

Guilfordian

Volume LXVIII, No. 11

Guilford College, Greensboro, N.C. 27410

March 15, 1985

Rugby... The Impossible Dream?



photo by Carol Nieuirkirk

by Doc Roberts

Who or what is the Guilford College Rugby Football Club? As far as Guilford College is concerned, no such animal officially exists. However, there is a group of students who travel around the state of North Carolina to play against other club teams. Because of much 'red tape,' they have not been granted club status as of yet. Says player/coach Colin Vallance-Owen, "The only place where we're not the

Guilford College RFC is on the Guilford College campus."

Vallance-Owen began putting the team together a year ago, first playing semi-organized games against area clubs. Most of the top schools in the state, including N.C. State, U.N.C., Wake Forest, and Davidson, all have rugby clubs. Vallance-Owen set about trying to make it an official Guilford club, but was hindered by "the system." "At the time," according to him, "there was no organized list of requirements to

work with." Consequently, it became a day-to-day process of submitting a proposal for club status, getting it back unapproved with a request for another signature, then getting that signature only to have the proposal rejected again for some other reason.

Last year, after much frustrating administrative work, Vallance-Owen thought that the proposal was finally complete. It passed through the Athletic Council, but then the Administrative

Council shot it down on the grounds that they had not acquired team insurance. He had never been told about insurance; he had assumed that that would be taken care of after they had become an official club. And so the team hangs in limbo.

Athletic insurance for club teams runs generally at \$100,000 per player, and the college is liable for anything above that. Dr. Herb Appenzeller, Guilford's Athletic Director, believes that the insurance question is the largest problem facing the would-be club. "The college does not want to be slapped with a \$500,000 lawsuit if someone is seriously injured," he says. So until the college is sure that it will not be financially responsible for the club, it will not grant it club status. He speculated that one solution to the problem would be for the players to have their parents agree to cover any medical expenses above the club's insurance policy, thus alleviating the college of any responsibility.

Since last semester, after experiencing Vallance-Owen's frustrating attempt to gain club status for the team, the administration has established an organized list of requirements for becoming a club sport. He hopes

that his work has at least made it easier for other groups to go through the process of achieving club status. Mark Wagner and Matt Burt are now going through the steps in another attempt to make the Guilford College RFC official.

Until then, the ruggers will continue to play off-campus. Coach Geoff Miller, administrator of the college's athletic facilities, has threatened to bring formal judicial charges against Vallance-Owen and the rest of the team if they practice or play on college property. Thank God (haha), the Lutheran Church on New Garden Rd. (near the softball fields) has graciously agreed to let the team practice on their soccer field.

The rugby team has grown impressively. Starting out with only Vallance-Owen, who had played in Ireland, and a handful of basically inexperienced players, the group has enlarged and developed to where there is now sometimes fierce competition for starting berths at the matches. Rugby is a unique sport, for both the player and the spectator, and hopefully the team will soon be able to play some home games when they become an official club team.

Learning Is Occurring at Guilford

By Heidi A. Hall

While some may have their doubts, the above shocking headline does have a basis in actual scientific fact. Learning is occurring at Guilford College. Who, you may ask, is learning anything at this point in the year, when it's "Just spring; and the world is puddle-lucious"? How should one even presume to "learn" anything in the unfortunate work-week which fills in the gap between Spring Break and Serendipity? And just who are these preposterous individuals who insist on doing what they are supposed to?

The answer to these (and many other questions which will not be asked in this article) may be found in a small room in King Hall, where eleven white male albino rats are learning; diligently and quite successfully, how to perform for rewards and avoid punishments in a "designed environment" known as a Skinner Box. The rats are learning because, unlike the various inhabitants of the Guilco Campus (both students and those of us attempting to impersonate students), they have no choice. From the moment of their con-

ception the fate of these animals is sealed. They are lab bred animals: genetically pure and void of any inconvenient variations in appearance, white haired, red-eyed, never to breed, as sterile and as faceless as the men in a Magritte painting. The existence and practice of breeding lab animals allows researchers to do their work without having to resort to "domesticated" animals.

The eleven rats are the objects of research which is being conducted by students of a psychology class entitled "Learning and Behavior Modification" taught by Claire Morse. The students are doing this work because it helps them get actual experience in working with animals in the area of behavior. Hopefully, this work will help these students get a feel for what is involved and what the strengths and weaknesses are in this type of research. According to Morse, the class is going very well with the rats learning a good bit, and the students probably learning something as well.

The rats are worked by a pair of students at the same time

every day for a 30-minute stretch. The Skinner Boxes used consist of a bar, which, if pressed by the rats, will deliver to their hot little paws a pellet of food. The rats soon learn that if they press the bar they will obtain a pellet, and Presto— learning has occurred. There are several other variations on this theme which have been successful. The rats have learned to be aware of and respond to a signal light— because if ignored, this light will be followed by a loud noise which is, presumably, not desirable. If the rats press the bar, however, the noise will be canceled out. In another variation the rats learn that they must allow a certain amount of time to pass between bar-pushing for food pellets; pushing continuously is futile since the pellets are only released after certain lag-periods. Some of the rats have even learned to "count"; they are aware that they must press the bar a certain number of times (up to ten) in order to receive a pellet.

And why, in a college as sensitized to women's issues as Guilford is, are the rats all male? Is this just another attempt to ex-

clude females from the laboratory? No such conspiracy intended. Female white rats have an estrus cycle which repeats itself every five days, and this can make their lab performance less than consistent.

What future does the world hold for eleven albino, sun-sensitive, well-educated rat alumni of Guilford College? Do they have career plans and how has their time spent at Guilford helped them develop their own unique potential? Some of the students might keep the animals as pets (OFF CAMPUS), but it is not encouraged. Some of the rats have been given names and personalities have emerged, but they are not pets. More likely the animals will be put to sleep at the end of this semester.

The point of this particular

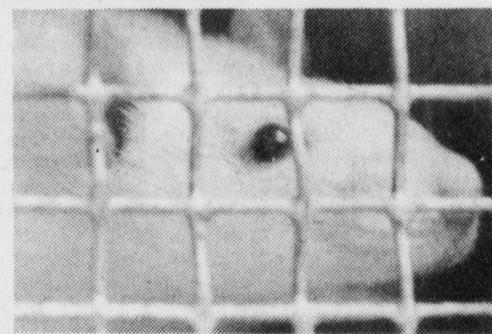


photo by Megan Trend

research is to familiarize students with the techniques so that they can perhaps one day carry out research on their own. The point of researching Learning and Behavior Modification, in general, is so that the knowledge gain in the laboratory can be applied to the "real world" — specifically to human learning and behavior. It is no longer 1984, so I will not bother to dig back up the inevitable and tiresome comparison to Orwell's "thought control". Like most scientific research, behavior and learning scientists are inspired to search for the helpful and the good. Humankind has profited immensely in the last 200 years from research done in laboratories in animals and will continue to, at the expense of these animals.