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

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

September 1, 2002



Commentary

A Life or Death Decision

Coral Eugene Watts, meet Saddam Hussein.

And what do they have in common? Well, they are both a known threat, and there is great debate over what to do about their imminent threat.

Coral Eugene Watts is the multiple murderer currently held in a Texas jail. He is due to be released in 2006. He is known to have killed 13 people, and admitted to that many, but is widely suspected of having killed as many as 80 people over a lifetime of crime – and he has announced he will continue to kill upon his release.

Coral is being released because he was granted immunity for many murders on the condition that he relieve parent's concern nationwide by leading the police to the bodies. Coral had been convicted of attempted murder in Texas, but the Texas Judge forgot to include water as a murder weapon in his conviction of attempting to drown a woman, and an Appeals Court overturned the conviction – leaving attempted burglary as the charge. Through a series of technicalities, and three days "good time" for every day served, Coral will be released to the public in 2006.

Coral is the worst kind of killer because he leaves no evidence and follows no pattern. He knifes, he shoots, he strangles, he drowns. Some victims he rapes, some he burgles, some are men and some are women, some old, some young. No victims are known to him. As he goes from city to city he kills as he walks the streets. He

picks houses at random, victims at random, kills at random by random means...and then he keeps on going to another town, another city, another state.

There are those who say there is nothing that can or should be done about that, because we can't preemptively arrest someone based on what he or she MIGHT do, regardless of their past history.

You get the parallel between him and Saddam who, based on his past history, is going to kill many when he gets his hands on nuclear/biological/chemical weapons. I am not certain that those who say that we cannot do something about Coral are the same people who also say we must wait until Saddam destroys half of New York City before we do something about him, but if there is any consistency in thought processes they should be the same people.

The law has always been concerned with how and when a person, or a state, can defend himself/herself/itself and how much defense is "appropriate." In frontier Texas the first question was, "Should the deceased have died?" If the community decided that the deceased should have been killed by someone anyway, then there was no trial.

Perhaps that was a bit extreme, but equally extreme is this idiocy that we can never do anything until we, or our neighbors, are dead! Civilization would be better with the pioneer Texas attitude, but if that must be modified to "appear" more feminine, let's not offer up lives to the process.

As to Coral, I think the Texas Rangers should take Coral to San Francisco and keep him there...where he can become part of the "diversity" of the city. Random murder could become accepted as a liberal San Francisco "Alternative Lifestyle."

Both as a people and a nation we must face the question of when we defend ourselves against certain attack. The law is all about drawing lines.

Where do you think you as an individual, or we as a nation, should be able to stop murder – or mass murder?



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