

# Oxford keeps door open for ill Rhodes scholar

By Mary Jo Howe

"Oxford has been a venerable institution for over 700 years, so it can wait a little longer for one student," Jim Steckel-

burg, a 1975 Rhodes Scholarship winner was told by the Rhodes Scholarship Committee.

Last May, Steckelburg was on his way

to attend Oxford University in Britain after maintaining a 4.0 undergraduate grade point average, completing one semester of graduate work, and receiving three of the most prestigious scholarships, the Rhodes, Marshall and Danforth.

However, this summer Steckelburg said he had a "slight setback" in his education plans.

After a tennis game one Sunday last May, Steckelburg felt a tingling in his feet. The sensation spread, and five days later he was paralyzed from the neck down in Bryan Memorial Hospital in Lincoln.

Steckelburg was the victim of a rare disease called the Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a disorder of the nervous system.

The disease begins with a weakness in the limbs, which spreads to the trunk. In severe cases, the disease causes total paralysis and may last from two weeks to two years.

"Very little is known about the syndrome except that it is seldom fatal or permanent," said Steckelburg.

During his illness, Steckelburg said he read several papers on the disease and

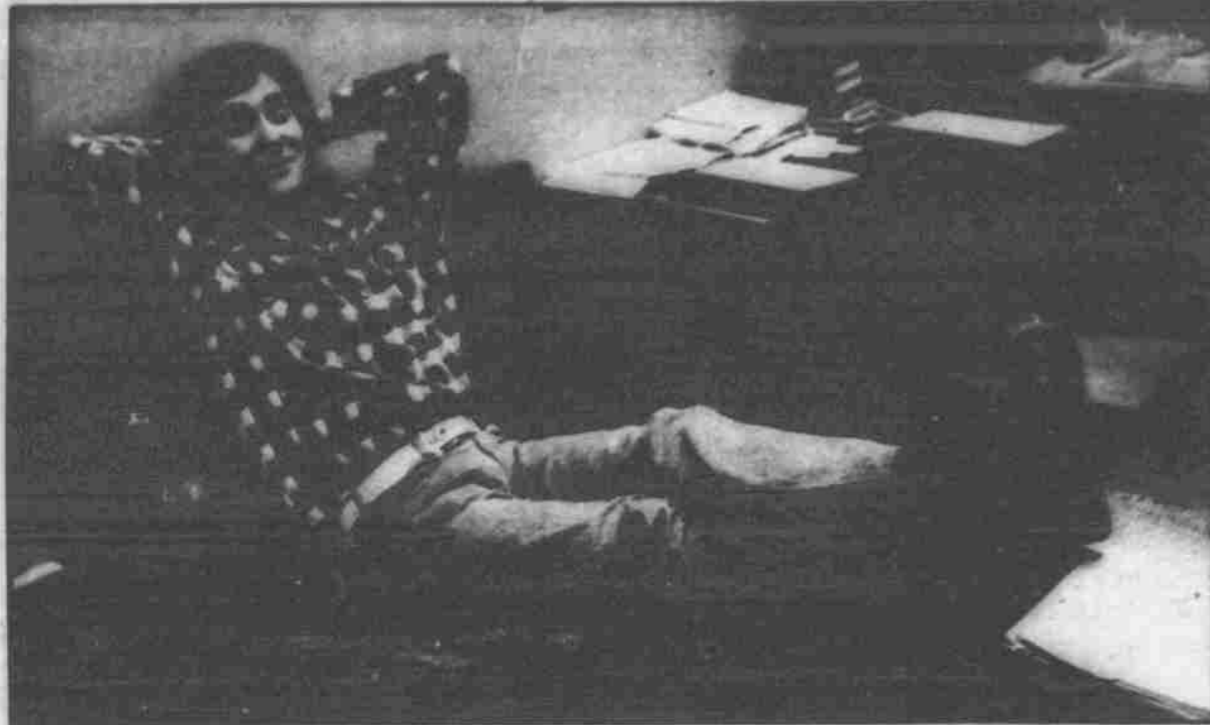
found that current treatments haven't changed much since a scientist from the 18th century first described them. Some persons have claimed solutions to the disease, but all you can do is let it run its course, he said.

"About the first of June, the doctors told me how serious my condition was, and my brother wrote to the Rhodes committee," said Steckelburg.

"They were really terrific and agreed to delay everything until I was able to continue my education," he added.

Steckelburg was released after nine weeks in the hospital. He is tentatively planning to enter Oxford this January. In the meantime, he is tutoring part-time in the UNL Math Dept.

Steckelburg, who was graduated in December 1975 with majors in math and computer science, was one of 32 U.S. students selected to receive the Rhodes Scholarship, which is worth \$17,000 a year. It is awarded for a minimum of two years with an option to renew for a third.



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Jim Steckelburg's trip to Oxford University, courtesy of a Rhodes Scholarship, was sidetracked by a rare disease.

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