Rhodes pick suing Yale for sex bias

By KATHLEEN WOODRUFF

The Bergen County woman who won a Rhodes Scholarship is one of five persons who filed a class-action sex discrimination suit against Yale University last summer.

Ann M. Olivarius, 22, of Harrington Park filed the suit in Federal District Court in New Haven, Conn., along with three female classmates and a male faculty member July 7, according to court records. The suit is still pending.

Miss Olivarius and her co-plaintiffs were unavailable for comment. Miss Olivarius' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Olivarius, said their daughter was in Boston on personal business and was expected home tonight.

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Miss Olivarius, a political science major, graduated from Yale last June and learned this past weekend that she had won the prestigious scholarship for two years of study at Oxford University.

She was one of two New Jerseyans to win the award. The other was Frederick T. Smith, 22, of Newark, an economics major at Harvard University.

Stanely Flink, director of public information for Yale, said the suit charges that the university failed to provide suitable protection or provide for special procedures in cases where sexual pressure might be applied to female undergraduates by faculty members or other college officials.

He said the university's position is that there are established grievance procedures outlined in the undergraduate regulations.

But Phyllis Crocker, a member of the Yale University Women's Caucus Grievance Committee, said the plaintiffs contend that the grievance procedure is inadequate. She said the suit seeks to have a new procedure established.

Flink said the undergraduate regulations call for any student who feels that there has been discrimination based on race, religion or sex to discuss it with the person involved, then the masters and deans of the residential colleges, the faculty-student executive committee or the associate dean for student affairs.

In a public statement issued by university officials after the suit was filed the university said the "plaintiffs have chosen their own course of action, one which seems to ignore the impact on those who may be innocent while trying to force institutional and public action against particular persons."

Miss Crocker said the Woman's Caucus is not releasing the names because the suit was filed as a class action. In addition, she said one of the original plaintiffs has dropped out of the case because she was concerned about her "vulnerability" as a student and the court recently allowed two additional undergraduates to join the case. The other plaintiffs have since graduated, she said.

Court records indicate that in addition to Miss Olivarius the original plaintiffs were Ronni Alexander, Eugenis Lestwich, Lisa Stone and John Winkler.

Miss Crocker said the original suit alleges that:

Photo by Rich Raska

Kenneth Olivarius and his wife, Ann, of Harrington Park look proudly at a picture of their daughter, Ann, a Yale University graduate who has been awarded a Rhodes Scholarship

- One woman was forced to have sexual intercourse with a professor and was unable to continue her studies in that field because of the incident.

- A second woman had a friend who was sexually harassed and became convinced no adequate grievance procedure existed and consequently lost confidence in her male professors and her ability to take advantage of educational opportunities at Yale.

- The third woman tried to investigate a sexual harassment case and because of an inadequate grievance procedure was forced to waste time, effort and money.

- The male faculty member contends that the lack of an adequate grievance procedure poisons the faculty-student relationship and stands in the way of a proper learning environment.