



Kenneth Earl Smith

## Smith Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison

Kenneth Earl Smith, 38, of Geneva, Ala. was sentenced to 11 years in prison by Judge P. B. McLaughlin, Jr. for Assault 1st degree.

In August, Smith plead guilty without an agreed sentence to Assault 1st and DUI for recklessly causing his car to collide into the car occupied by Florian Hinrichs, a German Helicopter student, who became permanently paralyzed from the shoulders down. The crash occurred on June 24, 2007 at the intersection of Hwy 27 and Geneva County Road 64 just south of Chancellor.

At the sentencing hearing on Wednesday, December 10, Alabama State Trooper Sam Pickett testified that Smith blew a .22 on a breathalyzer two hours after the collision, almost three times the legal limit. Trooper Pickett also testified that Smith had five previous arrests for DUI dating back to 1991.

Daniel Vinson, a fellow flight student, who was driving the vehicle occupied by the victim, testified about the collision and the difficulty his friend, Florian, had coping with total paralysis.

District Attorney Kirke Adams read a letter from the victim who is now back at home in Germany after approximately one year in the hospital. The letter described how Florian was dealing with his paralysis and how his life had totally changed since the collision.

Florian described how the simplest things that everyone takes for granted would never be possible for him to do again. His letter described how he is in constant pain and requires 24-hour care.

Smith was sentenced to 12 months for the DUI and denied probation on the Assault 1st and remanded to serve his 11-year sentence in prison.

After the hearing, Adams stated, "This was a horrible event and a tragedy. No matter how many years Mr. Smith serves in prison, it will not make up for what he did to Florian Hinrichs. There was nothing that Mr. Vincent could have done to avoid the collision. However, there will continue to be people who drink and drive and law abiding citizens should always be aware of their surroundings and always expect the unexpected."

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Reaper, Ledger, News-Herald, F