

'Being an RA is a tough job'

If you lose your key, who can you call?

By MELISSA HOLLAND
Staff Writer

The door's pounding wakes you from your mid-afternoon nap. You open the door. A freshman's smile greets you. You smile back. You don't mind the prospect of one more session of homesickness counseling.

This is the life of a resident assistant. An RA, the dormitory student's lifeline to the University, is one of a rare and giving breed at UNC, said Al Calarco, associate director of University Housing.

"RAs are the backbone of what we attempt to do at University Housing," he said. "We give them responsibility, and they always give productivity and cooperation back to us 10-fold."

More than 200 people apply for between 75-100 fall RA positions. Calarco said these numbers reflect the desirability of the job.

Selection of RAs begins right after Thanksgiving when University Housing starts its publicity campaign, and applications subsequently are accepted through the beginning of December. The interview process, the meat of RA selection, begins in January.

Before interviews begin, however, University Housing checks to see that applicants meet the minimum requirements of a 2.5 quality point average, a full academic load and rising junior or senior standing, said Calarco.

The interview phase begins with a one-on-one interview between an applicant and an RA from the applicant's area, with off-campus students being assigned an RA at random.

"These first interviews are very informal," Calarco said. "They're designed to let the applicant ask questions and find out what the job's really like."

Applicants then progress to a panel interview.

Calarco said the panel is objective because a student living in one area is interviewed by area directors and RAs from other areas and a Student Government representative from the student's area.

"This is an opportunity for students to see across campus what to expect from an RA position," he said.

After the panel interview, all 10 area directors convene to discuss each applicant using three different criteria: the student's application, including

recommendations from professors and employers, the one-on-one RA interview and the panel interview, said Calarco.

Before the final decisions are made, area directors have an opportunity to do follow-up interviews with the applicants. Follow-ups are merely an option for the area directors, Calarco said, and a student still can be chosen to be an RA without going through one.

An area director can follow up on three times the number of RAs he actually needs to employ in his area, and a single student can go through three follow-ups. Calarco said that a limit was placed on the amount of follow-ups to avoid bombarding any one student.

Finally, area directors decide who they would like, and students are notified in mid-February if they've received an appointment.

Students who are hired are asked to sign a contract with the area director stating they'll receive \$2,800 plus a single room at a reduced rate for a year's duty.

In return, RAs agree to go through training sessions as well as assume "on-duty" hours.

RA training starts in the spring and trainees also return a week earlier in August than the student body for more concentrated instruction in counseling, discipline, handling emergencies and community development.

Calarco said that the training sessions go smoothly because most of the students have a strong desire to learn.

"An RA has to be teachable," he said. "And almost always they display a willingness to learn and participate. In fact, in the end, I think they learn more about themselves than anything else."

Calarco went on to say that University Housing emphasizes that RAs must become more like peer counselors and role models than police figures.

"Other schools are not set up that way," Calarco said. "But I think that's why students see the RA job here as a pleasant experience, and that's why we've been so successful with it."

As far as being role models, Calarco said that although University Housing impresses upon its RAs the importance of being respected, it never sets them up to be superhumans.

"Being an RA is a tough role," he said. "But they have the support of the department."

The support of one's staff is indeed an integral part of an RA's life, according to two Scott Residence College RAs.

"My staff is my group of friends," said Katy Clapp, a senior from Greensboro. "It helps that we're a certain type of people. Though we have our differences, I think there's something that's the same about the staff, and I really love them all."

Wanda Nicholson, a junior from Rockingham, said that although she had to leave her friends in Cobb when she became an RA, the staff has helped her make the adjustment.

"I still see my old friends," she said. "You just have to make the effort to keep in touch with the people who are really important to you."

Both women said that they have experienced little trouble with discipline or defining their roles as RAs.

"Right now I feel I've done more administrative work than anything," said Clapp. "But when I entered this hall, from the beginning I established my role — mostly as a counselor and friend. So far there's been nothing to regulate."

"I think I established myself in the area on discipline the first week I was here," said Nicholson. "The residents realize that if you didn't do it, you wouldn't have control of the hall."

Otherwise, Nicholson said that she sees her RA position more along the lines of "just another student."

"I really feel like a resident," she said. "If I ask someone to turn down a stereo, it's because I'm a resident like any other resident."

"I don't always like the RA label — I just happen to have the keys to everything."

Clapp, however, said she used to date an RA and so she feels more comfortable with the title and its responsibilities.

"I'm a very organized person, and so I thrive on this stuff," she said.

Although each woman seems to have successfully dealt with the pressures and expectations of their RA posts, still neither denies that the "role-model" idea is ever-present.

"You always have to be there for the students," Clapp said. "Like they kept saying to us in training, 'you're living in a fishbowl.'"

Lowe stinks in rotten 'Oxford Blues'

I know what you're thinking: "Oxford Blues? As in Oxford University? Sounds like one of those 'intelligent' movies. Ugh."

Surprise. *Oxford Blues* contains not one iota of intelligence and is about as artificial as wax fruit. You did, however, hit the nail on the head with "ugh."

Meet Nick Di Angelo, a freshman at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. He's an ordinary, everyday American with a crush on a fair lass named Lady Victoria, an international royal celebrity.

But there's a problem. Victoria lives 10,000 miles away, in England. Poor Nicky needs about \$15,000 and an acceptance letter from Oxford University, which Victoria attends, in order to consummate his love.

Nick gets his acceptance letter via some high-tech computer hacking.

Then, from out of the blue, a rich divorcee enters Nick's life, albeit for one day and night. Their chance encounter produces one of the most insipid, clumsily-acted conversations ever captured on film. When this bit of emoting is over, the two hit the gambling tables and win just enough money for Nick to go to England.

Of course, just before the lady leaves, never to be seen or mentioned again, Nick's intermediate mate insists that he keep all the money, including her share. Son of a gun!

And so it goes in *Oxford Blues*. Characters — many unbearably jolly, all frustratingly unreal — drift in and out of Nick's periphery like dried leaves in a stiff breeze.

The interactions of these characters are equally unrealistic. Situations reach miraculous, increasingly predictable conclusions; endings and sub-endings are of the happy variety and somehow manage to tie any and all loose ends together.

Mind-numbing simplicities abound. Nick, Victoria and practically everyone else in director Robert Boris' child's-eye-view of the world are made of psychological paper-mache. Nick's first face-to-face encounter with Victoria is a rousing, preposterous success; after roughly two minutes of chit-chat, she invites Nick, a near-total stranger, to a swank party.

Rob Lowe, as Nick, contributes absolutely nothing to the proceedings. Quite possibly the worst young actor currently in the business, Lowe has a batting average that remains at .000, as all his previous films — including *Class* and *The Hotel New Hampshire* — were universally panned.

Ed Brackett

Review

Lowe has the looks, but he cannot act. His words flow together evenly enough but they lack any semblance of sincerity. Whatever emotion he manages to muster is similarly fake.

Ally Sheedy, fresh from *WarGames*, does a nice turn as Rona, an American Oxford student who befriends Nick. Her job isn't easy, as the script, written by director Boris, has her doing all sorts of dumb things.

In her first meeting with Nick, for example, she runs up behind our hero and pours champagne all over him. Seeing his face, she apologizes, saying she thought he was someone else. Of course, the two hit it off immediately and develop the kind of repartee found only in the worst television movies.

Oxford Blues tries to be a number of things, including a drama and comedy, but it never clicks in any of them.

Midway through the story, a *Rocky*-like, innocent youth-conquers-all theme creeps in. This time, however, the sport is rowing, not boxing, and the competitive encounters are much, much more contrived. Boris could take a few pointers from John Avildsen on how to direct a good, inspirational story.

As far as writer-directors go, Boris is light years from Orson Welles. William F. Buckley once criticized ABC's *The Day After* for its lack of what he called "analytical rigor." Had he seen the simplistic *Oxford Blues*, he wouldn't have been pleased. Boris' heavy-handed message, carried on the tip of a baseball bat that strikes the viewer repeatedly, is that we're all ducks in a duck pond, and life is simply ducky. With minimal perseverance, boys and girls, you can get everything you want from the duck pond.

The conclusion of *Oxford Blues*, sappy and predictable, is as unrealistic and uncomplicated as they come. Boris wanted a nice, dramatically expedient ending, so he went to K-Mart and bought one for about a nickel.

Someone once said that 90 percent of everything is crap. *Oxford Blues*, an insignificant, worthless film, is among that majority.

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Politics from page 1

Geraldine Ferraro for vice presidential candidate as a positive step toward reversing President Reagan's lead in the polls.

"It's definitely brought more attention to the race and given us a certain degree of momentum coming out of the convention," Hunt said, adding that Ferraro's apparent lack of experience did not present a problem in light of the energy and charisma that she brings to the campaign: "All things considered, she's a plus, and Mondale's choosing her was one of the best decisions of the campaign."

Hunt is the son of Gov. Jim Hunt, who is challenging Republican Jesse Helms for his U.S. Senate seat.

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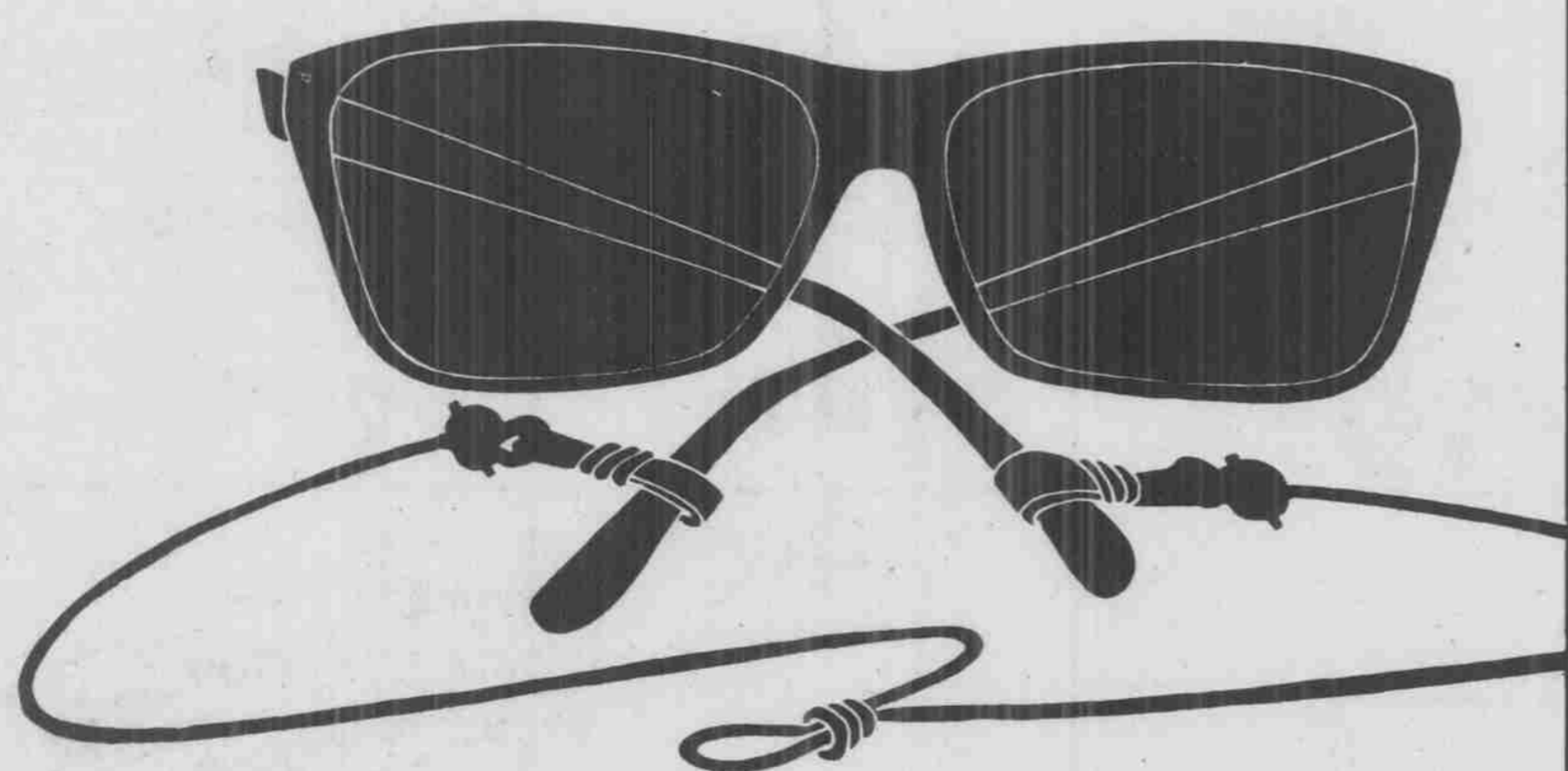
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UH, OH. HERE'S SOMETHING RATED "PG-13"

WHAT'S "PG-13"?

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CINEMA 64
I DO NOT LIKE THIS.
UGLY TREND.