

A Modest Proposal for Making Driving More Entertaining,  
While Creating the Same Risks for Everyone on the Road  
by Elizabeth Farley

It is a melancholy object to those who often frequent the bars in this great country to see those who do not currently share in their fortunate state of being. They are usually alone, observing those around them with great envy, holding the car keys, but worst of all, sober. It is the inopportune being who is unluckily chosen to be the designated driver for the evening. It is always an enjoyable experience to spend hour upon hour pounding back the drinks in a bar. Why limit the fun? Why choose someone to be a designated driver and make his or her night miserable? Why not take the fun onto the road?

I think that it is agreed by all parties that the prodigious number of sober drivers in our neighborhoods, city streets, and country roads is at present deplorable to the state of our great nation. Currently, a whopping ninety-eight percent of Americans of driving age feel threatened by those who drive under the influence of alcohol, which means that only two percent of Americans are able to fully relax and enjoy themselves while on the road, and with the growing awareness, this number could be on the rise (MADD Online: General Statistics 1). What a travesty! All drivers, and passengers alike, should be put at the same risk for danger, be it damage, injury, or death.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for those driving the cars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of citizens, whether they are driving the car or riding in it and even extends to those who are merely walking down the street.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true. There are not enough drivers who drive under the influence. In the year 2001, MADD Online approximated that only one in ten drivers, a mere 25 million, drove drunk, and, consequently these drivers were the ones significantly more likely to be involved in a crash of some sort, but why shouldn't we level the playing field? (1)

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will obliterate the need for expensive car insurance plans. Those plans steal from us our hard-earned money and will no longer be necessary if we all are at equal risk for damage, risk, and liability.

The number of souls in this country is currently reckoned at just under three hundred million (American FactFinder 1). Of these are calculated to be approximately two hundred million licensed drivers (Licensed Drivers – Our Nation's Highways – 2000 1); from which number I subtract twenty-five million who already drive while intoxicated (MADD Online 1). This being granted, there remains one hundred seventy-five million drivers who do not currently drive while intoxicated. There remains approximately one hundred seventy-five million drivers, their families, friends, and peers who will be benefited by my proposal.

I am assured by a very reliable source that with the current standing, only “three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives” (MADD Online: General Statistics 1). This statistic leaves approximately seventy percent of all Americans out of the loop. Why are the numbers so low? Why not make the possibility more widespread? One concerned

citizen is quoted as saying, “It’s not fair to take the life of other people for your [own] pleasure,” but if the chances were greater, we would all have a better chance at having one of these accidents (Santo).

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American, Kim Reed, a college student, of my acquaintance in Richmond, that a drunk driver is indeed an acceptable ride without another “safe ride or [in] an emergency situation.” If acceptable in these situations, why not all of the time? Why put another in misery and force that responsibility of staying sober in order to drive onto another?

I do therefore humbly offer it to publick consideration that the one hundred seventy-five million drivers who do not already claim to drive while intoxicated, should be forced to. Everyone—drivers, passengers, walkers, bikers, even children—should be forced to be legally drunk in order to enter the roadway system in the United States in any way. Not only will this add to the pleasure and enjoyment of the nation, as a whole, but it will put everyone at the same risk.

Everyone will be put at the same risk of getting into an alcohol-related accident. Everyone will be on the same page. No one will have any driving advantage over another. It could even be included in driver’s education. When learning to drive, teenagers should be forced to be legally, drunk and could, therefore, get used to the additional impairments of driving while inebriated. Passengers, as well would need to be intoxicated so as to not influence the driver in any way. Walkers, bikers, and children should also be under the influence of alcohol so that they, too, are impaired in the same way and put at the same risks.

It was suggested to me that we “kill all [the] dumbasses [who choose to drink and drive],” but I felt this too harsh (Holzbach). Why not let them kill themselves? The nation, as a whole, would be more pleasant, happier and more carefree. When drunk, all inhibitions are gone and people are better able to enjoy themselves (Brown). As a more carefree body, we would not be as greatly affected by the increased injuries and fatalities.

Since the risk for accidents and injuries would rise so substantially, we would no longer have the need for insurance. Everyone would get into accidents. Everyone’s property would be damaged. More than likely, at some point, everyone would be injured. We would personally pay for these damages and move on. Consequently, the American people’s vanity would drop, which is an additional benefit to my proposal.

Not even to mention the entertainment value that this would provide. Touring the streets of our country would provide entertainment for hours. We could watch drunk drivers dodge other drunk drivers on the road or if not so lucky, we could watch the collisions. We could watch small children dodging drunk drivers. We could watch drunk drivers destroy their own property, as well as ours. The entertainment opportunities are endless...

I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged, that the sheer number of human life injured and lost would skyrocket throughout the country. This I freely own, and ‘twas indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate my remedy for this one individual country of the

United States, and for no other that ever was, is, or I think, ever can be upon Earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients:

- Of having sharper penalties for those found to be drinking and driving,
- Of having more roadblocks, especially on weekends,
- Of teaching our children the risks and dangers of drinking and driving,
- Of making the decision to drink responsibly and find a sober driver,
- Of choosing to abstain from drinking if there is no other safe ride,
- Of better training our police force to be more alert to the problem,
- Of lessening the penalties for underage drinking if not driving, or
- Of mandatory sober rides home from places of public drinking.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, 'till he hath at least some glimpse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them into practice. On their own, or in combination, these possible solutions could very possibly work to curb the problem of drinking and driving in America, but only if done completely. Only if done by the entire nation coming together to combat a mutual problem.

#### Works Cited

- American FactFinder. U.S. Census Bureau. 18 Sept. 2002 <[http://factfinder.census.gov/bf/\\_lang=en\\_vt\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_DP1\\_geo\\_id=01000US.html](http://factfinder.census.gov/bf/_lang=en_vt_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1_geo_id=01000US.html)>.
- Brown, Meg. Personal interview. 18 Sept. 2002.
- Holzbach, Wyatt. E-mail interview. 18 Sept. 2002.
- Licensed Drivers – Our Nation’s Highways – 2000. 26 April 2002. U.S. Department of Transportation. 18 September 2002 <<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/onh00/onh2p4.htm>>.
- “MADD Online: General Statistics.” *MADD Online*. 18 Sept. 2002 <<http://www.madd.org/stats/0,1056,1789,00.html>>.
- “MADD Online: Government Survey Shows Troubling News On Drunk Driving, Underage Drinking.” *MADD Online*. 5 Sept. 2002. 15 Sept. 2002 <<http://www.madd.org/news/printable/0,1068,4966,00.html>>.
- Reed, Kim. E-mail interview. 18 Sept. 2002.
- Santo, Beth. E-mail interview. 18 Sept. 2002.