

# Historic Residences Open Doors to Women

**Associate Vice Chancellor Dean Bresciani said the push to integrate the halls started two years ago.**

**By KAREY WUTKOWSKI**  
Assistant University Editor

The addition of women to UNC's two oldest residence halls this year breaks from the 200-year-old tradition of creating a strictly male community in Old East and Old West.

When junior Katie Ahrendt first heard rumors last year that Old East and Old West residence halls were becoming coed, she was concerned about preserving this tradition.

"At first I was against letting girls in," said the Columbia, S.C., native. "I felt there are so many girls on campus, there should be something left for the guys."

But after she had been assigned one of the spacious rooms in the oak-leaved Old East, Ahrendt didn't put up a fight.

"I was really surprised I got in," she said. "You walk in, and it's so nice. It's

like a hotel."

The second floor of Old East and the third floor of Old West have been converted into all-female floors this year.

Dean Bresciani, associate vice chancellor for student services, said a strong push to integrate the two residence halls started two years ago, when members of student government and the Residence Hall Association approached him.

A series of open forums followed, revealing mixed opinions.

"All the women thought it was a good idea," Bresciani said. "The only people who had a problem were some of the guys and the alumni who thought it was a good tradition to maintain."

But Bresciani said the move garnered overwhelming support and that the change was way overdue.

"It's somewhat artificial to place women and men in different buildings,"

he said. "The only other institution that does that is prison."

To ease the transition, Bresciani said housing officials personally talked to all men living in the halls last year and assured them that no one would have to leave.

He said a large number of upper-class men moved out of the buildings last year, clearing up enough room for the women to move in.

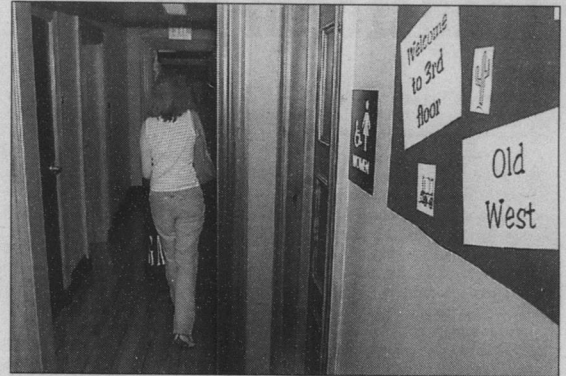
Officials also tried to choose upper-class women to participate in the integration. "They're more mature and self-confident,"

*"The only people who had a problem were some of the guys and the alumni who thought it was a good tradition."*

**DEAN BRESCIANI**  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Services

Bresciani said. "We just didn't know guys' reaction, but as it turned out, they've been great."

Junior Eric Boggs from Dallas, N.C., who has lived in Old West since his freshman year, said most of the men in his hall were strongly opposed to the integration at first.



DTH FILE PHOTO

Sophomore Whitney Greene walks to her room in Old West Residence Hall. The traditionally male hall opened its doors to women in August.

"But once we found out we couldn't do anything about it, we accepted it," Boggs said.

He said the men's largest concern was that the addition of women would dis-

rupt the all-male community. "We were really afraid that there would be a lot of sexual tension," he said. "It's fine and dandy with all guys, but if a hot girl moves in upstairs, it can mess things up."

# Hall Residents Declare Truce to Battle of the Sexes

**By JERMAINE CALDWELL**  
Features Editor

Lisa McKeithan wasn't just unlocking the door to the room in which she would sleep, study and live this semester when she moved into Old East Residence Hall.

She was entering a door not open to her or any other female for more than 200 years.

That entrance symbolized the controversial end

to the all-male tradition in Old East and Old West. And McKeithan said she is proud to be one of the first women to set her bags down, plopping on the bed and call a room her own.

"I wish we could have had the chance to move in here earlier," the senior from Elizabethtown said.

Old East's cornerstone was laid October 12, 1793, making it the oldest structure of any public university in the country. It stood as the University's lone building for several years, serving

as a classroom and residence hall.

McKeithan said she was ecstatic about "the chance to make history."

But she said that before she had even settled into the place she called "paradise," she saw something that reminded her of the contentious circumstances that preceded her arrival.

On one of her first days in the hall, a man walked by sporting an Old East T-shirt with the phrase: "These bricks weren't laid for chicks."

Enter Brandon Herring, the T-shirt's owner and model.

Herring, a two-year veteran of life on Old East hardwood, was yanked from temporary housing his freshman year and dropped into one of the most historic buildings on campus.

And at the end of Herring's sophomore year — when a female presence in Old East was becoming a more likely proposition — Old East residents adopted the provocative slogan for their annual residence hall T-shirt.

"It insulted me," said McKeithan, who thinks both sexes deserve to enjoy the buildings. "I think men and women should have the same privileges."

The halls are considered prime living quarters because of their proximity to both Franklin Street and main campus, hardwood floors and large rooms. And here the battle of the sexes stood: The women wanted in on the historic and relatively lavish residence halls, but the men occupying them wanted to maintain their tightly knit communities and male havens.

Herring said if the Department of University Housing had booted his male buddies to make way for women, then he was against it. "We were really concerned about people being forced to move out."

And Herring said the reason some of the male residents were dead set against women moving into Old East or Old West had nothing to do with their rich tradition or room style.

It was more than that.

When the dialogue started about giving women space in the then all-male residence hall, Herring said, they were told it was because women didn't have an equivalent all-female residence hall on campus.

Herring said this wasn't a valid reason to him and the other male residents. "The girls should have a nice dorm wasn't a good reason," he said, quickly naming halls like McIver Residence Hall and Alderman Residence Hall as reputable residence halls housing only female occupants.

But the disagreement ran deeper.

Though the Residence Hall Association held discussions dealing with the issue, Herring said the forums dealt with how to make the transition easier, not with whether it should take place at all. "It was like they already made the decision," he said.

And this made some residents feel unappreciated, fueling the feud's fire a little more — a battle that could have intensified when the women showed up to officially claim

their space.

But on the day when upperclassmen were set to arrive, the new Old East women said things were fairly calm.

The tranquility was due to the logistics of the integration, during which no male residents were displaced from either residence hall.

"We were really concerned about people being forced to move out," Herring said. "Since that didn't happen, I think everybody's OK with it."

McKeithan noticed there wasn't much animosity in the air when she arrived. "Some of the guys were really helpful," she said.

And after the T-shirt incident, McKeithan and Herring again crossed paths on the first floor, both as witnesses and players in a historic change.

"It was more about who was here and how it would affect them," Herring explained.

And soon both Old East residents stood together. A guy. A girl. Together in Old East.

*"(The T-shirt slogan) insulted me ... I think men and women should have the same privileges."*

**LISA McKEITHAN**  
Old East Residence Hall Resident

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