

## Handicapping the handicapped

by Randy Beam

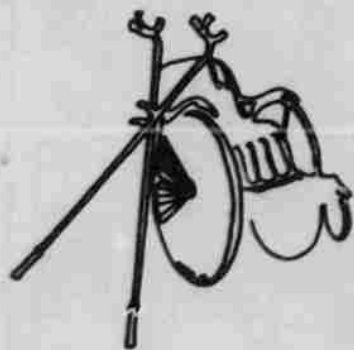
Someone once told me that being handicapped was like being black—you don't really know what it's like unless you're that way.

The statement's truth is obvious. But in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the problems a wheelchair ridden student faces at the University—and illustrate them for the student body—I took to a wheelchair briefly one afternoon.

My experience was unrealistic because I was in the chair for only a short time. I couldn't have run up against even a fraction of the physical barriers

wheelchair ridden students do.

Also, I was able to react to certain situations in ways a student in a wheelchair could not. I



apologize to the couple who watched in horror as I fell while trying to manipulate my chair over a curb, only to bound quickly to my feet.

Even though many

physical barriers remain for the handicapped to cope with, the University is attempting to remove them as both the opportunity and money present themselves.

But of more concern to the handicapped students I talked with are the social barriers they face. They are not any less of a student—or a person—than anyone else at this University. They want to be treated as social equals.

As one blind girl put it: "Although we're different, and we have a handicap, there are things we have to offer (to others) and maybe we might not only be interesting to them, but we're definitely interested in what they're doing."

