

Dormitories took the place of discipline at home

By Mary Louise Knapp

The University of Nebraska students of 1950 found few escapes from strict rules when they left home—at least if they lived in a residence hall. Not for them the freedom to visit members of the opposite sex until 2 a.m. or to throw pizza in the halls as 1980 dorm dwellers are accustomed to doing.

The residence halls still maintain some control over the students who live there, but over the years many rules and hall government policies have been relaxed and altered to fit the changing lifestyles of college students.

Before the first residence hall was built, students lived in apartments, in boarding houses, or at home.

Male students often lived in fraternities or cooperative houses. Some cooperative houses for women were converted from old houses along Q and R Streets in the early 1900s.

Women's residences had to be approved by the dean of women, who kept a list of "suitable" boarding houses.

The owners of these houses were required to provide a reception area on the ground floors where women could receive male visitors—only on weekends, of course.

WOMEN WERE not permitted to visit men in their apartments or fraternity houses.

Jay Curtiss, a former resident of Neihardt Residential Center, said that the need for on-campus residence halls arose during the 1920s when boarding houses began closing down and fraternities and sororities took over many available houses.

Curtiss, who is now a student assistant in Abel Hall, is compiling historical information on Neihardt, formerly the Women's Residence Hall.

Raymond Hall was opened in 1932, and Love and Heppner Halls were added in 1942. Piper Hall, which is now known as International House, was added in 1958.

Women living in the residence halls were expected to abide by the rules of the Association of Women Students (AWS).

That organization ceased to exist in the early 1970s when the UNL Housing Department required men and women in the residence halls to follow the same rules.

Helen Snyder, a former Dean of Women, said that women students had to sign out with a housemother when they left the hall at night or during weekends and sign in when they returned. Freshmen women had to be in their rooms by 9 p.m. on week nights, and by midnight on Friday and Saturday nights, she said.

VISITATION HOURS for men were from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the first floor parlors, she said. Men were never permitted above the ground floor.

From 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., study hours were in effect. Women were supposed to be in their rooms studying, or at least being quiet.

Meals were served in a dining room which is now the large television lounge in Raymond Hall. Snyder said that dinner was served family-style, with busboys serving. Grace was sung before meals, and women were required to wear dresses.

"Flirting with the busboys is never in good taste and is not permitted," admonished a Raymond Hall bulletin of the 1950s.

During the 1950s, cafeteria-style service began in the dining room, but the women were still required to dress for dinner.

"The Raymond Hall cuisine is undoubtedly one of the most famous in college campuses across the country," proclaimed a Raymond Hall bulletin of the 1930s. Snyder said that the meals were not as varied as those of today's residence hall cafeterias. Usually only one or two entrees were served at each meal.

IN 1941, the housing department rules that all freshman women not living in Lincoln must live in the residence halls.

Most women did not stay in the halls past their freshman year, Snyder said, but moved to apartments or sorority houses.

The upperclassmen who did live in the halls received special privileges such as extended hours. Some of the upperclassmen served as counselors for the freshmen the forerunners of today's student assistants.

Four housemothers, who also served as counselors and as enforcers of dorm rules, lived in each hall, along with a social director. They, like today's residence directors, lived in the hall and served as general supervisors.

Students did not have telephones in their rooms until the Centrex system for on-campus telephoning was adopted in 1975, Curtiss said.

Students in all halls fought for the three or four telephones at the ends of their floors, or depending on the desk switchboards for messages.

THE SWITCHBOARD operator at the front desk would page a student in his room through a buzzer system. One buzz meant the student had received a phone call, three meant a visitor at the desk. His roommate got two buzzes for the phone, four for a visitor. The roommate whose name began with a letter occurring later in the alphabet got two-four buzz.

The basement of Raymond Hall contained storage rooms for trunks and baggage, washrooms, and "shampoo rooms" in which women could wash, spray and dry their hair.

Selleck Quadrangle, built in 1952, was the first residence hall for men.

Bob Brandt, complex director for Selleck and Burr-Fedde Halls, said that men were not required to observe hours or be in the halls at night.

Women were permitted to visit during scheduled open houses in the first floor lounges.

BURR-FEDDE Hall, on East Campus, was built in 1958. Men and women lived in the hall together, but in separate wings. The first truly coed hall was Schramm, built in 1967. Men and women lived on alternate floors, as they do in 1980.

Although coed living was accepted by UNL officials without a great deal of controversy, men and women were not allowed to visit each other's rooms until 1972, when the present visitation policy took effect, Brandt said.

The student population grew rapidly in the 1960s, creating a demand for new residence halls. Cather-Pound was built in 1964, and the Abel-Sandoz complex opened in 1956-66.

Cather Hall was originally intended for women, but the demand for men's housing became so great that it was converted to a men's dormitory. The Harper-Schramm-Smith Complex, which are the newest residence halls, was opened in 1967.

The Women's Residence Hall was renamed Neihardt Residential Center in

1973, because men were living in the hall by that time.

BENTON, FAIRFIELD, and Seaton Halls, now office buildings that were originally part of Selleck Quadrangle, were used for graduate housing until the 1950s, when graduate students were moved to the 4000 building in Selleck.

The first association of residence hall students was called the Inter-Dorm Association. The name was changed to Residence Hall Association in 1969.

Few changes were made in dorm policy and rules until the early 1970s.

James Smith, director of the office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, lived in Abel Hall from 1968 to 1970.

During this time, he said, student assistants who were members of minorities were hired, and a policy requiring students to dress for Sunday dinner was abolished.

"One man was upset because he didn't have clothes to wear for Sunday dinner and they wouldn't let him eat," he said.

Several of the man's friends, armed with baseball bats and machetes, went to the cafeteria and demanded entrance, which brought about an abrupt change in the policy, Smith said.

RIVALRY BETWEEN residence halls and Greek houses has always existed, but it was and is usually nonviolent and is mostly in the form of verbal battles and snowball fights, Smith said.

In recent years, the halls have been filled to capacity, making triple rooms, and in some instances, temporary housing in lounges necessary. Many students live in dorms throughout their entire college careers.

For the students of 1980, a residence hall is a popular housing alternative.

Little restriction is placed on students.

Student assistants have replaced the housemothers and serve to help students and to enforce the few restrictions students still must live by.

Since the extension of visitation hours in 1972, students can entertain members of the opposite sex in their rooms for a maximum of 14 hours a day. Floor hours are voted on by students and the traditional policy of no alcohol in the dorms still exists. Students are not required to observe study hours, or stay in the halls at night or on weekends.



Dorm residents enjoy television outdoors in warmer weather in the courtyard of Selleck Quadrangle, one of the older but now coeducational dorms.

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