

Geneva man gets 11 years for alcohol-related crash

Student helicopter pilot paralyzed

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A Geneva County judge sentenced a man to 11 years in prison for an alcohol-related crash that left a helicopter pilot permanently paralyzed.

Circuit Court Judge P.B. McLaughlin, Jr. sentenced Kenneth Earl Smith, 38, of Geneva, to prison on Wednesday after he pleaded guilty in August to felony first-degree assault. Smith also pleaded guilty to driving under influence for recklessly causing his car to collide into the car occupied by Florian Hinrichs, accord-



**Kenneth
Smith**



**Florian
Hinrichs**

ing to a statement by Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams.

Hinrichs, a German student helicopter pilot, was seriously injured in the crash and became permanently paralyzed from the shoulders down, Adams said in the statement.

The crash happened on June 24, 2007, at the intersection of Alabama Highway 27 and Geneva County Road 64, just south of Chan-

cellor. Adams said in the statement Smith had a blood alcohol content of .22 about two hours after the crash. The investigating Alabama state trooper testified at the sentencing hearing Wednesday that Smith had five previous DUI arrests dating back to 1991.

Hinrichs was a passenger in a vehicle driven by Daniel Vinson, a fellow flight student, who also testified at the hearing about how hard it has been for his friend to adjust to paralysis. Hinrichs has returned home to Germany.

"This was a horrible a tragedy," Adams said. "No matter how many years Mr. Smith serves in prison, it will not make up for what he did to Florian Hinrichs."