

How to handle 'Roommate from Hell'

By KAREN NEUSTADT

(CPS) — Meet the Roommate from Hell.

She borrows your white sweater, then slips it carefully back in your closet — with a new tea stain. He comes in drunk. She flicks on the overhead light as you are drifting off to sleep. He plays music of questionable taste at top decibels. She smokes; you don't. Your lunch money vanishes.

There is no more bitter rite of passage than sharing space with a disastrous roommate. Many college students have never bunked with a brother or sister, much less experienced being trapped with a stranger who does things they don't understand.

Some first-year students are so distraught over a Roommate from Hell that they pack their bags and call it quits. "Come get me," they tell bewildered parents.

Everyone has a horror story.

Leanne Call, a reporter for the *Western Star*, the newspaper for Western Oregon State College in Monmouth, interviewed dozens of students about their experiences for a recent story about living situations that are less than perfect.

One student said he found a roommate rummaging through his drawers. "I'm just looking for drugs," she announced. Another student came home to find his roommate having sex with someone — on *his* bed, no less.

One unfortunate student reported that his roommate did his laundry only once the entire semester, and an ever-growing mountain of dirty clothes threatened to take over the small room.

Another student said a former roommate hosted a four-day orgy in the middle of finals, made drunken phone calls to 911, and

put a vodka bottle full of dimes in the microwave oven.

One former college student recalled an unexpected guest for two weeks — her roommate's boyfriend, who camped out on the floor. Then there was the Irish Setter and his owner, cleverly hidden from the resident advisors, who took up residence in the suite next door.

Still another nightmare roomie had a penchant for making harassing calls to the girlfriend of a policeman for whom she had developed a "Fatal Attraction" obsession.

What's a student to do?

"Learning to live with roommates, to share, is part of the college experience," said Adrian Schiess, director of freshman programs at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Until the 1970's, say officials, the housing staff would throw students together randomly, even alphabetically, in dorm rooms. The past decade, however, has seen a shift to a consumer consciousness aimed at keeping students satisfied.

"We know that how happy and satisfied a student is with his room and roommate has a lot to do with how happy and satisfied they are with their whole college experience," said Peter Armstrong, director of residential life at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.

In spite of sophisticated methods of roommate selection, such as computerized matching, roommate nightmares are so prevalent that colleges now offer conflict resolution procedures and special training for resident assistants to help bring peace to the dorms of the 1990's.

"When I was in school in the '60s, we thought of it as an intellectual boot camp... a place where

you had a dry roof and three squares a day. If you were from the South, you'd be thrown in with someone from Brooklyn," said Mac Johnson, vice president for student affairs at Roanoke College in Salem, Va.

In the 1990's, however, there are sufficient challenges on campus without being stressed by an incompatible roommate. Johnson's staff has offered the Myers-Briggs personality test to incoming students for six years, dividing the class into general "types" and matching up roommates accordingly.

"In the past six years, since giving the Myers-Briggs, the

number of roommate change requests have dropped. Most people are satisfied with our choices," Johnson said.

The roommate problem is taken so seriously at Hood College in Frederick, Md., that Barbara Ingram, director of counseling, wrote the *Roommate Negotiation Workbook*.

"It is only necessary (for roommates) to understand each other and respect each others' rights. It is not necessary that you have the same feelings, preferences, and opinions," the book says.

At Wartburg College, Armstrong said "negotiation kits"

are distributed to new roommates. They contain step-by-step guides to all the common problems that can occur in a residence hall room.

Students are told to fill out in-depth questionnaires about themselves, read them to their roommates, and discuss any differences.

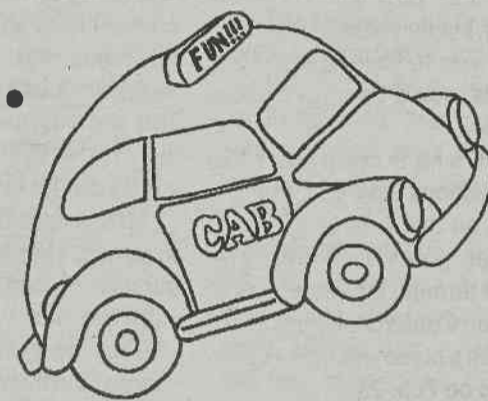
"We even teach students to articulate assertively on things like TV watching, noise, whether you keep the room neat or in a more casual way," Armstrong said.

Roommate contracts help smooth out problems at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pa.

CAB CORNER...

Spring Fling Update

It's here! What's we've all been waiting for! Spring Fling '93 has fun for all! Review the schedule below so you won't miss out:



Sunday, March 28: Talent Show

sponsored by Sigma Phi Delta. Join us in the SAC at 9 p.m. to see just what kind of talent NCWC has. If you would like to participate, see a sister of Sigma Phi Delta.

Monday, March 29 Tye Dyeing sponsored by Pi Epsilon. Join us on the Edge lawn at 4 p.m. You will need to bring a white article of clothing for best results. If you have nothing white, they will probably be selling some white T-shirts. Supply will be limited!

Tuesday, March 30: Acapello group and humorists, "The Blenders," will be performing in SAC at 9:30 p.m. Psychology Club will be serving *mocktails*, so get here early to grab a great seat and to get a refreshing drink!

Wednesday, March 31: Pie Throwing will take place at 3:30 p.m. on the patio outside of the Union. Make plans now to be at this event. Sponsored by SNCAE, they will be auctioning off your favorite faculty and staff members, and even some high profile students. Watch for details, and start saving your pennies!

Thursday, April 1: Goofy Olympics! Sponsored by Delta Sigma Phi, events may include "Izzy Dizzy," "Egg-in-Spoon race," and more. Be sure you show up for this fun! Watch for posters on where and what time this event will take place.

Friday, April 2: Spring Fling finale, and *Soc Hop* sponsored by Sigma Phi Delta. It will be in the SAC and it will start at 9 p.m. The 50's is the theme, but come as you would like. It will be fun for all!

Watch for signs and posters giving more information!

COMING ATTRACTION — April 22: Guitarist and singer, *Daryl Rice*. Come listen as the blues resonate throughout Doc's. Showtime is 9 p.m. See you there!

Give Us Your Opinion!

Campus Activities Board (CAB) is trying to plan a trip to Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Va., and we'd like to know if you're interested in going with us. Please review the info below, then give us a call at 5227 to let us know if this trip is something you'd be interested in!

Date: Saturday, April 24

Approximate Departure Time From NCWC: 7 a.m.

Approximate Return to NCWC: 9 p.m.

Group Ticket Price: \$21

Extra money may be needed for food, games, souvenirs, etc.