

FEATURE STORY

A ROADSIDE MEMORIAL



Jack Bouslog

under a doctors' care for a serious heart condition as a result of radiation following breast cancer.

Bill was riding his motorcycle near Tyler when he was struck and killed by an intoxicated 20 year old driver. The trauma of arranging and then attending Bill's funeral was unbearable, even more so for Bettie. Bill had been divorced about a year and had a 16 year old son.

A few days after the funeral, Bettie called the Tyler MADD office. In December we were notified of a Crime Victims Christmas Memorial held by Smith County Victim Services. All of Bill's family attended this memorial. There we met a staff member and a volunteer from the Tyler MADD office. I know that if it had not been for MADD and the District Attorney's (DA's) office, Bettie would never have made it to the day that the offender was convicted. A plea bargain was made between the DA's office and the defense attorney. This route was taken because we felt that Bettie would not have made

it through a trial. The offender was sentenced to 12 years in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) with a deadly weapon enhancement, which ensured that the offender would serve half of his sentence before becoming eligible for parole.

Some two months later we were informed that the offender was up for parole, which was not supposed to happen due to the deadly weapon enhancement. We later found out that somehow the deadly weapon enhancement was not listed on the paper work sent to TDCJ. Again, it was MADD that made many trips to the DA's office for us to correct this matter. The necessary paperwork was sent to Huntsville and less than a week after this we were notified that the offender had been taken out of parole review. As long as Bettie's health remained stable, she made a number of visits to penitentiaries, Crime Victim Programs and MADD Victim Impact Panels to tell Bill's story. She was always willing and ready to volunteer for MADD. Bettie passed away June 19, 2004.

The time during and following Bill's death, the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) did not allow any crosses/memorial markers to be placed along roadways where a death had occurred as the result of a motor vehicle crash. MADD worked diligently with TXDOT to allow these memorial markers to be placed on the roadside. After several months, MADD called to inform me that the State would allow the markers only if certain guidelines were followed. MADD sent me a copy of the State's guidelines and I began to make all the roadside crosses/memorial markers for MADD East Texas. Inscribed on each marker is the word "MADD." I am looking forward to the day when MADD tells me that there is no longer a need for the memorial markers as this will be the day when drunk driving is only a memory.

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