

THE OBSERVER

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■ AND IN THIS CORNER...

Modern wonders: ND joins coed debate

I really wish somebody would explain to me what the big deal is about "coed" dorms. Near as I can figure, every college in the U.S. has had coed dorms for thirty years, at least, some for longer. Since Notre Dame has only allowed female students since the early '70s, it comes as no surprise that there are still gender-based problems. Actually, since it is approaching 25 years since this momentous occasion, you'd think these problems would have already gone the way of the three-dollar bill.

Matthew Apple

Why bother making only one dorm coed, when it would only affect 100 out of 8000 students? Why not make them all coed? It's not just the proposal I don't understand, it's the mind set, the reason for this ridiculously infantile debate in the first place. For some reason or another, students persistently cling to this "dorm spirit" drivel, as if they individually have no spirit and desperately need their artificially created peer "families" in order to have any identity. I'm not sure whether its the students who oppose the concept of "coed" dorms or the administration.

I've heard the "argument" that dorms will no longer be able to play sports as teams. Besides the fact that studying should take precedence over sports in college, I see no reason why having men and women in the same dorm would affect the structure of "interhall" sports leagues. I still think it would be much better if students were able to choose their own teams for intramurals, but

there's no reason why dorm teams couldn't exist in normal dormitories.

It could be that the concept of "coed" bothers some members of the Notre Dame administration — the fact that it may be possible for women to spy men strolling the corridors in their boxers (tee hee). I figure if you feel like roaming the halls naked, that's your problem, pal. Actually, the very word "coed" is troublesome: a male-only dorm is called "a men's dorm," but when you introduce the female half of the human race, all of a sudden it's called "coed." Let's call female students "women" and male students "coeds" for a while and see what happens.

I wonder if the dorms on campus are still sexually segregated because the University implicitly mistrusts its own students. What if, heaven forbid, a dorm should be made coed by floor — students of either sex would be able to see each other by walking up a flight of stairs; parietals would make no sense at all, facilitating its subsequent removal from the English language (if the word existed outside South Bend in the first place); men and women might talk to each other outside of class and perhaps even (gasp) touch each other. It would be too much like the real world, with everybody living together and learning how to stand each other on a daily basis. How horrifying.

Frankly, ND, let's admit it: you're afraid to join the 20th century because you believe allowing coed dorms condones premarital relations. You'd rather maintain a cold distance between the sexes and pretend that real couples live in separate Victorian houses or sleep in separate Cleaver family beds. You'd rather pretend that the Catholic Church has the power to regulate human behavior, although Notre Dame itself has shown a disregard for official policies unless they happen to suit Notre Dame's "mission to drag the known world kicking and screaming into the 21st century" statement. You'd rather

pretend that the University is some sort of parent away from home with the right to stick its nose into people's own affairs, ignoring the fact that students over the age of 18 have the legal right to screw up their lives all on their own and learn by trial and error like the rest of humanity.

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Last semester, a Notre Dame student was apparently apprehended in the shower with his girlfriend, which evidently translated into dismissal from the University. Had this happened on any other college campus, the student would have had a very good basis for a court case. In fact, he probably had a good case against Notre Dame, but he'd never win because everyone knows that the bulk of Notre Dame's alumni illuminati are lawyers who convince potential plaintiffs to quietly settle out of sight and hearing. How convenient. I notice that law students haven't hit any freshmen women on sidewalks in a while.

Notre Dame really ought to grow up. This is probably the only college in the world where the issue of "should we

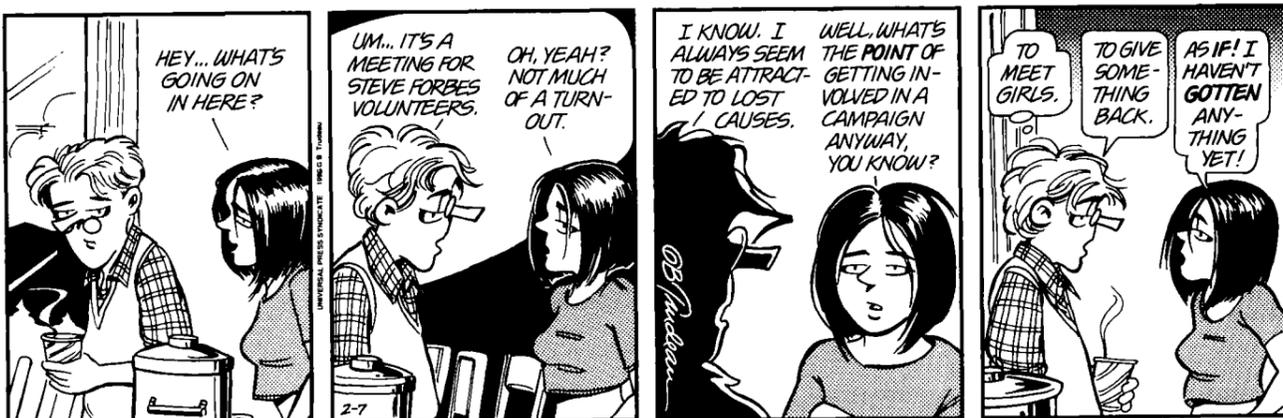
have coed dorms?" makes front page two days in a row as a subject of earth-shaking consequence. I submit that gender problems at Notre Dame and drinking problems are directly related. I would also bet that both of these problems occur in a direct proportion to the number of Notre Dame students admitted straight from Catholic or other parochial schools.

Of course, I fully expect people to do one of two things upon reading this column. The first is to complain that I still don't know what I'm talking about: "You never went here, you never experienced dorm life, blah blah..." I don't have to live here to know that this place is, well, screwy. Loopy, if you prefer, or any number of appropriate euphemisms. Anyone from outside this state can instantly tell after stepping foot on this campus that the overall attitude is typically conservative, sexist, racist, homophobic, beer-swillin', sports-lovin', adolescent, white-born and -bred middle class American. Not that you can't find it elsewhere, naturally (more's the pity, it exists in all levels of the corporate and political American "culture," despite public lies to the contrary). It's just that the average college student is not going to learn much worthwhile in the midst of such close-minded elitism at what considers itself a major university. Which is to say that business students "cheating" on a "take-home final exam" didn't raise my eyebrow even a millimeter.

The other thing they'll complain about is that I'm beating the old drum again. Well, hell, somebody's got to beat the damn thing. I just happen to own the biggest drum stick right now.

Matthew Apple is a creative writing graduate student at Notre Dame, home of the brave. Send your indignant cries of outrage to matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu or Get in the Ring at <http://www.nd.edu:80/~mapple>.

■ DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU

■ QUOTE OF THE DAY

"T Truth is the only light that can stand by itself in the surroundings of darkness and yet be noticed shining in the square of the universe, which is 360 degrees."

—Shahid God Allah