

ALAN PHELPS

# Shhhhh, don't say the D-word

The other day I heard a Residence Hall Association member blasting a university administrator over his use of the word "dorm."

The politically correct term, she said, was "residence hall," and if he didn't want to "piss people off" with his "stupid" comments, he shouldn't say the D-word.

"A dormitory is where you sleep," she said. "A residence hall is where you live."

When I was a freshman, I had a dorm room. Everyone called the building in which we stayed a dorm. Sometimes we would visit friends in other dorms. I ate in my dorm, studied, talked, went to the bathroom, took showers and just about everything else people normally do in dorms.

In short, I lived there. And the only time anyone used the words residence hall was when we were electing our RHA floor representative, who occasionally would tell us about those boring meetings.

This incident wasn't the first time I heard someone bring up the old line about living in a residence hall and merely sleeping in a dorm. I went to a couple of RHA meetings myself back in the old days.

When I started at the Daily Nebraskan, one of the first style points I learned was never to use the word dorm. The DN Stylebook, under the entry of "dorms," says: "do not use. Use residence halls. Let it slide in a column, however."

Luckily, this is a column. Thank heavens I can bend those rules a bit and use nasty, evil words.

The residence hall vs. dorm controversy is reminiscent of other word wars waged throughout our new, more sensitive society. Reminiscent, perhaps, but a far cry from intelligent.

For example, when we say Native American instead of Indian, we're trying to make up for a past misnomer. Indians are from India, not America. The term Indian never was cor-



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rect for referring to the first Americans, and it eventually came to be used as a slur in many cases.

The word dormitory originally meant a building with sleeping accommodations, and Americans have changed the word over time to be more encompassing of other aspects of living in general. However, even by the older definition, dormitory is a fairly accurate name for the residence halls.

It is true that the campus dorms are more than just a place to sleep. Students are smart enough to realize that. On my floor, in fact, sleeping was sometimes impossible because everyone was so loud. Often during the night I'd be forced to "reside" when I would have rather been sleeping.

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I suspect the residence hall concept was thought up by university officials who wanted to attract more students to the dorms through friendlier advertising. A residence hall sure sounds nice, full of nice people and nice activities and nice food.

I lived in what we all called "the dorm." The dorm also was full of many nice people who had fun and liked at least most of the food. I enjoyed my year in the dorm. Perhaps it wasn't as perfect as a shiny happy

residence hall is, but then that's life.

It would be a different matter if the average student seemed offended at the mention of the word "dorm," cringing and inwardly crying at the sting of the D-word. But that hasn't been my experience. This seems to be a far more laughable sight: A small group of people trying to force the majority to rename themselves.

I hope and suspect RHA members also discuss matters of slightly more substance. Because members are elected from each floor and regularly report back to their constituents, RHA probably is one of the most representative student bodies on campus — certainly they reflect the dorms more accurately than ASUN does the campus at large.

RHA members can call the dorms anything they like when they speak of Those Places Where Students Sleep/Live. I've heard a lot of names for them myself. But whining is quite an excessive reaction to administrators who use the same perfectly adequate word students have used for hundreds of years without ever feeling bad about themselves.

But then, what do I know? I sleep in a commune these days, not those Slap-Happy Residence Halls.

Phelps is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and a columnist.

RICHARD WRIGHT

# Infant brings sleepless nights

It was a dark and stormy night. The thunder boomed, the lightning struck, the wind howled and both the kids were awake and crying.

It was a bad night. Children crying because of storms is understandable. My daughter hates the thunder.

But after the storm passed and all was quiet, we knew it was still going to be a bad night. Well, maybe not bad, but unpleasant.

Our son will not sleep through the night.

In fact, he wakes up two, three or four times a night.

You can set your clock by Aaron. If he wakes up at 1 a.m., you can plan on getting only two, possibly two and a half hours of sleep after that. He'll be awake again.

Each time he wakes up, he's hungry. He's only four months old, and he eats like a horse. When he had his four-month checkup last week he weighed in at 18 lbs, 2 oz. He's doubled his weight, which babies are supposed to do.

When they're six months old. Aaron wakes up to eat. I guess he's getting a head start on those midnight refrigerator raids. Only it's me or my wife who goes to the fridge for him.

And it's not just midnight. It's 11, 1, 2, 4, or 6 in the morning when he wants to be fed. There is no set time.

For example, last week, after putting everyone to bed and enjoying a little quiet time watching television and studying, I went to bed at around 11:30.

I was in that weird mode of serene calmness. Sleep was falling upon me. Aaron woke up.

It was 11:45. Grumbling, I got up — I was taking the first shift, got his bottle, got him out of his crib and fed him. He sucked the bottle dry. The whole eight ounces, gone.

After burping, which is a completely different subject, and rocking him to sleep, it was time to try and go



We'd stay up late watching television in our bedroom. We'd go to bed when we wanted. Get up when we wanted. When I woke up before children, I'd stay in bed and fall back asleep.

to bed again. I was really tired this time.

But it wasn't to be. After laying Aaron down, covering him up and tiptoeing out of the room, our daughter woke up.

All it took was a few soft words and a rub on the back and she was back asleep.

Crawling back into bed, after gently moving my wife from my side of the bed, I finally fell asleep.

For one hour. Yep, Aaron was awake again. No! He can't be hungry again. He can't, I thought.

Luckily, he wasn't. There is a god. All he needed was his pacifier and his blanket placed up near his face for comfort and he was back asleep.

It sounds bad, but not every night has been like this.

One night he only woke up once, and he slept 'til six in the morning once. Once in four months isn't good.

The one time he only woke up once, I still didn't sleep.

I woke up four times by myself wondering if he was still breathing. Each time I checked, he was.

One time when I wasn't sure if he was OK, I went into his room and checked on him. Gently, I touched him.

I knew he was OK when he jerked awake and started to cry.

Great, now I'd done it. I blew it. The perfect night's sleep gone. But I wasn't sleeping anyway. If I had to be up, so did Aaron.

Oh, how I long for the nights we had before children.

We'd stay up late watching television in our bedroom. We'd go to bed when we wanted. Get up when we wanted. When I woke up before children, I'd stay in bed and fall back asleep.

Before children, I'd wake up to cars driving by, people walking and talking outside our apartment in Dallas. I'd also wake up to the occasional gunshot in our neighborhood. Each time I'd fall back to sleep quickly. You get used to those sounds.

After moving back to Nebraska, I once woke up to an owl outside our window and once to some cattle mooing in the pasture out back. Once again, I'd fall back to sleep because those sounds are nice, soothing noises.

Aaron crying at the top of his lungs for a bottle is not one of the best sounds in the world. Especially at 3 a.m.

Now don't get me wrong, I really do love my son.

When I feed him, I love how he'll hold onto my finger as he sucks on his bottle. And when he's done and I rock him asleep, his cooing is one of the most beautiful sounds in the world.

It's just that I miss sleeping a whole night. I can operate on a few hours of sleep, but not every night.

And I do like it when he speaks. I just wish he did his talking during the day.

Wright is a graduate student in Journalism and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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