

## **LETTER TO A COLLEGE FRESHMAN & OTHER YOUNG LADIES**

(Contributed by Rayburn Hesse from Spy Softball)

*I was asked recently to render advice and counsel to a College player.  
Perhaps others would benefit from the message:*

For 30 years, I took great pride, in addressing the United Nations, in meetings here and abroad, in saying, "I represent the United States." That was both a privilege and a burden. I was acutely conscious, even after hours or in casual settings, that I never stopped being a representative of the United States – and that my every word, every action, reflected not just on me but on my government.

You have a similar situation. You are not just another coed. You are one of the most recognized female athletes at a very athletically-oriented university. What you do or say reflects on you, your team and your school. Thus, you bear a responsibility, indeed an obligation, to bring pride and respect to your team and yourself through your behavior. Moreover, as a scholarship athlete, you bear a double obligation because you are in effect an employee of the University.

I sometimes wonder if you realize how fortunate you are. There are approximately 300 girls pitching for teams in Division One. Fewer than 25 have the skills and the teams behind them to be consistent winners. You have the talent to be among that group of consistent winners. And, you have the privilege of playing for an excellent team. But, your game needs work, and nothing off the field should deter you from a goal of performing to the best of your talents, which are a gift not to be squandered.

Many people have a vested interest in you – and you owe *all of the coaches, and yes, other players who helped you win.* (personal references deleted) When you take that mound, or when you party, you carry the hopes and aspirations so many have vested in you.

You are a representative of (*your team and your school*) every minute, day and night, until you graduate. Your goals should include leaving behind a tradition of excellence, on and off the field, that people will point to with pride when new students are introduced to (*the school's*) softball team.

I recently found a note I had written to another player bound for college. She had lost her father, a close friend of mine, early in her teens and became something of a rebel. Her Mother asked me to talk to her, and say what I think her father, a blunt-spoken man, would have said. I was heading overseas so I wrote her a note.

*Study hard, and when you think have done enough studying, study for another hour. Think about where you want to be 10 years later, and never lose sight of that goal. Regard your reputation as one of your most prized possessions. Have a good time, but know your limits for alcohol, and always force yourself to stop one bottle or one drink below that level. Keep your panties on; sex is a wonderful experience when it's a mature expression between knowing adults, and you're too young to appreciate that the most precious gift a woman can give is herself, and it should be treated accordingly. Boys your age want to score, not so much for the sexual gratification – (passage deleted) - but so they can brag about it. Go to church; it's a drag on Sunday morning but there are few realizations more beneficial than the acceptance that there is a God, a more perfect being. Keep your lips sealed; girls will gossip but respect confidences and other girls' reputations. Don't do drugs; the idea of chemically-altering your state of consciousness should be anathema to you. At the end of every day, ask yourself: how did people see me today? Did I do anything to earn or retain their respect – or did I demean myself? Life is a daily process of accounting for being who we are – and a nightly inventory can be quite instructive.*

*Finally, would my Mother and Father have been proud of me today – on and off the field?.*

Throughout her college career, and indeed until she married, I was a Dutch uncle, father-confessor, and supportive friend to that girl – a fine woman today, with children of her own.

*In a lighter vein, when I turned 16, I received much less somber advice from my father. He told me: Always remember two things before you indulge in some of the behavior of many college boys. First, adhere to the principles of your Catholic upbringing. Second, remember that I was elected judge in McClain County; if you do anything I wouldn't approve of, do it in Cleveland County.*

RFH

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