

Legal fallout for underage drinkers

Enforcement in University, town

BY ANDREW DUNN
FEATURES EDITOR

For the interconnected web of law enforcement agencies that patrol campus, the fact that UNC students drink under age is a given.

The path such cases take through the legal system is a testament to how widespread the issue is.

The housing department, the Department of Public Safety, Chapel Hill police and Alcohol Law Enforcement all cite students for drinking violations on or near campus.

In most cases, the consequence will amount to a penalty ranging from only a verbal warning to a 15-hour alcohol education class.

Still, the repercussions for the busted drinker vary widely depending on who does the busting.

On-campus quaffing

For the hundreds of teenage drinkers who populate South Campus dorms, trouble begins with a knock on the door.

The resident advisers could be investigating a loud noise complaint, or they could have spied a liquor bottle through a cracked door.

Though students of legal age can drink in their rooms, alcohol is prohibited from common areas and in quantities suitable for more than one person, regardless of the owner.

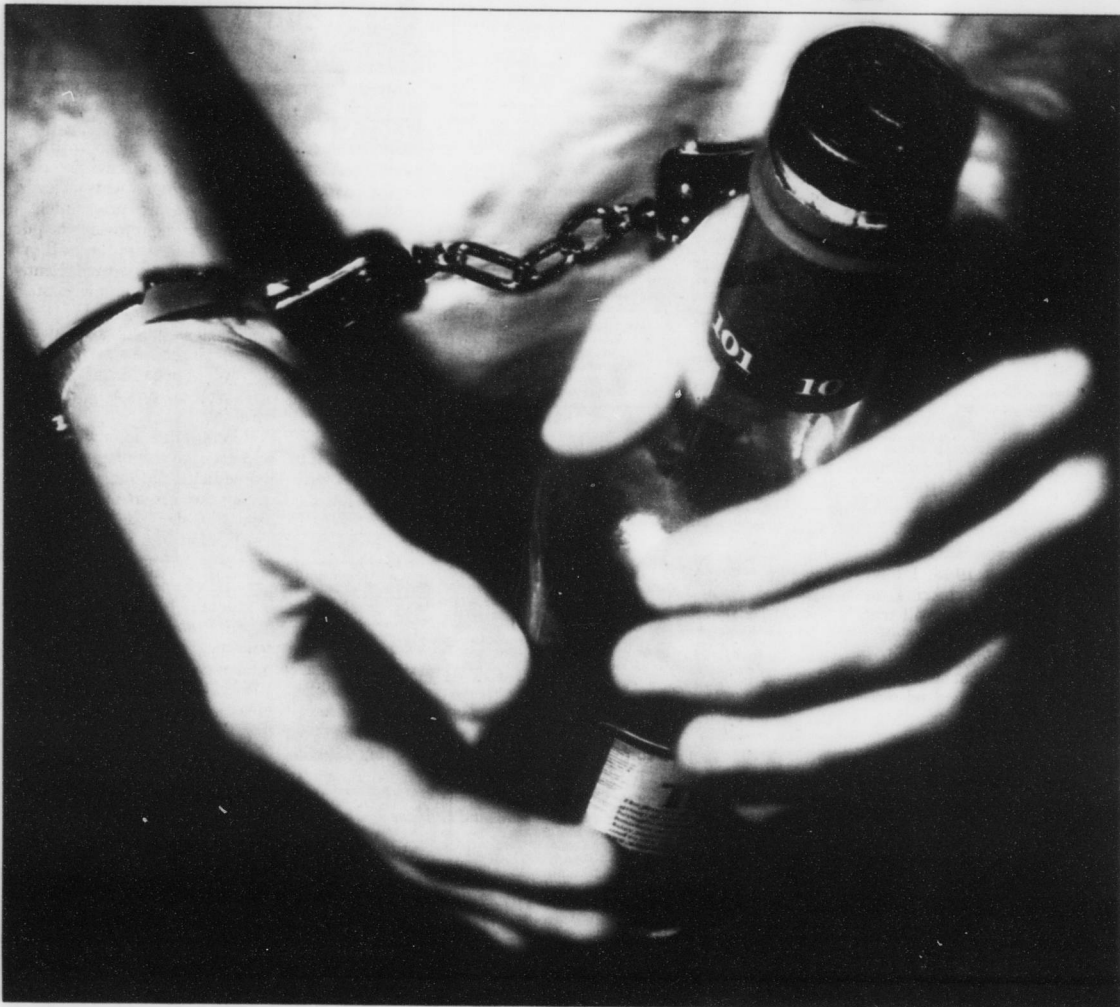
The RA will immediately ask for the One Card of everyone in the room, and the alcohol will have to be poured out. If the drinkers follow those directions, the incident could end right there.

The dorm's community director also reserves the right to issue a written warning or mandate an alcohol class. If the violators are not cooperative, DPS officers will be called in.

Randy Young, DPS spokesman, said most of the problems with underage drinking stem from downtown excursions and house parties, not the residence halls.

"Underage drinking presents the biggest problem at large-scale events and out in public," Young said. "We're not going to go room to room in the dorms."

And UNC's Honor Court, though



DTH PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/ALLIE MULLIN

Consequences for underage drinking in the residence halls might be as light as a written warning. Being caught by the Chapel Hill Police Department or the N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement means a trip to the courthouse, along with fines and the possibility of alcohol education classes.

alerted to underage drinking, primarily deals with charges of disorderly conduct and driving while intoxicated, Deputy Student Attorney General Andrew Pham said.

"We can't realistically look at every underage possession charge," Pham said. "The University has a concurrent process that takes care of that."

That process usually just requires the offender to take an alcohol education class through Campus Health Services, according to the Dean of Students' office policy.

Out on the town

Drinkers will find the town of Chapel Hill less forgiving if its officers are making the bust.

Citations from the Chapel Hill Police Department or N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement will land the drinker in the courthouse.

On one Tuesday each month, 20 to 40 UNC students and town residents file into the Chapel Hill courthouse, alcohol citations in hand.

But for most of the offenders, a

quick visit with an assistant district attorney will be the furthest they venture into the legal system.

"Our first move is not toward a purely punitive action but an educational one," Orange County Assistant District Attorney Jeff Nieman said. "It doesn't mean we don't take it seriously."

For first-time offenders, the district attorney's office will offer what is known as deferred prosecution.

Nieman said most choose that

path, which offers a lighter sentence and dismissal of charges that can later be expunged.

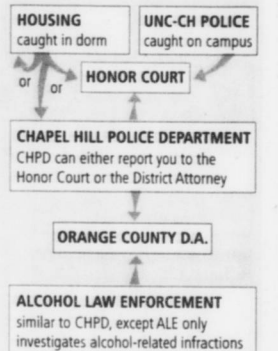
Offenders must pay about \$200 in court costs and sign a statement that says they "freely admit guilt" and agree to complete several measures within three months:

- Stay enrolled in school or employed full time.
- Don't commit another offense.
- Take a 15-hour alcohol education class that costs \$150.

Technically, an underage drinker

Handling the violation

The group that cites the alcohol violation affects how you are passed through the legal process. (represented by the green arrows)



Underage drinking laws

As of Dec. 1, 2006:

► Underage drinkers risk a possession citation even if they weren't caught holding an alcoholic beverage.

► If a police officer suspects intoxication, he can require the person to take a blood alcohol content test, and if that person has alcohol in his system, he is legally "in possession."

► A person who refuses will automatically be charged with possession.

► If a possession citation is issued, the police officer — either a member of the Chapel Hill Police Department or UNC's Department of Public Safety — also will refer the student to UNC.

could face 60 days in jail, a sentence reserved for severe offenders who decide to plead not guilty and fight through a trial.

"It's not the majority of cases, but it can happen," Nieman said. "The point is, no matter what the charge, the assumption is innocent until proven guilty."

Assistant Features Editor Nate Hewitt contributed reporting. Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

Blackouts permeate the college campus culture

BY ANDREW DUNN
FEATURES EDITOR

Lord, have mercy, it happened again.

The noonday sun reveals you fully clothed as you struggle to lift your body from the rumpled bedsheets.

And judging by the look on your roommate's face, you must have said something bad last night.

Blackouts have become a part of the binge drinking culture prevalent on college campuses.

But you'll be losing more than your memory and your inhibitions when you drink a bit too much.

"If recreational drugs were tools, alcohol would be a sledgehammer," Duke University professor Aaron White writes. "Few cognitive functions or behaviors escape the impact of alcohol."

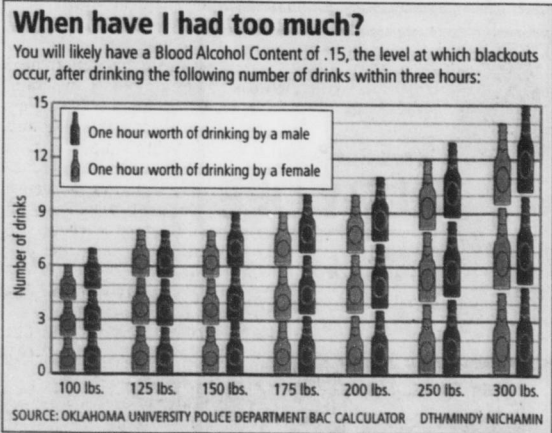
On a grant from the National Institutes of Health, White explored the causes and effects of blackouts in his paper titled, "What Happened? Alcohol, Memory Blackouts, and the Brain."

The magic number he came up with? A blood alcohol content of 0.15.

More than that, and blackouts are almost sure to occur.

Even below that mark, they can happen. White described that type of blackout as "lapses in memory that people might experience after having a few drinks at a cocktail party, often manifested as problems remembering what another person said or where they were in conversation."

But college students are more likely to experience the complete blackouts because they are more



likely to consume alcohol rapidly.

In a 2002 study by Harvard School of Health director Henry Wechsler, 40 percent of the 772 students surveyed reported blacking out in the year before the survey. More than 50 percent had blacked out at least once in their lives.

Socially, the forgotten-but-not-gone actions can range from casual conversations to sexual intercourse.

Physically, the effects are a little more complex. For those who haven't taken psychology, humans have two types of memory: short-term and long-term.

Information stays in short-term memory for less than a minute before it is forgotten, unless it can be transferred to long-term memory.

Alcohol attacks that trans-

fer process, known as encoding, mainly by impairing neuron connections in the hippocampus, the short-term memory center.

But because heavy drinkers maintain that short-term memory, they might seem normal, carrying on conversations and even driving.

The most troubling aspect of blacking out might be the link between blacking out and a future of alcoholism.

Alcohol abuse is defined by UNC's medical school as the intentional overuse of alcohol, thought to be three to five drinks at a time. It takes about double that to black out.

Alcoholism — long-term alcohol abuse — usually requires treatment, counseling or medical attention.

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

A beer-making experiment

Two fraternity brothers brew for fun

BY SARAH FRIER
STAFF WRITER

Ten gallons worth of hops, yeast, barley and malt extract — the beer essentials — cost amateur beer-brewers Porter Durham and Danny Lawrence \$20.

"It's almost like how you would brew coffee or tea," Durham said. "You put the barley in what looks like a sock, let it steep for about an hour, then add the malt, hops and yeast and let it ferment."

The friends and UNC seniors said although they spent about \$80 on equipment, they will save money on beer in the long run.

Aspiring beer-brewers can buy kits online cheaply, but the two Chi Psi fraternity brothers went to the BrewMaster Store, a hole-in-the-wall converted pool house off of I-85 in Durham. They said they wanted to see everything in person.

"The startup cost is a little high," Lawrence said. "But we calculated it once. It cost us about 47 cents to make each beer, and we're looking to make that number go down by buying cheaper ingredients."

The type of brew changes based on how the grains are roasted and the temperature. The project takes about two and a half weeks but is not high maintenance.

"It's a safe process," Lawrence said. "It's not like you're making moonshine or anything like that." Because the brewers buy pre-roasted grains, the process is mostly waiting and timing, they said.

After brewing, Lawrence and Durham filter their mixture into another container to avoid sediment at the bottom of the batch and to add priming sugar. The sugar reacts with the yeast to carbonate the beer

and make it smoother.

"It's easy to get it to be good; it's hard to get it great," Lawrence said.

Great beer depends on temperature regulation and precise measurement of ingredients, which Lawrence said is the hardest part.

Durham acquired their first recipe for pale ale last semester from a high school friend's father. Because they added too many hops, the product turned out bitter.

The duo was more successful with its second batch, which they named Porter's Porter, incorporating Durham's first name.

"We got a lot of compliments on that one," Durham said.

Some home brewers aren't so lucky. Lawrence has talked to people whose caps exploded off bottles — they'd forgotten to let air escape during fermentation.

But Lawrence and Durham said they enjoy the experimentation. They plan on making a lager for their next project.

"It'll be difficult, because we have to keep it at 46 degrees," Lawrence said. "We still haven't figured out how we're going to do that."

Durham brought the equipment home for Thanksgiving and brewed beer with his dad, who used to work for a restaurant microbrewery.

"He had never seen the process in action, and I could tell he enjoyed it," Durham said. "Plus, it was just fun to do something like that with my dad."

The brewers live in the Chi Psi fraternity lodge but keep the beer equipment in a friend's apartment.

"There'd be some liability issues inherent in having it around in a fraternity," Durham said. "We've



DTH/KATE NAPIER

Senior Porter Durham uses home brewing equipment to make beer with his fraternity brother Danny Lawrence (not pictured).

been really cautious and don't want to mess with the law or anything."

If friends offer to buy the beer, the brewers decline. Legally, they can't sell their beer without a permit or provide it to anyone underage.

"It's really more of a hobby, and doesn't take up much time at all," Lawrence said. "It's just neat to create something like this."

Now amateur brewers, Lawrence and Durham said they think about beer differently. Lawrence said he prefers to use home brews for sipping, not playing drinking games or chugging. Once he's created it, he wants to savor it, he said.

"My friends think it's great, and they're always willing to be taste testers," Lawrence said.

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