

Why campus living is popular

Living in the 'improved' dorms

By KATHLEEN GLANVILLE
Of the Emerald

Four years ago the University dormitories faced a crisis. That year, in 1969, freshmen were no longer required to live on campus. Dorm residency fell off by 700 reservations in one year. The following year showed no signs of improvement. The University had lost a captive consumer group. When people were free to choose their own housing arrangement, the majority opted for anything but dorm living.

Today dorm reservations for next fall are flooding the housing office at a rate far ahead of the expected schedule. They're already completely out of single rooms. The housing office is both amazed and delighted.

What happened?

Four years ago there was an exodus from the dorms. Students fled the noisy cramped quarters, the regimented dining hours, and the lack of privacy.

Today the housing office is packing them in—and expensive single dorm rooms are booked solid by early April.

Obviously there have been some significant changes in dorm living.

Dick Romm, assistant director of housing, explained the dormitories' successful comeback.

"It became a buyer's market . . . when the freshmen had to live on campus, we had no trouble filling the dorms. When residency requirements were dropped we had to go on a selling program. We felt we could sell the dorms better if we improved them. We became much more open to change."

In those dark years of 70-71 a great deal of criticism was leveled at the way the dorms were run.

"The state board commissioned a survey the spring of 71, and they came up with huge amounts of results—needless to say we didn't come out looking very good," said Romm wryly.

"All types of people were included in the

survey . . . and none of them were very happy with us."

The survey revealed that the three things people disliked most about the dorms were: lack of privacy, noise, and rigidity in the food service.

The things people liked most about dormitory living were the opportunities for meeting people and the convenience.

The Housing Office began to act on the results of the survey. In response to criticisms concerning lack of privacy in the dorms, occupancy was reduced. A large number of double rooms were converted into single rooms.

The management began carpeting the dorms and they radically changed the food service.

If you lived in the dorms before '71 you probably harbor a few not so fond memories of standing in long lines three times a day to eat, sleeping through breakfast, or arriving home too late for dinner.

Today the dining hall opens at 6:30 a.m. and doesn't close until 2 p.m. They change from breakfast to lunch at 10:30, but the line is always open. The kitchen reopens at 4 p.m. and remains open for dinner until 6:30 p.m.

"Now students can go to an early class and come back in plenty of time to eat breakfast," said Romm. "We've increased the number of entrees, the variety of the food, just about everything."

Romm talked enthusiastically about the new food service and orientation programs.

"We've encouraged R.A.'s to take a much greater role in working with their units," said Romm. "In some of the complexes R.A.'s have helped set up photography darkrooms, offered instruction in handicrafts and sponsored chess and bridge sessions."

"The idea is not to involve thousands of people in every project we organize," explained Romm. "Students today seem a lot more willing to look into this type of thing. We're treating interested individuals as individuals, we no longer require a mass turnout to prove a program effective."

The continuing orientation program

features a series of guest speakers who repeat their presentations in each complex. The speakers range from Planned Parenthood explaining contraception to a dramatic fire prevention show, complete with fire swallowing.

"The response has been varied. Some talks have been attended by over 100 and others by as few as five," said Romm.

Sue Tamiesie, an R.A. in Sweetser Hall, considers the University's changing

would have never approached any where else."

When the laughter died down she added, "It would have been my loss never to have known those people. Any where else I never would have found out what they were really like . . . we would have never talked or even met. Living here teaches you that there is a lot hidden in people, you have to look for it."

"I'm living here just to meet people,"



Sue Brissett takes advantage of a peaceful moment to contemplate the view from her Sweetser Dormitory window.

attitudes to be the most important factor in the success of the dorms.

"They've become more responsive to students, more willing to change," said Tamiesie. She stressed the fact that the administration no longer places great importance on the numbers of participants when organizing a variety of programs.

"Being an R.A. has been a good experience," said Tamiesie. "There is no other type of living arrangement that allows you to meet so many different people from so many different backgrounds."

"I enjoy watching 'my girls' mature . . . not that I mean all incoming freshmen are immature; I don't mean that, but they go through some real changes. It's incredible . . . they're different people in May from what they were in September."

The dorms are a necessary transition period for many people, she said.

"Freshmen trying to adjust to the University have a hard enough time without having to live on their own, budgeting, shopping, cooking, and all that work living in an apartment means."

"For freshmen the dorms are the best source of meeting a lot of different people. I've known people who moved right into an apartment their freshman year and found themselves becoming isolated. Many people coming out of high school know few other people at Oregon . . . freshmen classes are often huge, and they're not exactly conducive to meeting people."

People. People living in close quarters, all night bull sessions, knowing 60 people by their first name, water fights in the halls, bitching about the food . . . these things make up dorm life. Lack of privacy may be a fault peculiar to dorms—but it is that very lack of privacy that brings these people together, forming bonds which may last a lifetime. This so called flaw is perhaps the dormitories' greatest asset. It is simply impossible to live in the dorms and not meet people.

The girls in Sweetser typify the close easy going relationship that exists in a housing complex.

"I love it here because I love being with people," said freshman Suzanne Malter.

"It's the easiest thing to do when you don't know a soul in Oregon," added Meg Bowman.

"It's fine when you get a good roommate."

"Single rooms are best."

"If you can live through dorm life you can live through anything."

"You know everyone here—even the weirds. There's so many people here I

said Leslie Beley, "I'm moving out next year . . . but if I don't like it I'll move back."

Most of the girls felt the same way. They enjoyed many aspects of dorm life, but they were eager to live on their own.

Dick Romm would agree with them.

"Dorm life is an experience every student should have, but I personally think a student shouldn't live there all four years. They should have different housing experiences."

Sue Tamiesie, who lived in the dorms in those pre-carpeted days, really appreciates how much the carpets muffle noise. However the freshmen complain about excessive noise . . . even though they laughingly admit they contribute to the roar occasionally.

Tamiesie can also recall what the food was like way back when—and she thinks it has definitely improved.

The freshmen went into dramatic detail over how gruesome the food is in the dining halls. However, Dick Romm needn't despair after putting so much effort into his food program. Dorm food gets better in retrospect, especially after you've eaten your own cooking for a while.

Only seniors and grad students can probably remember living in dorms with no visiting hours and a curfew for women. Today's freshmen can come and go as they please with the use of card keys, and visiting hours are set by the dorm residents themselves within certain maximum limits.

Doing away with closing hours was a huge step toward humanizing the dorms. It was the first of many examples of an administration that has started to listen to the people it serves and to respond to those people.

"Even after we eliminated closing hours in the women's dorms, we still locked the doors at night for security reasons," said Romm. "Then we realized that all these years we hadn't been locking the men's dorms. It was part of the whole double standard and it was ridiculous. The men's dorms were being ripped off right and left. Now all dorms are locked at night, both men and women."

"Living in a dorm is still an artificial kind of lifestyle," added Romm. "Not that it's bad, there are good and bad things about it. You must appreciate many different value systems, cope with loud stereos, and put up with people you might not like. It's still a life style you won't experience any where else . . . and for many, living in a dorm will be the best experience of their college career."



Photos by Peter Grant

Meeting new people and increasing one's social life has made dorm living popular. Here Lauren Loye talks with visitor Steve Twedt during a visit to her room in Adams.