

Feature

Loft-building: trials and tribulations of the unending quest for a nest

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Staff Writer

You see them in girls' rooms, you see them in guys' rooms, on north campus and on south campus, but just how do you get a loft?

If you've always been a one-story dormitory dweller, then you may be a little surprised at what Joe Climber, the dormitory resident who wants a loft in his room, must go through to construct one.

As with anything in college, loft building requires procedures which involve dreaded paperwork. For starters, Joe Climber must go to his Area Director's office and pick up a loft/stilt/bed bunking permit and a University housing loft policy form.

The loft/stilt/bed bunking permit is fairly simple and easy to comprehend. It states that the residents are responsible for anything they do that results in personal injury.

Although college students have been known to be rowdy and immature, very few loft-induced injuries are reported.

"We haven't had any problems —

not so far," said Mangum Resident Assistant senior Steve Lewis, whose only reported casualty was his own. "I got on it (the second rung of the ladder) and then a nail went through my leg. Someone else built it for us, too."

Besides the injury factor, the resident is also responsible for the cost of repairs if the loft damages the room. (In other words, knocking out the top side of the north wall to make shelves for Joe's roommate's complete stereo system and box of tapes is out of the question.)

Once Climber reads and signs the permit, he's ready to tackle the loft policy. This four-page piece of red tape is thorough. The policy regulates every detail from how and when loft construction can take place to what materials can be used.

Hefty fines will be assessed if specifications and regulations aren't met. There are fines for building without first signing the permit, for not clearing the room of construction materials within seven days and for removing any piece of furniture issued by housing. (Look out Joe, this includes the removal of those bulky bed frames which sometimes find their way into the closet or the attic of your roommate's parents' house.)

When Joe finishes the paperwork he can think about buying a loft from someone else or design and construct his own. For those residents who decide to buy their loft from others, the work is already half done. If they've bought it in advance, all they have to do is find a place to store the baby over the summer and then

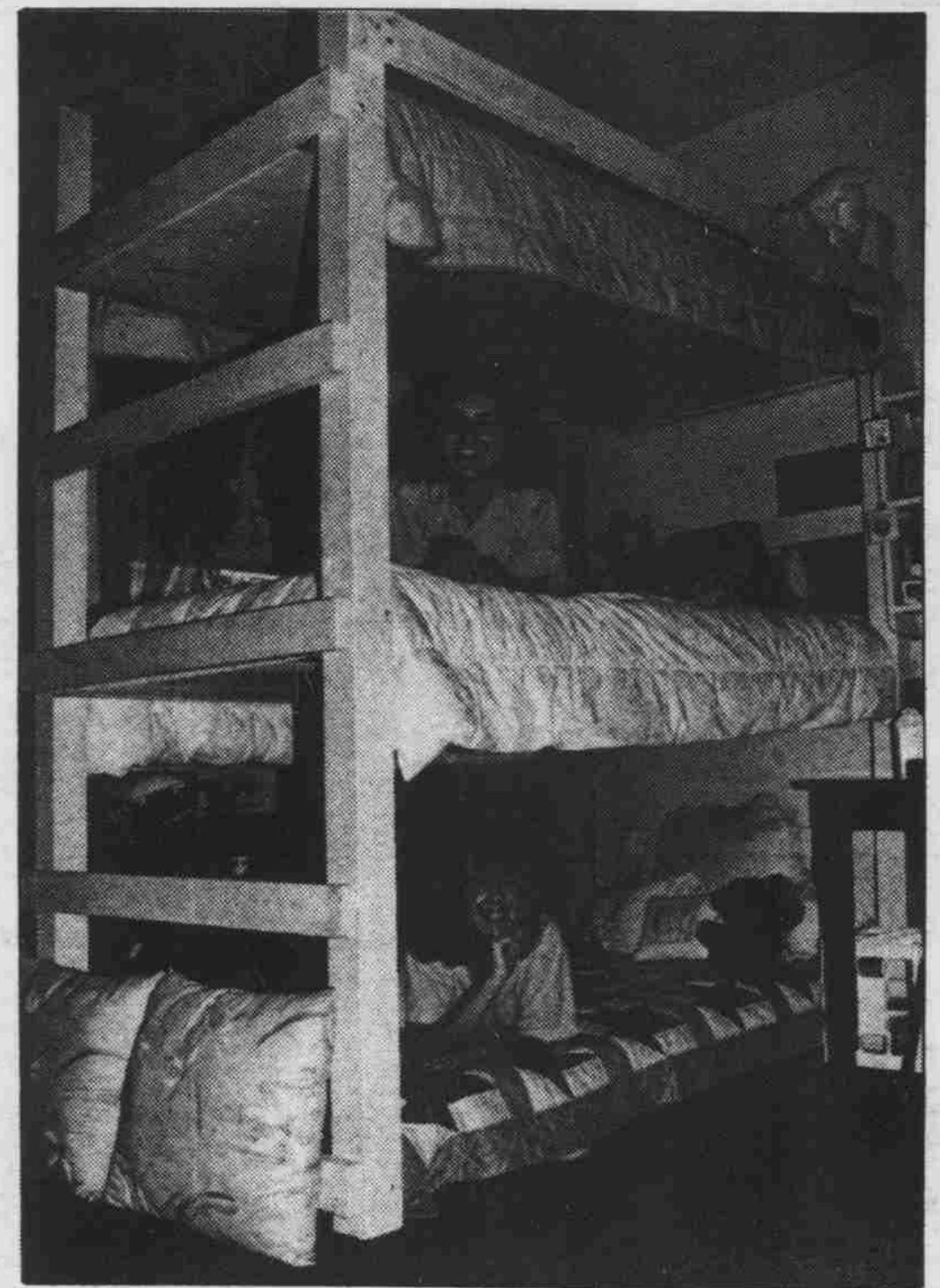
transport it to school when it's convenient for them or, more likely, their dads.

The alternative to buying a used loft (for the adventuresome type like Climber) is creating a unique and individualized loft. Climber has to go back to the policy sheets and make sure he gets the right kind of wood, nails, screws and paint. Then he tries to build the sucker, which should be pre-cut and pre-sized (power tools may set off the smoke alarms). Of course, there's always the trusty do-it-yourself hammers and nails, bolts and screws which are acceptable to University regulations.

Once the loft is constructed, the fun is still not over. The University housing loft policy states that inspection will take place 14 days after loft construction is completed. But the University usually waits until it has to inspect a large number of lofts in one area. University maintenance workers take care of brief inspections and usually pass everyone. If the loft doesn't pass, the resident gets a chance to correct the problems and pass inspection.

Surprisingly enough, most students don't seem to mind complying with house rules. Freshman Sara Lewis of 117 Aycock even compared the loft rules and regulations at North Carolina State University to those of the University of North Carolina.

"My boyfriend (a NC State junior) designed and built this (loft) and my roommate's dad built the other one," Lewis said. "I saw his at State and wanted one. I got all the regulations from him and they were mostly the



DTH/Nancy Fister

Beth Cranford (top) and Samantha Cox relax on their triple bunkbed

same — basically with the fire retardant paint and all."

Some residents are so anxious that they plan ahead of time for their lofts.

"People would call me up during the summer, and I'd send them (the permit and policy)," Roger Nelsen, Morrison Area Director, said.

But still there are those unidentifiable individuals called the "Bypassers" who either don't know about the regulations or just don't want to go through "the hassle" of doing it by the book.

"We never even had a permit," one Bypasser said. "We just brought the stuff in and built it. Our RA never even knew about it, and we never got it inspected either."

Had the Bypasser's Resident Assistant known, he would have told

the dorm's Area Director who then would have asked the resident to fill out the papers and would have taken disciplinary action if request was refused, Nelsen said.

Despite what it may take in terms of labor and paperwork, lofts continue to be a popular way of life for residents all over campus.

"Last year we had about 105 permits out of approximately 500 rooms. I think they may tend to put them on south campus just because it will give them more room, but north campus has high ceilings so it might be nicer to have them there, too," Nelsen said. "I encourage them. It's a good way (for residents) to personalize their rooms, and it gives them more room to do more things and entertain more people."



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