

Written testimony from Steve DeGeorge:

I feel Mr. Lloyd Smucker is on the right track to try and prevent future DUI situations in the state. Presently there is nothing that causes the person to not want to do the right thing so they play with the system.

It would help the state if the offender would lose their license for 6 months with the first offense and have to surrender their car's plates immediately. If a second offense occurs, they should lose their license for a year and receive a hefty fine. If a death occurs regardless if any traffic rules were broken, the person should automatically go to state prison for 2 years and lose their driving rights for 5 years. This might cause people to do the right thing.

As the law stands you can actually commit legalized murder in this state. If you do not like someone and keep it to yourself, you drive safely, do not take drugs or alcohol and run into a person and kill them, it is not a crime that can put people in jail for a long time as I understand it.

My son's death was the result of a 3rd DUI case and the girl said the hell with the system and drove anyway. That in itself is criminal. In that case she should have been held to a standard by the state and had a minimum 2 years in state prison.

We need to take the control out of the judge's hands. In my son's case the judge elected to be Santa that day to this girl. That is wrong. What message does that send? She received the lightest sentence probably possible, she is alive and it makes the victim's family seem as if there is no justice. It was criminal. She broke the law driving unlicensed and caused a death but we again leave the defendant off very lightly.

She might have had a phone call as I understand it. A call came in and did she look at her phone? Why would she take 95% of the other line on a straight road and hit another driver head on if she was driving safely? That was unsafe and should have been handled that way. If PA would make driving and being on a hand held phone illegal then texting and phone incidents would be easy for law enforcement to enforce. PA could be like MD and have signs at the border. No tolerance. The end of that problem. It is too easy to fix. Why have we not moved in that direction?

If a person allows a known unlicensed person to use their vehicle that person should be liable of a felony as well. That would prevent them from doing this. If a person is killed, then they should suffer prison time as well.

Thank you
Steve DeGeorge

Victim's family upset at sentence for woman who caused fatal crash

BRETT HAMBRIGHT Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, April 24, 2013 12:11 pm

Because her license had already been suspended for numerous DUI convictions, Mackenzie Dantine had no business being behind the wheel on Nov. 30, a Lancaster County judge said Wednesday.

The judge ordered Dantine to spend up to 23 months behind bars for causing a head-on collision that killed 31-year-old Josh DeGeorge.

Dantine, 24, was not drinking prior to the afternoon crash, but her license had been suspended through 2019\!q because of three previous DUI-related charges, according to court testimony.

"We feel she has made a mockery of the court," Steve DeGeorge, Josh's father, Judge Dennis Reinaker at her sentencing. "Just read the record for yourself.

"You could give her as many years as you can and it's not going to change anything. She's still going to wake up every morning in prison. Her life's going to go on."

DeGeorge's survivors scoffed when the 9-to-23-month sentence was announced. She also will get credit for time she's already served, about half of the 9-month minimum sentence.

Police charged Dantine with causing a fatal crash while driving under suspension, a third-degree felony. A more serious charge of homicide by vehicle wasn't applicable in the case, police decided.

Also, Dantine had no alcohol in her system at the time of the crash in the 3200 block of Charlestown Road in Manor Township.

"Fortunately, you weren't drinking," Reinaker told Dantine, a short woman wearing pigtails, jeans and a black sweatshirt. "I could certainly give you a state prison sentence. I'm giving you a chance to make some good of this."

Reinaker's sentence, which includes a consecutive 5-year probation term, was in accord with state guidelines for the felony charge.

He also ordered that Dantine not drink or drive during the entire supervision period, about six-and-a-half years. She also must perform 500 hours of community service.

Defense lawyer Douglas Cody said his client has "no excuse and no explanation" for what happened.

"She doesn't remember the accident," Cody said. "It's sort of unexplainable."

Cody said his client suffered a permanent brain injury in the crash. Dantine spent several weeks in hospitals before being committed to Lancaster County Prison.

A motorist who was behind Dantine's SUV told police she wasn't speeding or driving erratically prior to the crash, according to testimony. The SUV hit DeGeorge's vehicle seven feet into his lane of traffic, according to court testimony.

"She wasn't in a hurry or swerving," Cody told the judge. "She wasn't texting."

Among her prior arrests was a DUI crash in 2009, in which her blood-alcohol content was measured at .20 percent, more than twice the state's legal limit.

Dantine cried throughout the hourlong hearing Wednesday and could barely speak.

"I'm sorry to the DeGeorge family for their loss and for my decision to drive that day," Dantine said.

Dantine, a 2006 Penn Manor High School graduate, was a star soccer player there, helping her team win a state championship in 2005.

She was due to graduate this spring from Millersville University, Cody told the judge.

"Maybe she'll wake up, maybe this will wake her up," Steve DeGeorge told the judge. He asked for the maximum sentence.

Justice was not served

Posted: Thursday, May 16, 2013 4:58 pm

TO THE EDITORS:

Recently, a court sentencing was held for a woman driver who had crossed into the other lane of traffic and killed a young man.

The defendant had three prior DUI arrests, was driving without insurance or a valid license. She was in the Lancaster County Prison under a \$500,000 bail.

Judge Dennis Reinaker was to provide justice. He appeared to let justice not prevail. He gave the defendant a light sentence despite the prior history and large amount of bail. It was disheartening that the judge did not provide justice for the victim. It was a gift to the defendant, with no apparent thought of the victim or his family or the law enforcement people who had to do all the work to see this turn into another waste of taxpayer money.

I have lost faith in our system. Because the defendant admits to the crime and offers remorse does not change the fact that the punishment needs to reflect the crime.

Life is not valued in our court. When will our judges stand up and do what is needed to correct the disregard for accountability in the county and country.

When will that happen? Only when God returns. It is hard to accept my son died in a trade for a couple months in the prison system for a person who should not have even been on the road.

Steve DeGeorge

Manor Township

(Editors' note: The judge ordered Mackenzie Dantine to spend up to 23 months behind bars for causing a head-on collision that killed 31-year-old Josh DeGeorge. Dantine did not have any alcohol in her system at the time of the Nov. 30 crash.)

Justice not served in driver deaths

Posted: Wednesday, May 29, 2013 5:09 pm

TO THE EDITORS:

I agree with Steve DeGeorge: Justice was not served on the female driver who crossed into another lane of traffic, killing his son. The driver had three prior DUI arrests, no insurance and no valid license and yet she was given another chance .

It shouldn't matter that alcohol was not found in her system when she hit Josh DeGeorge. She violated the conditions of her sentence and was obviously driving recklessly, which is just as bad.

Josh DeGeorge does not get another chance. All those who loved Josh do not get another chance. Why does Mackenzie Dantine, the woman who killed Josh, get a fourth chance?

The newspaper quoted Judge Dennis Reinaker as saying, "I could certainly give you a state prison sentence. I'm giving you a chance to make some good of this." Why are we rewarding bad behavior?

Is it any wonder people keep testing the system? They know they will just get a slap on the wrist. Meanwhile victims and their families relive their loved one's death every day.

I say, give her a maximum state prison sentence. Mental anguish over what she has done is not enough. Apologies mean nothing.

My heart goes out to Steve DeGeorge and his family because I understand somewhat how he feels. My son, Jason, was killed in a similar car crash on March 3 near Park City Center. He was 21. He attended Hempfield High School. He is loved and missed every day. He won't get another chance at life.

I forgive the driver, but forgiveness does not forfeit justice. I do not want an eye for eye, but I do want the driver to be disciplined for the rest of his life.

My son paid with his life for the driver's mistake. I am paying with my life for the driver's mistake.

At the very least, the driver can pay for his mistake with a lifelong sentence.

Gary Taft

Lancaster