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Driver in fatal crash gets nearly six years

2006-05-27

by [Noel S. Brady](#)

Journal Reporter

Friends and relatives of 20-year-old Robert Vasen packed a Seattle courtroom Friday to confront the man who killed Vasen and injured several others in a drunken traffic accident in downtown Bellevue.

Most of those in attendance wanted to see 21-year-old Jarrod Wayne Bandy sentenced to the longest prison term law would allow. And that's exactly what they saw.

A judge sentenced the Sequim man to 5 years and eight months in prison, following his guilty plea to vehicular homicide and two counts of vehicular assault.

"Jarrod Bandy is fortunate that drunk-driving laws are so lenient in this state," Vasen's sister, Jackie Vasen, said with her eyes locked on the black-suited man who killed her brother.

"Make no mistake," she said; "this was no accident. You killed another human being. Robert was loving and gentle and kind, your polar opposite. ...What you did on March 25 should effect you for the rest of your life."

Robert Vasen, who lived in Beaux Arts, a lakefront village between Bellevue and Lake Washington, spent the last day of his life taking his grandmother to lunch. That night he was a back-seat passenger in a friend's car with several other friends after an evening of dinner and cards.

It was about 11:30 p.m., and Bandy was driving an uninsured 1993 Jeep Cherokee, with five teenage passengers, about 53 mph up hill on Northeast Second Street in Bellevue. A traffic light at 108th Avenue Northeast turned red, and Bandy slammed the accelerator.

Bandy slammed into the rear driver's-side door of a BMW driven by 22-year-old Ryan Kellogg. There were four passengers in the BMW, including Vasen who bore the brunt of the impact.

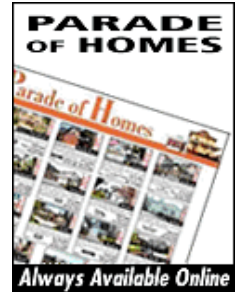
Rescuers pulled Bandy from the car and performed CPR on him as he lay on the sidewalk. But it was of little use. His neck was broken, and his heart had stopped beating.

After the accident, Bandy admitted to running the light. He also said he had had some beer and vodka to drink. A blood draw revealed Bandy's blood-alcohol concentration was 0.16, twice the legal limit of 0.08, charging papers state.

Numerous witnesses called 911 to report seeing Bandy's SUV driving recklessly up to two hours before the crash, prosecutors said.

Kellogg, Vasen and three other passengers in the BMW were taken to local hospitals. Neither Bandy nor any of his five passengers was seriously injured.

In court Thursday, Vasen's friends, sister and brother spoke at length of their agony over the of loss such a promising young man.



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At the time of the crash, Robert Vasen was studying economics at the University of Washington. In 2003, he graduated from Bellevue High School.

He was an elite-level soccer player up until junior high, when he suffered a life-threatening staph infection that put him through numerous operations. After years of physical therapy, he never fully regained strength in his knee.

Even so, he continued playing soccer in high school, and he even made the basketball team his senior year.

``Robert always had such a great presence with his smile that got you smiling back," said Jay Johnson, one of Vasen's friends injured in the crash. ``He is someone who leaves a lasting impression on you."

Vasen was born to an immigrant family. Now living in Hunts Point, his father Daniel came from Chile, his mother Evelyn from Brazil. His grandmother, on his mother's side, escaped from Nazi Germany.

More than 1,200 people attended his funeral at Temple B'nai Torah, 15727 N.E. Fourth St., Bellevue.

In court, a friend of the Vasen family read a statement from Robert's mother. She spoke of the sanctity of life and the despair of losing a son. Her daughter was to be married this weekend, she wrote, and Robert was to escort his grandmother down the aisle.

David Vassen trembled as he recalled his brother and asked Judge Julie Spector to make an example of the man who took Robert's life.

``Your honor, this man murdered my brother through deliberate actions, without remorse," he said. ``Make him think about each and every day."

Heeding the request, Spector ordered Bandy to pay a fine of \$10,000 and make monthly contributions to a memorial fund in Robert Vasen's name. She said all the checks are to be drafted on the 25th of each month to remind Bandy of the day of the accident, March 25. And in the memo space on each check, she ordered Bandy is to write ``in memory of Robert Vasen."

``I am deeply humbled and would like to take this time to apologize to everyone," Bandy said in court before he was sentenced. ``This is not a crime of intent. ...This is a crime of carelessness that came with being young and naive."

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