

# Menace to society

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?You are a menace to society.?

That's a phrase a judge in a courtroom would, once upon a time, say to defendants who were repeat offenders and posed a risk to the public.

That was usually followed by a lengthy prison term to keep that person off the street and keep regular citizens safe.

A menace to society could include everything from a person with a history of violence to someone who routinely commits fraud and relieves people of their life savings through deceit and trickery.

I believe everyone deserves a second chance.

Sometimes people do end up on the wrong side of the law, and it doesn't necessarily mean they are a bad person. People make mistakes.

I know of a few people who were charged with DWI after having a couple of glasses of wine at a wedding or other social gathering. They may have felt sober and good enough to drive, but a roadside breathalyzer showed they were over the legal limit.

In that case, I don't think a serious punishment is suitable. Most normal people who go through the process of being arrested are probably shaken up enough that it will never happen again.

They were all embarrassed and were all nice people who just made a bad decision, but they don't have a criminal mind.

However, there is another type of person who, for some reason, just doesn't learn from their mistakes. And those mistakes always affect someone else.

I had an acquaintance who was one of these types of people. I refer to him as an 'acquaintance' because, as a neighbour, he was one of those guys you had to at least pretend to be friendly with, or you just knew there would be trouble.

He had been arrested for DWI, driving under the influence of drugs, several assault charges and other offences, for which he spent time in jail. After he moved to a different area, he was once again arrested for aggravated assault for stabbing someone in the neck during an altercation.

He had been in numerous fist fights over the years for various reasons ? and every time he was drunk. He usually ended up being pummelled into a bloody mess. You think a guy would learn a lesson.

I went to a local event where some of his family were in attendance. I asked if he was going to be arriving.

A family member casually told me that no, he wouldn't be arriving because he was again in jail on a charge of attempted murder, after stabbing yet another person in some ridiculous fight.

Yet, three months later, I saw him walking his dog down the street. He had been released ? again.

There was a recent traffic collision on in Bolton during the first week of July.

As a result, a young man is in the hospital with serious, life-altering injuries, including internal injuries, broken bones, and a head injury. He is currently in a coma, and his family and friends are praying for his recovery.

Traffic accidents happen every day. It's an inherent danger of driving an automobile.

However, in this case, the person who allegedly caused the accident and put this young man in critical condition in a hospital has already been convicted of drunk driving five times since 2010, and was on three separate lifetime driving bans.

Yet, there he was, driving a car, which he wasn't supposed to be doing, and driving it while again under the influence, which caused a serious collision that put someone else in serious danger and a life-threatening situation.

After the accident, the man was arrested, again, and charged with Impaired Driving Causing Bodily Harm, one count of Driving With Excess Blood Alcohol, and three counts of Prohibited Driving.

After being charged, he was released back on the street.

The young man's father did an interview with CBC News, discussing his son's current situation and calling for bail reform.

He remained remarkably composed and calm for a man who is probably experiencing a lot of inner turmoil along with the rest of his family.

He questioned why a man with a lengthy criminal record, who is clearly a danger to society and obviously has no concern for anyone else or the law, would again be released back onto the streets while his son languishes in a hospital bed fighting for his life.

Anyone who has been convicted of drunk driving five times, and does it again, and is behind the wheel of a car after being issued three driving bans, clearly is a menace to the roads and society at large.

A lot of people, as well as police, are calling for bail reform to keep the streets safe from people who routinely flout the law and are a menace to society.

Our government needs to step up and ensure public safety.

Next time, it could be you or one of your family members.