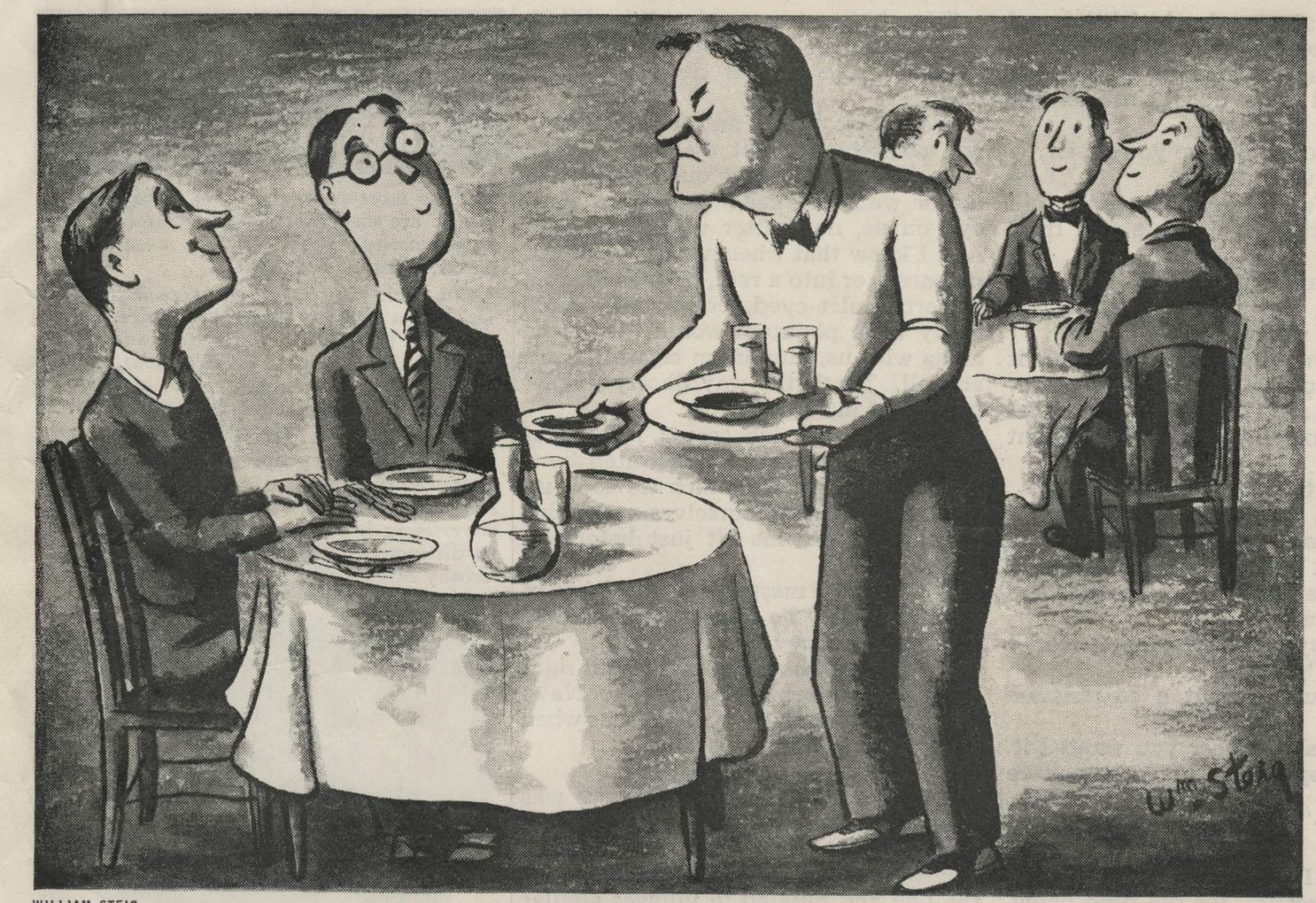

WILLIAM STEIG

Can a boy of 21 go through a hard football season, hold down a job, and still find time for classes? Mr. Atherton would like to know

Professors grow sternest when they compare the football coaches' salaries to their own

Gridiron G-Man

By Richard L. Neuberger

The young athlete from U.C.L.A. was identified by knife scars on his back. He had, in addition, three complete sets of names. All this was irregular, and Ted Key was ruled ineligible. This incident, together with a few score more, made the professors (who run football on the West Coast) uneasy. They hired G-man Edwin N. Atherton to look into irregularities. Mr. Atherton is now at work, and apprehension among alumni everywhere is acute

Enthusiastic alumni have always done their share in maintaining the "gravy train" for the athletes

Investigation of subsidized athletes has caused some uneasiness on certain West Coast campuses

ALONG the sundown rim of America, where eight football teams are locked in a tense struggle for the championship of the Pacific Coast Conference and an invitation to the Rose Bowl, mention of Edwin N. Atherton makes fervent alumni shudder and hard-boiled coaches blench. His arrival in any college town on the Pacific seaboard sets 200-pound fullbacks to mopping their foreheads and hiding in the closet, and starts football fans wondering what might take the place of their favorite sport these crisp Saturday afternoons.

Yet the name of Edwin N. Atherton appears in neither football programs nor newspaper line-ups. Multitudes never rise to hurrah his achievements on the gridiron.

This leads to the conclusion that Atherton must occupy a unique position indeed. He does. He is the first Federal Bureau of Investigation graduate ever assigned to ferret out the low-down on college football proselyting. And he has official sanction for the job. The faculties of the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Athletic Conference have hired him to discover how and why behemoth young men suddenly appear at their colleges, perform mightily on the gridiron and do not become ill-fed, ill-housed or ill-clothed during the process.

In simpler language: Where do the heroes get their money? The professors want to know. They have commissioned Atherton to find out. So right from the beginning he has a different status than anyone else who ever pried into intercollegiate football. Previous muckraking of the athletes' financial affairs has had to be conducted from the outside. Much of it has been on the sly. The investigators have had to resort to snooping. Atherton, however, can arrive on a campus as conspicuously as he pleases. No keyhole sleuthing for him. His task has faculty approval. Any nimble halfback or colossal guard who refuses to reveal to him the source of the money that pays for T-bone steaks, corduroy trousers, college tuition and tickets to the junior prom may find himself nervously holding down the carpet in the dean's office.

On the Trail of the Gravy Train

The inquiry into the finances of the gridiron heroes was authorized late last December at the 1937 meeting of the Pacific Coast Conference. The "gravy train" is the way some cynics refer to the practice of bestowing slight emoluments on young men of football prowess, and the gravy train formed the meeting's No. 1 topic of discussion.

Edwin N. Atherton, after being in charge of the F. B. I. offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles, had resigned to go into the investigating business for himself. He had just made a sensational report on graft in the San Francisco police force and he was the chief investigator for the Better Business Bureau of Los Angeles. Here was the fellow to do the job. The professors would put a veteran of the G-men on the trail. What better way to find out who was financing what athletes, and why, when, where and how?

To understand these occurrences, certain circumstances must be explained. The Pacific Coast Conference is governed not by coaches and athletic directors, to the intense disgust of those individuals, but by professors. One professor represents each of the ten schools in the conference. The schools are University of Southern California, University of California at Los Angeles, Stanford University, University of California, Oregon State College, University of Oregon, Washington State College, University of Washington, University of Idaho and University of Montana. The last two institutions, however, do not compete for the football championship.

The whole probe has the coaches in such a funk that Atherton repeatedly assures them his information will not be used to declare ineligible the athletes performing at present. Whatever he uncovers will apply only to future situations.

"My investigation," said he not long ago, "is for research purposes and not to dig up evidence of professionalism that will disqualify from amateur sports any player now competing in the conference."

Atherton, who is forty-two years old and who spent eleven of those years in the service of Uncle Sam, is about halfway through the prowl of the Western athletic scene. He has been surveying conference sports since January. The task will be completed late next spring, when he will present to the professors