

EGOTISTS AND THE BOTTLE

An Oration

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This past summer, while driving home from a friend's house in another city, I had the misfortune of coming across a fatal car crash. Flashing lights, sweeping headlights, the distant sounds of ambulance sirens, and in a car was the body of a man. It would be to no avail to describe him. But smashed to bits on the floor was a bottle of bourbon. The cap not attached. I stood transfixed until I realized I felt no emotion. It was almost as though my mind were saying, "of course."

Then I looked across the road to another car. The side was ripped away exposing the body of a child. I later learned that the little girl was--six years old.

Am I wrong to say that when I looked back at the man's dead body I felt a spasm of anger stream through my body? "OK, YOU. But why did you, you egotistical monster, set out to kill a child?" Yes, an autopsy showed that he was, indeed, drunk. Terribly drunk. Yes, in my opinion, this scene was evidence of the most selfish, egotistical statement I'd ever encountered in my short life.

Drinking and driving....One can't turn on the TV, radio or read in the paper without hearing of its danger...or its results. The public can no longer say, "I didn't know!" Any kindergarten kid can tell us of the hazards. So I ask. Why is the little girl dead? Why do people still go out, get drunk and drive? Time and time again they say, "I don't care." "I'm not drunk." "I can handle it."

Combine these irresponsible attitudes of drinking into all the other woes they can get in to....What do they say? Yes, a policeman told me that most will claim, "It wasn't my fault...I was drunk." Yes, that is the actual cop-out. But it doesn't work! He took the first drink. It was HIS choice. It was also HIS choice for the second, third...for the whole darned fifth if he chooses. It is HIS choice!

I still picture the little girl. She was the victim of a self-centered killer who "isn't responsible." The girl's life was taken before she had a chance to live it! There are times in which I wish that monster had lived...lived to live with his guilt. But anyone so self appointed would have spent a year or two in jail and then gone back on the street head-hunting for other victims..."NOT RESPONSIBLE!"

I really don't know how the parents of the girl - they did survive - feel today. Are they bitter? Or am I the only witness to the disaster who is having a difficult time forgiving? How much pain...physical and emotional do they feel?

We, generally, think of highway patrolmen as being stoically controlled and hard. That night, as the little girl was removed from the auto, a trooper gently took her hand and seemed to lead her to the waiting ambulance. In the eerie light, I saw tears on his cheeks.

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