



BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY LAW ENFORCEMENT

Drink Driving: A Testimony

Prior to August 2019 I was a hard working self-employed man contracted out to other businesses working throughout Guernsey. I was a friendly relaxed person with an easy going approach. I never had any disagreements with people and I was a general day to day kind of guy who had a good relationship with family and friends.

I had my own personal issues with work and relationships and one night in August I arranged to meet someone in St Peter Port and have a few drinks. I drove with the intention that I would park up and leave my car in town. I met my date, had a few drinks and went around town. Unfortunately the evening didn't end as I planned and I was feeling a little let down, a little lonely and feeling sorry for myself. I couldn't get a lift but having had a few drinks something came over me, I felt brave. I genuinely believed I was OK to drive!

I made a silly decision and went to my car. I got in, started the engine and left to drive home. I drove less than half a mile. The thing is I really knew that I shouldn't drive and pulled over but as I was about to get out police arrived. Someone must have done the right thing and reported me.

The moment I saw the police I realised my life, as it was, was over. I was breathalysed and blew four times the legal limit. I was arrested and taken to the police station where I had to provide my details before being placed in a cell until I sobered up. It seemed like a very long time in that cell.

I had to have my fingerprints taken along with a photograph and DNA sample to be held. It was here that the reality of committing a criminal offence struck home.

After being charged I was sent to appear at the Magistrates Court. I wasn't really aware of the seriousness of the matter until my Advocate advised me that prison was a very possible and likely outcome. I had never been to prison in my life!

The matter was adjourned following the initial hearing for reports to be carried out on me. I had to speak with my Probation Officer and expose every personal detail of my life to that officer for them to write up a report on me as a person. Once the report was completed I was required to re-attend court. In the meantime I had to inform my employer of the situation who were good enough to keep my job open providing I didn't go to prison. Unfortunately I did go to prison and I also lost other job interviews which were based upon me having a driving licence and I would estimate that my mistake has cost me £20,000 in lost earnings.

At the sentencing I was in the court room with my son. It was a scary moment waiting for the decision to be made that would affect my life. I had been told by my Advocate that there was a 70 to 80% chance of me going to prison. I was open and honest about myself, my mistakes and my personal circumstances but because of the reading I gave when the drink/drive test was carried out, there was no option but to send me to prison. It was expected but it was a shock. I went from court to prison without saying goodbye to my family which was really hard.

When I arrived at prison I walked out of the van which had no windows. I walked in through a door into the reception area. I was scared, I knew no one and the routine of my life had gone. I had to remove all my life's belongings leaving me with nothing but a long wait before being taken to my cell.

That night I didn't sleep at all and the next morning I didn't want to leave my cell. For the next few days I felt very lonely but after a while it becomes a little easier with me being assigned a job in the workshop. The other option was to remain in my cell all the time. I learnt how things work between inmates and in the prison. It was hard at first but prison gave me time to think about what I had done and I did come out with a more positive mind-set about life. I served four weeks inside prison which I can say did me some good. I wasn't tempted by alcohol, I got on well with the majority of inmates although some kept themselves to themselves.

In addition to prison I lost my driving licence for four years. Now I have to use a bus or bicycle to get around. As you can imagine this makes life difficult as I have to rely upon others to move my tools around. You can't do that on a bicycle. My social life is restricted being limited to an area close to me and again I rely on my bicycle. I can't afford taxis to travel elsewhere. I can't pick my children up from school, I can't drop them off at football and I can't spend as much time with them as I like. I miss those things that Dads should do.

I'm limited in the work I can do which means a lower salary and being unable to earn higher.

So I learnt a lesson. When I got out of the prison van and went into the prison the door shut and on it was that sign "DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE". I had read that sign so many times before but I had never thought it would be me!

My advice to others is simple. A 15 minute walk home or a four year sentence/imprisonment. I could have killed someone all for the sake of a taxi ride. Is it worth it?

Even today I am still dealing with issues from my mistake. I am not through it yet and there is still a lot to do.