

Coeds in Town Opposed by Old Main

Officials, Student Leaders Divided on Residence Rules

She stretched her legs gracefully in front of her and lit a cigarette. Offering the pack to the reporter, the Dean of Women sank back into the chair, and, frowning a little said, "I'm a realist. We can't have more girls living in town because the dorms must be kept full. It is strictly for economic reasons." She took a long drag on the cigarette, then continued, "It's not a question of the girls' ability to operate an apartment. Any girl at this University could handle an apartment, even a freshman. They do it in the summer, when they study abroad, and when they student teach."

Oppressive Responsibility

Dorothy Harris then paused, engrossed in a thought. As dean of women at the University, she is responsible for how the 7,000 women students are housed. Her job was not always as complex as it is now.

When the University first opened its doors to women in 1871, Rebecca Ewing and Ellen Cross were granted admission as day students. As their number grew, the first coeds were housed in the Women's Building which still stands behind Old Main. The first women's residence hall, Irvin, was built in 1929, and as the student population expanded, was followed by Atherton Hall in 1938, Simmons-McElwain in 1948, and McKee Hall in 1949.

It was an accepted fact then that all women who could afford it lived in dormitories, and those who couldn't found rooms in town.

In the belief that University women needed the protection of a residence hall the Board of Trustees set up a policy that stated, "All undergraduate women students admitted to the main campus of the University shall be assigned to University operated residence halls and dining halls, except for reasons judged to be satisfactory by the officers of the University."

The officer designated to administer the trustee policy was the Dean of Women. According to a form presented by the DOW office, the Administration has interpreted the policy to mean that "both full and part time single undergraduate women who are degree candidates and who are under the age of 23 shall reside in residence halls."

More Women, More Dorms

To accommodate more women students, as well as the multiplying number of men students, the University built additional

dormitories. South Halls was completed in 1956, North Halls in 1957, Pollock in 1958 and East Halls in 1966. The University plans to stabilize the student population at 25,000 and there are no plans to build any more dormitories. But as one problem is solved, another takes shape.

The Administration's interpretation of the Trustee policy is being questioned and women students, especially 21-year-old seniors, are asking why they shouldn't be allowed to live off campus.

The Administration has reason to oppose the idea.

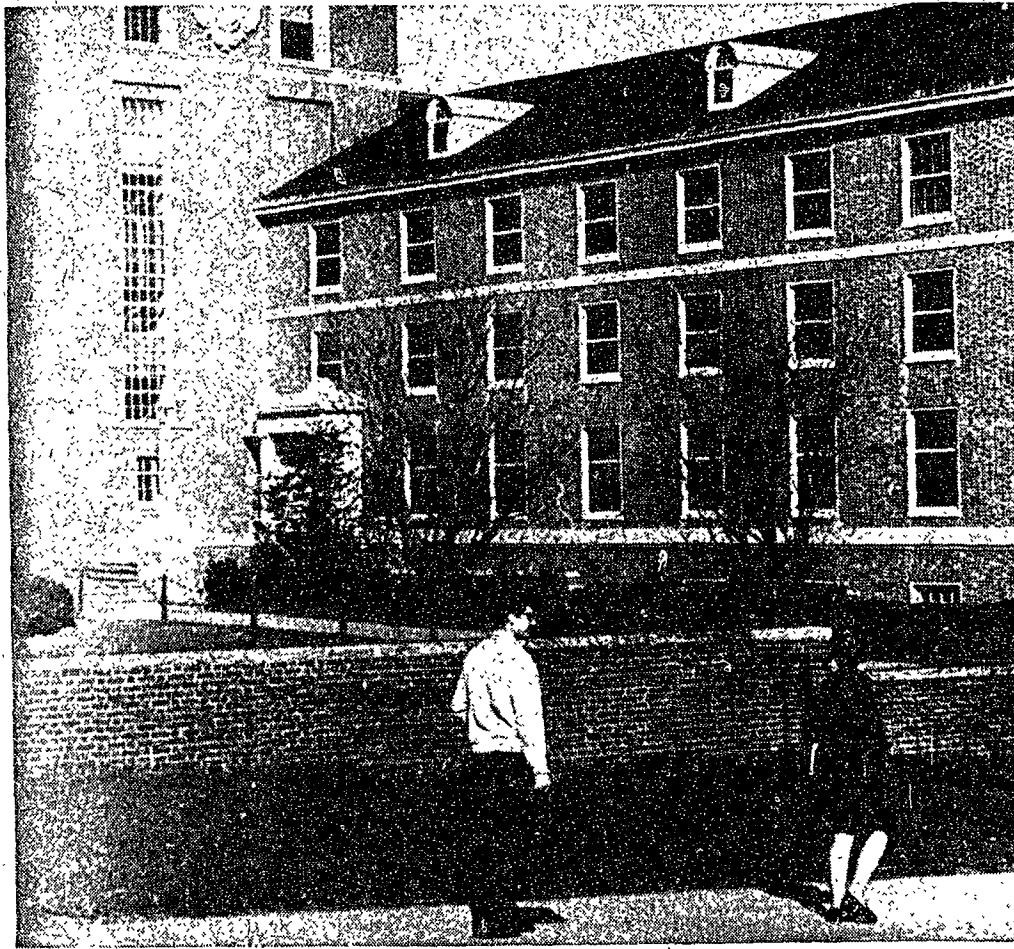
"It's a vicious circle," said Mrs. Lorraine O'Hara, assistant dean of women. "We could not have accepted so many students without providing housing for them. Now that we have the dorms, we have to keep them full, for economic reasons."

The economic reasons cited by Mrs. O'Hara are complex. The University builds its own dormitories and the General State Authority, which does most building for the State, constructs only administration, classroom and laboratory buildings on campus. The University gets no money from the State to build residence halls or provide food services. It must borrow money through bonds, in which banks, insurance companies and private citizens invest. These bonds are amortized over a period of sometimes 40 years, so that several generations of students will pay for the dormitories, as well as the entire food service operation through their room and board fees. The University has a strong commitment to pay off these bonds, and thus the urgency in keeping the dormitories full.

A Few Exceptions

There are exceptions to the Trustee policy. Undergraduate women who have reached the age of 23, married undergraduate women and women students living with their parents are automatically exempt from the residence hall living requirement.

Some conditions require individual attention by the DOW office. According to Mrs. O'Hara two justifiable reasons for a girl to live downtown are full time employment or residence with relatives or family friends. But the primary reason a girl asks permission to live downtown, Mrs. O'Hara said, is because of a health problem that makes residence hall life unfeasible: such as an allergy that requires air-conditioning or a diet that excludes most dining hall



"THE DORMS must be kept full . . . strictly for economic reasons," is the reasoning behind the Administration's ruling that coeds must live in University dormitories.

food.

Another reason is financial need. A coed who can prove she can't pay the \$295 per term combined room and board charges can arrange for cheaper living quarters in town.

Mrs. O'Hara contended that one of the University's major gripes against letting more women out is that it would take room space from men living in town.

"If you let the senior girls out you have to call the sophomore men back. Since the number of sophomore men is greater than senior women, we would have to set up rules saying which men can move out and which ones can't," she explained.

It's not that the Administration is against changing the rule, Mrs. O'Hara said, but it must have a workable plan to be sent to the Board of Trustees. She reported that two years ago the Administration seriously considered admitting enough new students to balance the senior women, to keep the dormitories full. But an investigation showed there was a lack of classroom space and enough professors to teach the lower level courses.

"Other schools have an open policy concerning student housing, but they most

likely are in towns and cities that can handle more off-campus living. If we had an open policy, more apartments might be built, but they would probably be more expensive. Also, the workers in the new industries and shopping centers in State College are taking some of the low cost housing away from the students," said Mrs. O'Hara.

Nittany Co-op

Of the approximately 100 girls living in town now 19 live in a boarding room situation at the Nittany CO-OP, at 244 E. Nittany Ave. The cost of the CO-OP is \$193.50 per term, and most of the girls are there because of financial need. Each girl has work duties in the house weekly. A cook prepares meals for the girls, as well as for the 20-40 men from rooming houses who eat at the CO-OP at a low rate. In exchange the men also have work duties and the use of the downstairs rooms.

The rest of the girls find their own rooms. The University does not recommend rooms and apartments for the girls downtown, Mrs. O'Hara stated, nor does it have a list of approved places. But the girls must comply with certain stipulations set up by the University. Perhaps the most

By Pat Gurosky
Collegian
Administration Reporter

important of these is that an unmarried women student cannot live in the same building where there are single men. This eliminates all apartment buildings, and as a result most of the girls live in the older rooming houses.

The girls are also asked by the University to comply with the dormitory closing hours, "in fairness to the girls on campus," Mrs. O'Hara said. No one from the University checks up on the girls, Mrs. O'Hara added, but they must have an adult sponsor in the building where they live. This sponsor could report a girl's activities to the University, which has the right to call a girl back from her apartment to a dorm.

TIM Opposition

Opposing the University's policy on off-campus living for women is Edward Dench, president of the Town Independent Mens Council. Dench also heads the Undergraduate Student Government Off-Campus Living Committee, which has been investigating the feasibility of more town living for women.

Fall Term the committee distributed a questionnaire through the Association of Women Students to all junior women at the University. In the survey the coeds were asked:

1. whether they would be 21 when their senior year started,
2. whether they would like to live downtown during their senior year,
3. whether their parents would allow them to live downtown,
4. if their financial situation would permit them to live off-campus and
5. whether they would still be willing to live downtown if they had to commute a distance of two miles or more by car.

Of the surveys returned, Dench reported that only 300 senior girls who were 21 would and could live downtown if permitted by the University, and 164 of these would be willing to commute two miles.

"The main problem now is that girls just don't believe that they can get out of the dorms," he added.

Dench said that the committee wants to get rid of the "old-fashioned, outdated regulations" that rule girls off-campus, especially the one prohibiting girls from renting rooms in buildings where there are single men.

"These regulations were devised in the

(Continued on page six)

Collegian Open House

Wednesday,
April 3
7-8:30 p.m.

What's a 1967 Olds doing in this 1968 Olds advertisement?

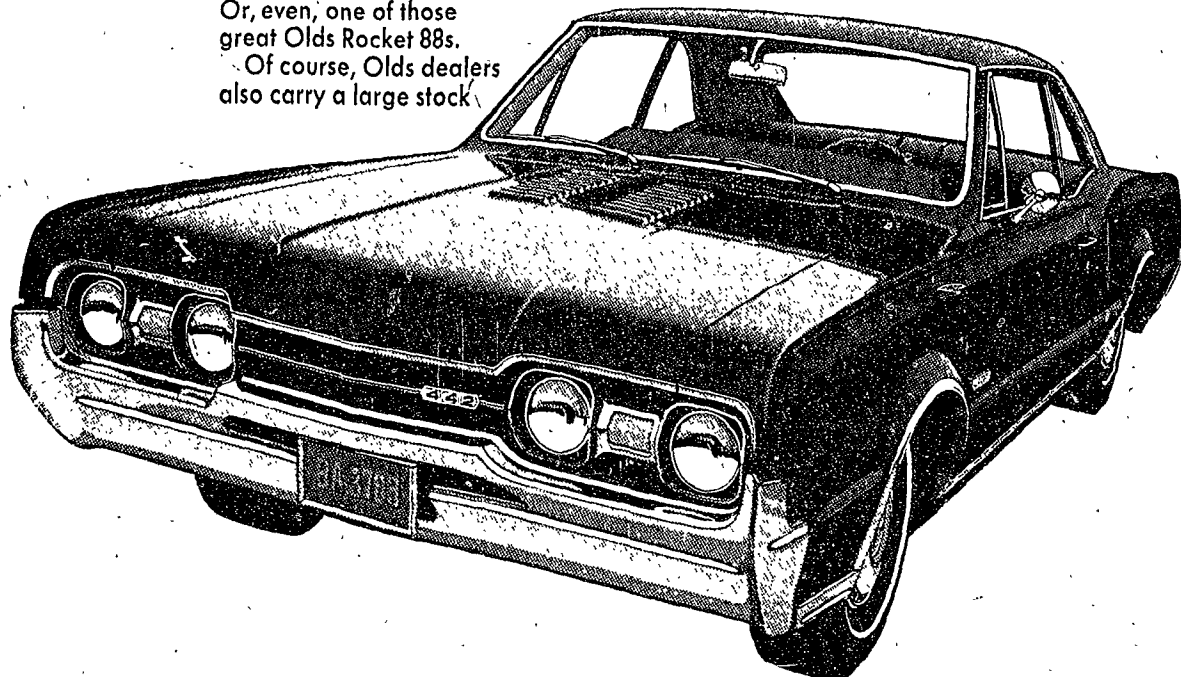
It's making the point that you can own an Oldsmobile. If not a new one, then certainly a used one.

Like the nifty 1967 Olds 4-4-2 you see here. Or a sporty used Cutlass convertible maybe.

Or, even, one of those great Olds Rocket 88s.

Of course, Olds dealers also carry a large stock

of other brands on their Value-Rated used car lot. And should you decide on one of them instead . . . well, at least we'll know you picked a good place to do it.



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