuries are serious.

NHTSA reports that traffic accidents are the greatest single cause of death for every age category between 6 and 33. Nearly half of those accidents are alcohol-related. Further, nearly 250,000 people died at the hands of drunken drivers from 1982 to 1992.

Translated another way, that is over four times as many fatalities as America incurred during the entire Vietnam War.

If you or your loved ones have not been impacted by a drunken driver, consider yourselves fortunate. Statistics show that two in every five Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related accident in their lifetime. Why does our society tolerate drunken driving?

Why do we allow drunken drivers the opportunity to repeat their crimes? Why is alcohol abuse considered less of a problem than illicit drug abuse?

## Why they keep killing

The leniency of our judicial system toward drunken drivers is a significant reason why repeat offenders continue to kill and injure thousands of motorists each year.

Our laws are engineered toward plac-

ing the rights of drunken drivers ahead of their victims. Americans should demand legislation that would attach extremely harsh penalties to those who drink and drive.

Groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) have been instrumental in changing legislation that has stiffened penalties for drunken driving.

As a result, 20 percent fewer people lost their lives in alcohol-related accidents in 1990 than in 1980. In addition, the number of all traffic fatalities involving alcohol dropped nearly 10 percent.

Thus, it appears that tough legislation reduces drunken driving. However, our laws are still not tough enough.

The way to significantly reduce drunken driving is to remove offenders from our roads and highways. I propose that first-time offenders should lose their license for one year and be fined \$2,000.

In addition, those arrested should be identified in local newspapers. Persons arrested for drunken driving a second time should permanently forfeit their privilege to drive.

## What should be done

No ifs, ands, or buts. In addition, a second-time offender should be fined \$5,000, forfeit ownership of his or her vehicle, serve a mandatory six-month jail term, and be identified in local newspapers.

Further, those caught driving with a terminated license due to drunken driving should automatically serve two years in prison.

## QUEST COLUMNIST



RAYMOND M. DUBIN

If these proposals seem too harsh, consider the sentences that are imposed on the victims of drunken drivers. They include death, dismemberment, paralysis, broken families, lost dreams, and so on.

Drunken drivers should be treated like criminals. In fact, most conventional criminals generally inflict less hardship on their victims than do drunken drivers. Most Americans could not afford to lose their driving privileges.

Therefore, millions of people would alter their behavior if they knew that their actions would result in harsh and certain punishment.

In Farmington Hills, local merchants and restaurants have been cited for violating liquor laws by selling or serving alcohol to underage police cadets. In some instances, local restaurants have served alcohol to cadets every time a sting was conducted.

At no time did the fines exceed \$1,000, and most of the fines averaged between \$200 and \$300. Obviously, cur-

rent laws do not provide much incentive for compliance.

## No third chances

I propose that the first offense for selling or serving alcohol to a minor would result in a \$5,000 fine. The second offense should be the last — because the offender's liquor license would be revoked.

No ifs, ands, or buts. These harsh penalties would inspire restaurants and liquor retailers to better train their personnel and to take additional precautions so as not to sell or serve alcohol to minors. Our laws should cater to the safety of our citizenry rather than to special interests.

Another aspect to consider is why Americans glorify the use of alcohol. Business lunches often revolve around alcohol. Alcohol is commonly found at dinner tables.

It is abundant at sporting events, weddings, and most social gatherings. Have people lost sight of the fact that alcohol is an addictive drug? It appears that our society has not learned the lesson of alcohol addiction.

Broken families, spouse abuse, neglected children, lost jobs and failing businesses are some of the consequences of alcohol addiction.

Reduced alcohol consumption would have countless benefits. Auto insurance rates would drop. Increased productivity in the workplace is certain. Families would spend more time together. In addition, sickness and disease brought on by alcohol abuse would be reduced.

Attitudes toward the use and abuse

of alcohol must change. Community awareness programs such as those sponsored by MADD are effective in educating students and communities about the hazards of drinking and driving.

One example is MADD's red-ribbon campaign (tying red ribbons on cars), which has been well-received throughout the country. In fact, MADD distributed over 60 million red ribbons in 1990 alone. It may be largely symbolic, but it does draw attention to the problem of drunken driving.

The evolution of MADD from a two-chapter, grass-roots effort in 1980 to 400 chapters in 46 states in 1990 demonstrates that many people are taking positive steps to address the problem of drunken driving. It should be noted that MADD is not comprised of just mothers.

In fact, MADD prides itself on the diversity of its members. Doctors, lawyers, students, businessmen, etc. volunteer their time for this worthy cause. MADD's local chapter is located in Bloomfield Hills and can be reached at (810) 253-1700.

Although extremely harsh penalties may not dissuade everyone who may choose to drink and drive, they certainly would deter most people who need to preserve their driving privileges.

The time is now to stop all this senseless suffering imposed on all of us by such a small number of selfish people.

Raymond Dubin owns Animal Crackers Day Care in Farmington Hills. He's lived in that city for 10 years.

# Shareholders' meeting reflects bank's troubles

**T**here was a siege mentality at Michigan National Corp. when the financial services company held its annual shareholders' meeting last week. We in the press corps were issued tickets that said on the back:

"THERE ARE NO CAMERAS OF ANY TYPE ALLOWED IN THE MEETING. ANYONE WITH A CAMERA WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE PREMISES."

If you take a camera into an art museum, you're asked to check it at the

door. At Michigan National, you're asked to leave.

Chairman Robert Mylod's job is at stake, though not his money. One-third of the shares were voted against his slate of directors. Mylod has enough stock and a "golden parachute" of three years' salary plus pension if, at 54, he were fired tomorrow; he could retire in luxury; if he dies, his widow collects the pension for the rest of her life.

But a lot of shareholders think the bank is underperforming so badly that



TIM RICHARD

it should be sold.

Someone asked Mylod, "Does the significant no vote tell you anything?" Mylod's non-answer: "We will take that into consideration."

A representative of Heine Securities, the New Jersey holder of 5.5 percent of MNC's stock, said he would love to know how the employees voted. "Confidential," said Mylod. "Morale would be better if we could stop reading about ourselves in the newspapers."

If MNC performed so poorly during

prosperity, asked a shareholder whose name I couldn't catch, what will happen when times get tough? "We've been over that," said Mylod.

To paraphrase Shakespeare's Henry IV, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown — even if it's a diamond-encrusted and holding a golden parachute."

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of regional events. You can reach him at (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1881.

# Athletes who leave college early need a 'what if' plan

**N**ews briefs from the sporting world:

This weekend the National Football League drafted college football standouts. Signing bonuses will run into the millions.

Last week University of Michigan basketball stars Juwan Howard and Jalen Rose announced they would get the big bucks and turn professional. Both are juniors. Howard says he'll be back to finish his degree. Rose almost certainly won't.

A few weeks ago, some U-M athletes pleaded no contest to a charge of shoplifting beer. Turns out a plant cashier had been letting them take it without paying. The case drew a lot of media attention.

I'm a newspaper publisher, a former sports editor (with the paper in Fairbanks, Alaska, many years ago) and a regent of the U-M. Below are some reflections on the state of college athletics.

First, the fact of the matter is that big-time college sports have become little more than fodder for the entertainment industry.

CBS paid \$1 billion to televise this year's NCAA basketball championship. Bo Schiembochler used to say that God intended football to be played at 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoons, on grass and out-of-doors, but TV schedules now determine when and where games shall be played. Graduation rates for athletes at most universities are far lower than for the rest of the student body. The pressure to win is great enough that some coaches cheat in recruiting, and a few are caught.

Second, so what?

A lot of people like to watch college sports, especially now that the professional ones seem so pre-packaged, marketed and devoid of any real emotion. What's wrong with that, especially when the colleges, at least those with successful athletic programs, get a lot of TV exposure? And the athletes, even if they don't turn pro, get scholarship rides worth something in excess of \$100,000 and a shot at a better life for them and their families.

Third, even if you don't like it, what are you going to do about it?

Not much. There's entirely too much publicity and reputation, not to mention bragging rights, that accompany athletic success. Television exposure, even to university presidents, is habit-forming.



PHILIP POWER

**■ There's entirely too much publicity and reputation, not to mention bragging rights, that accompany athletic success.**

There are costs. Most athletic programs around the country, even big time, lose money. At the University of Michigan, the athletic department has trouble breaking even on a budget of \$24 million (including about \$2 million in TV money).

But I know of no university planning to eliminate intercollegiate sports.

Fourth, it's still sad to see so many good kids turn pro, when I know full well very few will make it, and many will wind up with no degree, no job and no prospects. College should be something more than an unpaid player development system for the owners of professional sports franchises.

Here's a modest proposal: Whenever a professional team signs kids before they get their degrees, require the team to place in escrow with the university an amount sufficient to fund the eventual completion of the students' degrees whenever they return to school.

This would be an insurance policy as well as an incentive for kids to return to school to get their degrees. And it would, if only symbolically, indicate that even those who own professional teams recognize that at least one purpose of going to college is to get a degree.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. You can reach him by Touch-Tone phone at (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1880.

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