

Brotherly love saves man from hard time

Judge persuaded to be lenient in fatal DUI

By [Lori Kurtzman](#)

The Columbus Dispatch Saturday July 28, 2012 6:13 AM

NEWARK, Ohio — There was no Gary or Bruce, it was always Gary *and* Bruce.

They were brothers, best friends, two guys whose kids were more like siblings than cousins. Their families were so tight that even the events of Jan. 1 couldn't rip them apart.

And so yesterday, as a judge decided how to punish Gary Fellure, 51, for killing his brother in a drunken-driving crash in Licking County, both families fought together.

For Bruce. And for Gary.

"I've had two role models: my father and my uncle," said Charlie Fellure, Bruce Fellure's only son. "I've lost one, and I don't want to lose the other."

Gary Fellure told the court yesterday that he stopped by his younger brother's house that day to wish him a happy birthday. Bruce was 49. They drove out for a few drinks to celebrate and were headed home when Gary lost control of his truck. Just down from Bruce's house, on Linnville Road in Franklin Township, the truck smashed into a pole, snapping it in half. Bruce died right there.

On July 9, Gary Fellure, whose blood-alcohol level tested 0.124 percent at the hospital, pleaded guilty to aggravated vehicular homicide and operating a vehicle under the influence. In Ohio, a person is considered to be driving drunk at 0.08 percent or higher. He faced as many as five years in prison, but no one wanted to see him get that. Not the brothers' mother, not Charlie Fellure, not even Bruce's widow or teenage daughter.

"We could be mad at my uncle, and we could be resentful, but we aren't," Kalie Fellure, 17, said in court yesterday. "Taking him away is only taking away another meaningful person."

Licking County Common Pleas Judge David Branstool didn't want to send Gary to prison, either. After hearing the tearful pleas of the Fellures, the judge called the family "remarkable" and the emotional case "almost impossible."

"What do you do in the case of a mother who loses one son to the grave and potentially another to prison?" he said.

But Branstool felt some punishment was warranted, and so he sentenced Gary Fellure to 45 days in the Licking County jail and five years of probation. He fined him \$875 and court costs and suspended his driver's license for three years.

Gary Fellure accepted the sentence with quiet resignation. His family said the mental jail he's in is as bad as any physical one. He told the judge that his worst nightmare begins when he wakes up every morning.

"I've caused so much hurt and heartache that it's just about unbearable," he said.

He turned to his family and Bruce's family and apologized, over and over.

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