

# Housing

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Georgia, said he has a great relationship with his landlord, Bess Delaperriere. When one of Butler's roommates moved out and stuck him and his roommates with a larger share of the rent than they could afford, Delaperriere reduced the rent by \$100.

But most situations aren't resolved so easily. Greg Grachen's situation is a good example of the growing rift between students and landlords across the country. The U. of Delaware senior and his roommates have had several run-ins with their landlord, mostly concerning damages to the house.

"The condition of the house when we moved in was horrible," Grachen said. There was grease, dirt and blood on the walls, he said, as well as cat urine in the carpets.

Grachen said the situation hasn't gotten much better. When repairs are made, he added, the workmanship is often shoddy.

Debbie Stromwasser, Grachen's landlord, echoes the feelings of landlords who are forced to make repairs year after year because they rent to students. She said students often are quick to complain but don't do their part in keeping up the home.

"Some tenants leave the houses looking like 'Animal House,'" she said.

Most of the problems, Stromwasser said, stem from the maturity level of the students. She contends that they simply don't understand the responsibility of renting.

Students also tend to be disrespectful, she said, adding that some have written nasty comments on their rent checks. Students in Grachen's house have addressed their checks to "The Slumlord."

Todd Marshall and David Johnson, seniors at Western Kentucky U., also refer to their landlord as a slumlord. Living with gas leaks, cockroaches, doors without locks, a hole in the wall and a scum-encrusted bathroom is just the beginning for them.

They claim their biggest problem is their landlord, Wahn Raymer, whom they asked for five months to make repairs.

Raymer, who owns 200 units, responded, "I have other tenants to tend to also."

While Raymer acknowledges his apartments aren't magnificent, he balks at being called a slumlord. "(Students)



MICHAEL GARD, INDIANA DAILY STUDENT, INDIANA U.

**There's no place like home. There's no place like home.**

call anybody who rents to them a slumlord," he said.

Junior Brent Fisk did more than complain about Raymer's policies. When Fisk received a notice last spring announcing a \$77.50 hike in utility rates for the semester, he refused to pay. Raymer took his security deposit. Fisk took Raymer to court — and won.

Fisk is an exception. Suing a landlord is time-consuming and expensive, and most students won't take such drastic action. More often it is the landlords who take students to court, usually for breaking a lease or doing extensive damage.

Wendy Krakauer, staff attorney and program director for the U. of Washington Student Legal Services, said landlord-tenant disputes comprise about 13 percent of the cases her office handles.

Krakauer negotiates for students who wish to settle out of

court, an avenue she said is usually more beneficial for them. Tom Taylor and Dan Brennan, seniors at Georgetown U., said they threatened to stop paying rent until their landlord fixed the heat, which they said had been off for four months.

Taylor and Brennan, who admit they are "not the best tenants," live in a house with four others. They say their landlord, Henry McGovern, overcharges and exploits students.

Brennan said McGovern charged \$110 to replace the front of a kitchen drawer and \$250 to clean beer cans off the roof.

McGovern said he could have charged them much more than he did and that the long-term damages will be expensive. The charges for the roof stemmed from a party being held there. Repairs had to be made in addition to cleaning up the cans.

McGovern did not have a record of the \$110 charge for the kitchen drawer, though he did note a \$185 bill for replacing a broken door.

Yet McGovern, who manages 74 units, said he enjoys renting to students. Although they tend to inflict more damage on the units, he said, often they are willing to fix the damage and are more understanding when it takes time to make repairs.

So why do these students and many more like them put up with all the hassle? Location is one reason students at the U. of Delaware live on "Skid Row," a row of mustard-yellow houses located less than a block from campus.

Chris Cronis, a UD senior who has lived in two houses on the row, described his first as "an absolute pit." He said the kitchen floor was covered with a layer of scum. Previous tenants, he said, used the dirt-floor basement as a dumping ground for trash.

"When I first heard students call (the street) Skid Row I was appalled," owner Carroll Izard said. "I think the name sticks because students get a kick out of calling it that. It's part of the student culture."

Other parts of the student culture on any campus are parties, noise and general neglect of the houses. Yet landlords and students alike admit it is simply a way of life for students.

Jim Kenny, Taylor and Brennan's roommate at Georgetown U., concedes, "We have to be treated differently because we're not the mature adults other tenants might be. We have parties and we do damage."

Chris Pysinger, The College Heights Herald, Western Kentucky U., contributed to this story.

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