

Custodians

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Lewis Cooke, a custodial technician in Hamilton Hall, agreed. "They might be more careful about making a mess right in front of you if you're cleaning the hall," Cooke said. "But for the most part I don't imagine they notice you at all."

Cooke said winter is the worst season for cleaning a classroom building. Mud and snow are unceasing problems.

"I think that's probably the worst thing," Cooke said. "Except for that, we only have the usual amount of litter that we need to sweep up."

Behmer suggested most students are sloppier than they are at home.

"I think they must be dirtier than at home," he said. "I don't know anybody who throws cigarette butts or candy wrappers on the floor at home. I'm on the job eight hours a day and three to four hours is spent picking up trash."

"Dorm students are complaining about rising dorm rates. My job would not exist if it wasn't for cigarette butts, paper and spilled pop. If they would be a little more personally ecological they wouldn't even need custodians."

The custodians fall into roughly three categories: —people who have been and will continue to be custodians (both young and old); —people who are simply putting in some time until something better comes along; —and students. According to



Behmer, the student help is least effective.

"We have some student help on the weekends and they don't do much. They pick up the trash because that's visible, but that's about it. We've got a couple good ones who work together with us. But if I was some old man they'd probably hide in a corner."

Behmer described two particularly unpleasant situations he occasionally faces as a custodial engineer.

"You may not want to print this, but I'll tell you one thing that really grosses me out," he said. "You find it when you're cleaning the johns; boogers on the wall. Now who does that, man? And it's predominantly, although not exclusively, a male habit."

In the bathrooms Behmer said there is one major area in which male and female habits can be compared: throwing up.

"Boys generally hit the stool," he noted. "When a girl throws up you sometimes can't tell if they laid on the floor or what."

But generally boys are "ten times dirtier," he said. He said the biggest problem area he cleans is around the Foosball table, which he called a "99 per cent male sport."

Cooke said the job of a custodial engineer can be, if not the top of the world, at least a consistent job.

"You know about what to expect every day, even though there are a few emergencies," he said. "You can count on your regular pay check."

But Behmer complained that the pay is not high enough for a man supporting a family.

"I make \$65 per week, take home pay," he said. "That's enough for me, but it's low pay. Who can support anybody on that. The turnover rate is really high and some of the fellows who work with me receive food stamps. If you paid janitors, you'd get them off the food stamp rolls."

Although there are obviously few fringe benefits of the job, Behmer said one is finding money. "I find about 30 or 35 cents each week on the floor."

The downstairs hallway of Andrews Hall points up the problem the UNL custodial corps faces. In that hall there are seven standing ash trays, six wall ash trays, nine wastebaskets and two large trash receptacles. On Good Friday by 9:30 a.m. the trash had already begun to accumulate.

A crumpled Pall Mall pack lay within one foot of a wastebasket, nine cigarette butts and assorted ashes and matches had been dropped on the floor, a chewing gum foil lay within six inches of a wastebasket, three candy wrappers and four paper cups were scattered under various benches. Somebody has to clean up that stuff.