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Destination Tent City, AZ

Mark Feuerer
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Call it an $11,400 bottle of beer. And it wasn't even fun, or worth it.

But, "I," the subject and narrator of *Destination Tent City*, AZ, is still paying legal and other related fees, literally and mentally, because she made the choice to drink and drive in Maricopa County. Unlike so many other weekend regulars, she actually got caught.

"I" is a longtime professional businesswoman who, in Mark Feuerer's account of her arrest, incarceration, "rehabilitation," and its ongoing psychological aftermath, chooses not to reveal her name or her profession. But her tale of post-DUI woe is enough to make anyone think thrice about taking the same road. And, as Feuerer reveals, this mistake is still so commonplace that most people don't even think about how devastating a DUI can be until it's too late … and the cop car's lights are flashing in the rearview.

How devastating?

"I" didn't end up in an accident or kill anyone. She simply took an afternoon drive, had a couple beers, and failed a breathalyzer test. Now she's nearly bankrupt and dealing daily with suicidal symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Thrown into the 2,000-inmate Tent City, "I" was treated more like a career thief, rapist, or murderer. According to her, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and other advocacy groups contribute to making offenders suffer far stiffer penalties than are perhaps appropriate because something tragic happened years ago in their personal lives. And while "I" had nothing to do with those tragedies, she feels she was treated as if she was just as guilty.

Feuerer and "I" are a very effective and articulate journalistic team. They deftly profile a county judicial system in which an apparently untouchable Sheriff Joe Arpaio runs a highly lucrative (but not effective), "tent"-style jail in unbearable heat, where women and men are subjected to cruel and unusual punishment, including being crammed into a windowless, nearly airless, room awaiting processing for eleven hours or more along with fifty or more other incoming and outgoing, and often highly agitated, prisoners.

This timely book should serve as a document to hasten the end of Arpaio's brutal reign and Arizona's overzealous policy of making money from—and routinely ruining the lives of—people who've committed victimless crimes.

Going so far as to say that Arpaio's tactics create a new generation of career offenders, in that moving beyond this form of incarceration is difficult, to say the least, Feuerer's look at the real story behind a government that manipulates "criminal" statistics for its own profit is well written and highly recommended.

BRANDON STICKNEY (August 10, 2011)

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