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***"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."***

*A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker*

September 7, 2001



### Alabama Football Fumble

**T**he troubles in Alabamaland only point to the obvious - college athletics, like public school athletics at the lower levels, is incompatible with an academic environment. Most mothers warn their daughters about football players for good reason, but in truth it is not football players. It is all groups of men from fraternities to sailors. Men behave badly in a group, even worse than they behave individually, which is bad enough.

At the University of Alabama, almost 30 football players are accused of treating a 14-year-old female student as a sex toy. I am shocked, shocked...O.K., as a sailor for 26 years I am not shocked.

I am more shocked at the \$40 million lawsuit filed by the parents of the academic prodigy who was recruited by the University. She was apparently placed in a dorm where other scholarship students were housed, including many of the football team members.

University officials are not baby sitters. Some time ago, stupidly, university officials around the nation decided that putting males and females in adjacent rooms in a college dorm would give greater freedom for students to "find themselves." What it did, of course, was to permit boys to find girls, an altogether natural thing.

The parents of the young girl had to know where



**Commentary**

*their daughter was housed. I have never known parents who did not go to look at the accommodations for their child starting college if a dorm or an apartment was concerned. There is no charge that any of the charged football players used force. Apparently the girl was a willing victim. Yes, she was too young to make legal consent, but any 14 year old girl who is smart enough to enter a major university is not a mental retard incapable of understanding societal norms, and certainly has a sufficient vocabulary to say, "No!"*

*There is the charge that alcohol and drugs were used to break down the young girl's defenses. The parents must be shocked to learn that alcohol and drugs are prevalent on college campuses.*

*The University did not protect the girl. Perhaps they should have, but colleges gave up the parental responsibility long ago and everyone knows it. The parents did not protect the girl, and they should have made special arrangements for her in a private home. The girl did not protect herself, and while emotional age and chronological age are not always the same, she should not have been there if she was not emotionally prepared. I entered Trinity University as a math major at the age of 16, and looking back I was not emotionally prepared but I also was not vulnerable.*

*I am not surprised that the football players did not protect the girl - but no sane person would expect them to protect the girl. The football players should not even be part of the academic scene. They are semi-pro players playing in the NFL minor league. The NFL should pay them, and they players should not be on a college campus where they are around young girls.*

*Everyone has plenty to answer for in this situation. Unfortunately, only the deep pocket of the tax-supported university will be called upon to pay the price.*

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**"Undeterred by historical example, however, the EU looks to fulfill the age-old dream of having a country of English cooks, German lovers, French defense forces and Italian efficiency experts".**

**P.J. O'Rourke**

