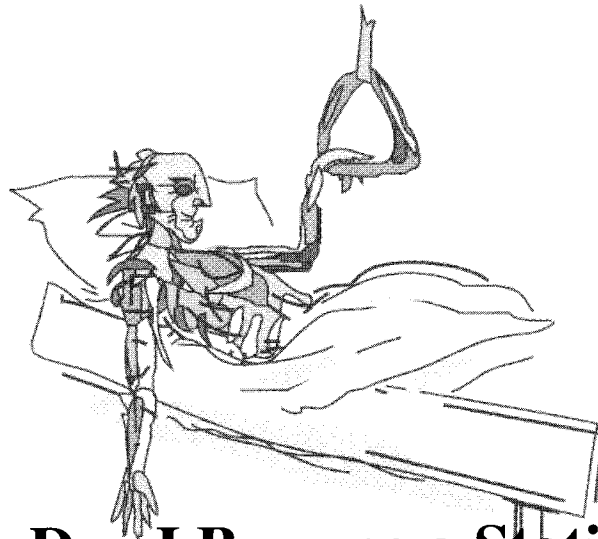




Bernardo Zavalza

Bernardo Zavalza is 23 years old and is currently taking English 1A at Delta College, his first and only college course to date. He plans to attend school full time in Sept. 2000 and become a Mechanical Engineer. Snowboarding, hunting, and fishing is how he spends any free time he gets.



The Day I Became a Statistic

"In 1994, 16,589 people were killed in the U.S. in alcohol-related traffic crashes. Of these, 2,222 were age 16 to 20. Nearly one million others were injured in crashes where alcohol was involved. Twenty-two percent of fatally injured 15-to-20-year-old drivers in 1994 were intoxicated. In total, alcohol-related accidents are the leading cause of death among young people 15 to 24 years of age" (Saunders 26). On July 5, 1993, I became one of the million that are injured and almost became one of the fatalities.

The day started out just like any other day that summer. I got ahold of my friends about 9 a.m. and we decided that we were going to go rafting down the river. Well, who in their right mind could do that without drinking a couple of beers? At 9:30, we stopped by the store and picked up a case of Bud Light. I was only 16 years old, but I had no problem finding a store that would sell me alcohol. On that day, I wish I had not been able to find that store. But I did

and we headed on our rafting trip with a case of beer.

I waited until we got into the river before I started drinking. It was 10:00 by now and the sky was clear with a large, yellow sphere shining down on us. The water was ice cold but felt refreshing on such a hot day. With the help of five beer breaks and two friends, we were able to consume the entire case of beer by the time we reached our pick up spot. We were picked up at 1:00 and were back to my truck by 1:30. In my elevated state of awareness, I decided that I was OK to drive home.

By 2:00, burning out and speeding got me about half way home, when I found a batch of gravel next to the road and turned into it. The truck pitched sideways as I pressed the gas pedal to the floor. When the spinning rear tires hit the asphalt, the truck jerked the other way and started to roll. After the truck stopped rolling and sliding, I tried to undo my seat belt and realized that the tip of the

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middle finger on my left hand was a mangled mess of flesh and bone. I had to release myself with my other hand, which was still complete, and crawl out of my overturned vehicle. I wrapped my shirt around the decapitated finger and sat on the side of the road. Shortly after that, the highway patrol and ambulance arrived and took care of me. The ambulance took me to the hospital where my finger was reattached. The highway patrol followed us to the hospital and took a blood sample. That took care of the DUI!

I later found out that my BAC (blood alcohol concentration) was at .09. At that BAC, "you lose your balance, stumble; your judgment and self-control are reduced. Memory and reason take a dive" (Arenofsky 24). So what did I have to fear? "The same thing we should all fear. Here's the

revelation: Stupidity destroys more guys like us than heart attacks do. Death, at least, is an attention-getter. Stupidity provides its own cover. There are a thousand creative ways to screw up our lives, yet most of us tumble into the same idiotic traps, generation after generation" (White 70). On that day stupidity was the only thing guiding me. How could I possibly think that I was OK to drive with a BAC of .09? Stupidity that's how! In a matter of moments, I became one of the statistics and almost lost my life. That has changed my life forever and to this day I will not drink and drive. Hopefully, my experience will make you think twice about drinking and driving.

Works Cited

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