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## 68 months for fatal wreck

**By Peyton Whitely**

*Seattle Times Eastside bureau*

The courtroom audience broke into applause Friday as Jarrod Wayne Bandy received the maximum sentence for vehicular homicide and was led away in handcuffs after an emotional two hours in King County Superior Court.

Superior Court Judge Julie Spector dabbed at her eyes with tissue and called the case “one of the most remarkable vehicular homicides that has ever appeared” before the court.

Bandy, 21, pleaded guilty to running a red light March 25 in downtown Bellevue and striking another car, killing Robert Vasen, a rear-seat passenger. Vasen, 20, was a popular Bellevue High School graduate and University of Washington student.

“I have never seen such an outpouring of letters to the court on behalf of one person,” in 20 years in the legal system, said Spector.

Spector then imposed the maximum possible sentence — 5 years, 8 months — explaining that Supreme Court decisions prevented her from departing from standard sentencing guidelines, which provide for a range of from 51 to 68 months in prison. The sentence will be served concurrently with 20-month terms for lesser vehicular-assault convictions.

The sentence was imposed after nearly two hours of statements by Vasen’s family members and friends about his life.

Bandy’s family also said they had been destroyed by the events of that night, but widely differing views about Bandy’s remorse were presented to the court.

A prosecutor revealed for the first time that Bandy had boasted on a Web site about being a cocaine dealer and continuing partying.

In Internet postings May 9, Bandy wrote about “going away” to prison on May 26, but added that he still had three weeks and two weekends “to party like a rock star,” said Senior Deputy Prosecutor Amy Freedheim. “This was an arrogant, selfish, irresponsible criminal act. That it is being punished as lightly as it is perhaps an embarrassment to the state.”

Vasen’s sister, Jackie Vasen, said the “absolute contrast is appalling” between the lives of her brother and Bandy.

“He was your polar opposite,” she said, looking directly at Bandy. “You should be haunted, ashamed and remorseful. What you did on March 25 should affect the rest of your life.”

The Vasen family asked that attention be centered on the goodness of Robert’s life, describing how he excelled at sports, survived a knee infection that nearly led to amputation and went on to make the varsity soccer team at Bellevue High School. He was majoring in economics at UW and expected to graduate in 2007. He regularly volunteered at Children’s Hospital, assisting with care for young patients in physical therapy, where he had been a patient. Some 1,200 people attended his funeral.

Bandy’s attorney, Andrew Huff, argued that his client was remorseful, was not a drug dealer or out partying and has spent his time doing yoga. He said Bandy is a professionally trained dancer who has performed internationally.

Bandy’s mother, Sherry Bandy, said the tragedy also has destroyed their own family and that she shares her son’s guilt. “He is clearly in his own hell,” she said.

Then Bandy turned and faced the Vasen family.

“This is a crime of carelessness that comes from being young and naive,” he said. “I’m going to make lifestyle changes and become a careful citizen in the future. I’ve learned a lot.”

Spector recounted the crime in imposing her sentence, noting that Bandy had been drinking for hours, yet chose to drive, had a blood-alcohol reading of 0.16 percent, twice the state limit. Bandy ran the red light at 108th Avenue Northeast and Northeast Second Street going more than 50 mph in a 35-mph zone in a Jeep carrying six people that struck the BMW carrying Vasen and four others. Vasen later died at Harborview Medical Center, and 10 people were injured.

“It was an outrageous sequence of events that unfolded on March 25,” the judge said, then ordered the sentence, a \$10,000 fine, payments to a memorial for Vasen and other conditions.

Huff asked if Bandy could wait until Tuesday to surrender.

“He’s going into custody right now,” said Spector, and most of the courtroom, filled with Vasen’s friends and family, applauded.

The judge reached for a tissue, wiped her eyes and motioned for Bandy to be led away.

Handcuffs were slipped on his wrists. The courtroom broke into applause again.

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