

Dorms — The College Gulag

College life contains many new experiences — experiences that challenge and stimulate one mentally, physically and emotionally. Yet, for many a newly arrived collegiate soul, the first and most challenging experience may take nearly the entire year to adjust to. I'm speaking, of course, of dormitory living.

It is not without reason that former hall residents speak of "dormland" in much the same way that Alexander Solzhenitsyn speaks of the gulag.

For many residents the dorm provides the first experience of living alone. This is roughly equivalent to shoving a first-time skydiver out of the plane with an umbrella. My own experience was a little easier as I had spent a brief but terrifying sojourn in that most frightful of places, the real world. My parents' gift to me upon my graduation from high school was a copy of the want ads and a set of luggage — courteously pre-packed. I felt, therefore, somewhat prepared

for dorm living.

My first impression of my new home was that while the closet was of a comfortable size, someone had neglected to connect a room to it. Imagine my surprise at learning that it was the room. It could have been considered a convenient size, since one did not even have to leave one's seat by the window to open the door.

residents of the dorm. These types have been standardized worldwide, and there is no escaping them.

The first is the music lover who is so enamored of his personal favorites that he feels duty-bound to share them with the rest of the dorm, nay, the rest of the campus. To do so he employs an amplifier and speakers appropriate to a concert

magazine. The type who's perpetually inebriated, devastatingly hungover for midterms and finals, and who maintains a comfortable "B" average. Such diabolical, insidious treachery can only be communist inspired.

Dorm life also expands one's vocabulary. On the first Friday night in the halls, the new resident is forcefully introduced to such delightful phrases as "praying to the porcelain god" and "calling Ralph on the big white phone."

Another great pastime of certain dormitory residents is the 1 a.m. football game in the hall. This is usually done against the wishes of other residents, who will drag themselves from bed to chastise the gridiron enthusiasts. The participants of the sport become indignant at what they perceive to be an attempted violation of their constitutional rights and an exchange of determined gestures and suggestions of a highly improbable nature physically will ensue. It is no surprise that firearms are not allowed within the halls.

Now, I have taken the liberty of using the masculine gender pronoun throughout the previous passages. This has been a matter of convenience and no sexism is intended. Believe me, women have the capacity of being every bit as obnoxious as men. However, I have less experience in women's dorms — indeed, much less than I would have desired.

Yet, all of this triviality. The real trial of dorm life remains within the confines of your own room. A force too powerful to be stopped, it can only be endured or, at best, tolerated. I am speaking of the dreaded roommate. I myself was unsure how I would deal with living with a total stranger in a room the size of a Japanese sports car. I assumed that we'd be able to deal with any disputes in an intelligent manner. Then I saw his name.

"Dirk Benchpress," I read disbelievingly. "That has to be a joke."

I opened the door to my room and came face-to-pectorals with my roommate.

He was not quite as big as a semitrailer and probably didn't weigh as much, but he looked big nonetheless. He was dressed

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The cafeteria was another matter. One look at the first day's fare convinced me that the culinary artists who had been deprived of their jobs by the closure of Alcatraz had found new employment. I soon learned that the only food that could be counted on to retain its original flavor was the liver, since there is no way on God's green earth to ruin what is by nature glorified shoe leather.

Within a few days' time certain inimitable character types will emerge from within the

hall. The playing of his stereo is usually accompanied by the falling of loose plaster and essential support beams. Pounding on his door does no good because it can't even be heard inside. Indeed, the detonation of a small nuclear warhead on his desk is not guaranteed to attract his attention.

The second universal dorm type is the "mutant." This genetically deprived individual is easily identified by his hair, which is usually spiked up in so many different directions with so many different colors that he resembles a porcupine caught in the explosion of a paint factory. His conversation is influenced by a set of Cliff notes on esoteric philosophers that he partially perused one evening while experimenting with controlled substances and from which he never recovered. What few brain cells he still maintains in operating condition are taxed to capacity just remembering his name and room number, and lack the capability to focus on such facets of higher education as classwork and what day of the week it is.

The third, and perhaps most exasperating, type to be found in the dorm is the "offhand student." Everyone is familiar with the type: he floats along, never attending classes, never getting past the title page of any piece of literature with the sole exception of his monthly "young nubile women in compromising positions with no clothes on"

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