

Department of Psychology - Valparaiso University
THE JODY ESPER ESSAY AWARD ON SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS &
PREVENTION

~ In Memory ~



Dr. Jody Esper April 6, 1953 - May 21, 2002 **Associate Professor & Chair of Psychology**

[Eulogy Student Reflections](#)

This is an annual student writing competition to honor the memory of former Professor Jody Esper. We solicit essays from students on issues related to sexual assault education, awareness and prevention.

The winner of this contest will receive a \$50.00 and will be recognized at the Annual Spring Picnic. S/he will also receive a certificate and his/her name will be placed on a plaque on display in the Psychology Department. Further, the winning submission each year will be published on the department website.

The paper may be either a review of research, a persuasive essay, or an account of personal experience. Suggested possible topics include:

* sexual harassment * date rape drugs * ways to prevent sexual assault * gender communications * gender equity * healthy gender relationships

The following Submission Guidelines apply to this competition:

- * Submission Deadline: April 15
- * Paper Length: Approximately 5 double-spaced pages
- * Student Info: State your major, class standing, activities, and other info about yourself that you would like to be included in the award ceremony
- * Procedure: Papers must be e-mailed as a Microsoft Word attachment to: terri.hendle@valpo.edu, Psychology Department Secretary.

This award is made to honor the life and work of Dr. Jody Esper, Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology at VU from 1985 until her passing in 2002. Professor Esper devoted much of her career to the prevention of sexual assault and the assistance of survivors of sexual assault. Among her many activities in this area, Dr. Esper organized the first Take Back the Night event, and she played a leadership role in establishing the SAAFE Office at VU.

We hope that you will participate in this appropriate way to honor Jody Esper's memory and to further advance her pioneering efforts to prevent sexual assault in our community.

2008 Winning Submission

Lierin Beecher

Broken

Friendship is something most people experience in their lifetime. In grade school children find other kids who enjoy playing the same games. In middle school, preteens find others they can do something recreational with such as sports or shopping. In high school, people begin to show truer colors and friendships are made and broken. Trust is something that goes along with friendship. We tell our best friends our deepest, darkest secrets, our most vivid dreams that we wish to come true, and we share memories. We try to believe that we can always count on friends or trust them with anything. Friends can be the most important people in another's life. Friends influence our decisions and our life styles. However, what happens when the ones we trust the most betray us? When we turn to them for a helping hand and they are not there. Throughout my life I thought I had a tight knit circle of friends that would always be there for me and never steer me wrong. I entrusted them with everything I had and would never think that they would betray me. When it came down to it, what I thought and hoped for was not the case. Friendship is a key outlet to love, but with friendship comes trust and respect. I was a tomboy growing up. I grew up with two brothers. I did not play with dolls or play house. I played football, basketball, baseball, and soccer. I played soccer since I was five on an all boys team. Even as I got older I played on an all boys team for most sports. That is, until I entered high school. It is hard to look back on that now, knowing that I had some of the best friends in the world and most of them were guys. I loved those guys like brothers because we were so close. I never thought they would hurt me in a million years. Upon entering high school, I stayed close with the guys I had been friends with but they added new guys to our crew. This did not bother me, most of them seemed cool. Over summer break between my sophomore and junior year, one of my guy friends, Shain, invited me to party. I accepted the invitation. I told my parents that I was going out with them, but my friend, Katie, was going to meet up with us later and that I would be spending the night at her house. Most of the guys I knew were at the party when I arrived. However, I did not know the guy who lived there. This was going to lead to one of the big mistakes of my life. Once we got there, I noticed everyone was drinking so I started drinking too. I soon noticed that I was the only girl at the party. I figured there was nothing to worry about; after all I had grown up with most of the guys. Lesson one: One should never go to a party, concert, or event without a buddy who is willing to stay with you for protection, protection from potential predators or protection from your own stupidity. After a while I wanted to leave, as I felt uncomfortable. I do not know if it was the alcohol upsetting my stomach or me upsetting myself because I knew I was not in the right state of mind. Plus, it was getting late. So I called my friend Katie to come pick me up. She said that she was busy hanging out with her boyfriend and would come pick me up when he left. I said "Okay." I waited for about two hours. It was already midnight. I went into the bathroom and locked the door; I then call Katie back. She did not answer. So I tried again, again, and again, still no answer. She sent me a text message a few minutes later, "Hey I can't pick you up." Now I really wanted to leave. So I called my friend

Jessica, but she was in Ohio visiting family and could not pick me up either. I went back to the party and asked Shain, who brought me, if he would leave the party and drive me home. He said he would but he felt he was too drunk to drive. I told him it was okay and that I understood. I should have just called my parents at this point or the police surely they would give me a ride, at least somewhere where I would feel safe. I went back upstairs. It was going on about two o'clock in the morning. I figured I would call my brothers' friend Ryan. I knew he would come pick me up because he had a crush on me. He always told me he would never let anything bad ever happen to me. Relief went through my head when I heard his voice on the other line. He said he would come pick me up but he wanted to know how to get there. I had not been paying attention on the way there, and I had no idea remotely where I was. Lesson two: Always pay attention when you are going somewhere your not familiar with. I went back to the party to find Shain, who had past out in the mean time. I asked the guy who lived there if he could give my friend directions to come pick me up. He agreed but as soon as he heard Ryan say his name he hung up and would not give my phone back to me. I do not know why none of the other guys stepped in; maybe they felt they would be ridiculed for helping me. Maybe they felt like it was just a joke and no one was hurt so why bother. I started to get hysterical at this point. I had no phone, no ride, and no one to protect me. I had this feeling in my stomach that something bad was going to happen. I went upstairs and locked myself in the bathroom. A few minutes later my friend, Mark, came upstairs to check on me. He told me if I wanted to I was welcome to go sleep in one of the bedrooms. Warning bells should of went off in my head at this point. Lesson three: No one should ever go into a bedroom or stray off from the party where everyone else is. I went into one of the bedrooms and lay down. After about twenty minutes, Mark and the guy who had taken my phone came into the room. At this very moment I did not know what to do. They shut and locked the door behind them. The one guy held me down while Mark raped. After Mark was finished, he held me down while the other guy raped me. I felt so violated and dirty. I begged and pleaded with them to stop. I screamed and kicked but no one came to help. I struggled to get loose from their grip but I could not escape. There was nothing I could do. I stopped fighting. I just lay there lifeless as they raped me, hoping it would be over soon. All these thoughts ran through my head. I should have stayed home. I should have just called my parents. I wish I was not here. I hope this is a bad dream. They left and I just lay there crying and blaming myself. I did not understand why this happened to me. I did not understand what I had done wrong; did I upset these guys in some way? Why in our society is there a double standard if a girl sleeps around she is a whore but if a guy sleeps around he is a role model. Were they just trying to get notched under their belts? Did they feel that since I was the only girl there they had a right too? These guys were my friends why did they hurt me? It is never right for someone to take advantage of you because of what you are wearing or how you are acting, that is not a free ticket to your body. As soon as I heard Shains' voice I demanded he take me home and have his friend return my phone. On the way home I did not say a word. I just stared off into space, wondering if what happened that night had just been a vivid nightmare. It was not, it happened! That night changed my life forever. I was so scared to tell anyone about what happened. So I did not. I tried to keep it to myself. If this happens you should not be afraid to speak up. This is not your fault, and you did nothing wrong. The next night after the incident, I was hanging out with my brother and his friends. His friend, Ryan, came over and asked me if everything was alright. This is the

point in which I broke down crying hysterically and told him and everyone what had happened the night before. My parents took me down to the police station. In order to get a case in court police have to have evidence. Lesson four: do not shower or anything. Go straight to the police station so that they can do a rape kit, do not wait! The police told me because I had showered and washed the evidence away that I had no case. They tested my blood but found no signs of roofies. The next series of questions they asked if I had been drinking. I answered yes. The police officers told me that because I could not tell them the location of where this took place, and I could only identify one of the guys. There was really no case it would be my word against his and I would probably lose. It is hard to look at our judicial system as just. These guys had raped me and taken everything from me. Why is our judicial system so unfair? What if these guys do it again because they got it away with it? That just does not seem fair in my eyes. I lost all respect for guy after that. I generalize after that, that all guys are selfish, arrogant pigs. The next few weeks I could not sleep. I would lay awake at night because when I closed my eyes, that night would just replay in my head and their faces were always there. I just kept blaming myself and wanted everything to go away. I even thought about suicide, but things got better over time. I learned to channel my hate into poetry. I realized that you have to keep going and things do and will get better. My family was very supportive, especially my older brother and all his friends. I had so much hate for the guys who were once my best friends. I never thought in a million years that they would be capable of hurting me so badly, in one night. I guess you never really no who your friends are until something like that happens. After that night I had refused to talk to any of my former friends who had been there. I know that someone had to have heard what was happening in that room, but no one chose to take responsibility to stop it. That hurts me even more knowing that people could have stopped what was going on. It's like the theory in psychology were people feel that they are not responsible to help someone when others are around it is called the bystander effect. I do not know if the guys that did hear and knew what was going on felt that if they helped me they would have been looked down upon. Or if it was fear that helping me, a girl, they would have been shunned from the group. I know how Dr. King felt when the white people were doing horrible things to the black people and even though people knew it was wrong they chose not to speak up and stop it. Dr King's message was to love the sinner, but hate the sin (King 95). It is hard to do that because I always expected my friends to be there to comfort me, not to destroy me. You say how sad. You say poor thing. But when it's you it's something else it's everything. You'd never believe the nightmares. You'll never know the pain you cause. You'll never see the scars you left. Everything you stole. Everything I lost. You took my body tore it in half. You took my childhood, my heart and my laugh. You took everything I kept for myself. Then you're gone. I'm not your poor thing no more (Degrassi Season 2). After that night I felt broken. I felt as though I was no longer good or pure. My heart was broken. My friendships were broken. My trust for people was broken. I felt like my whole life had been broken and there nothing anyone could do or say to put it back together. I am not sure I can ever forgive my former friends for what they did but I cannot generalize and say that every guy is the same. Just as Dr. King found it in his heart not to hate white people for what some bad are doing (King 103). I choose not to hate all guys for those bad guys that are out in the world.