

Dorm life has its highs and lows

It is Joe Aggie's first day at A&M.

After consulting a campus map, he finds his residence hall and checks in. With a suitcase in one hand and a desk lamp in the other, he climbs the stairs to the third floor.

Before him is a small, empty room.

He gazes at the plain walls and cold hard floor. The room does not quite fit the image of dorm rooms portrayed by University brochures.

Was your dorm room not what you expected? Before you go apartment-hunting, read on.

There are many pros and cons to living on campus, and what you get out of it depends largely on what you put into it.

A big benefit of dorm life is convenience. Getting to school is no problem because you live there, and this means not having to worry about finding parking space every morning or filling the gas tank quite as often.

Cost is another benefit. When you live in a residence hall, you once and don't have to worry with electricity bills, water bills, monthly rent or gas bills.

Another advantage is that there's always someone around whom you can study, eat or get a talk.

But having someone around the time also can be a disadvantage, especially on that night before a test when you absolutely have to study and someone decides to use your room for their poker game.

When you live in a residence hall, you never have to clean the toilets or showers. Maids take care of that.

But you have to do your own laundry.

Hall activities are a major feature of residence hall life. Every residence hall has a hall council that plans social gatherings, educational programs and other activities for the hall. Residents pay an optional fee of about \$10 per semester if they wish to participate.

All Girls Free parties are popular among the men's halls, and men's and women's halls sponsor formal and theme parties.

The Residence Hall Association, the University-wide coordinating body of residence halls, has many activities throughout the year. They provide fun activities like Casino Night in the spring and RHALloween in the fall.

A residence hall staff is on duty at all times to answer questions and to keep order in the halls. Each hall has a head resident and one resident adviser who help with the floor. They assist the

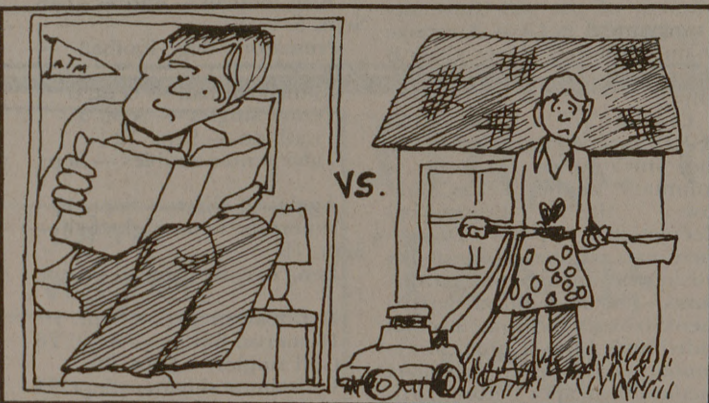
residents with check-in, check-out, maintenance, room changes and enforcing hall rules.

Although living in a residence hall offers numerous conveniences, there are certain commandments which must be followed.

Meals are available under three different plans — from the dining halls, if you're on board plan or dining out every night or living off cold, canned veggies and tuna fish if you're not on board plan.

Coffee, popcorn and hot water are the only things which can be cooked legally in a dorm room.

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Visitation by members of the opposite sex is limited to 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. Friday through Saturday. Sorry, no all-night study sessions with a member of the opposite sex. Your best bet would be to go to their place — off-campus.

The University does not allow the possession of firearms on campus. This includes guns, fireworks, hand grenades and nuclear warheads. But most of the above may be stored with the University Police.

The housing staff may enter your room at any time for cleaning and maintenance purposes, to make sure everything that the room came with is still there and for health and safety checks — not your health, the room's. They also can enter to make

sure you are complying with housing codes, in emergency situations or when there is reasonable cause to believe a violation of University regulations has been committed.

No pets, except fish, are allowed in the residence halls. The rule of thumb is "if it can live underwater for six hours, it's legal." But, one catch to this rule is that fish can be eaten, so you'd better check the food rule.

The only dog...er, we mean pet other than fish, legally living in the dorms is Reveille, the University mascot.

Violators of University housing rules can be written up by the housing staff and sent before a judicial board composed of on-campus residents.

Other disadvantages to dorm life are the small size and bareness of the rooms. And you don't get to pick your own furniture.

However, a little creativity can make any bare dorm room seem like home.

Posters are an inexpensive way to cover walls. But anything that looks as if it came out of Tiger Beat magazine is frowned upon.

Plants and aquariums add life to a room. Especially on those days when you look and feel like death.

Carpet, curtains and sofas also can personalize a room. Try designer sheets, leather furniture and expensive shag carpeting. And to really be a hit in the hall, get your own jacuzzi. Mom and Dad won't mind footing the bill; after all, you need to be comfortable, don't you?

Wooden lofts can add space to an otherwise cramped room and are great places to hide in.

Lofts must be approved by the area staff before construction, must be free-standing and all the original furniture must be kept in the room.

How does your room compare with others around campus? Well, there's good news and bad.

Rooms in the Commons — Krueger, Aston, Dunn and Mosher — are not the biggest rooms on campus, but are the most expensive. They have suite-type baths and an area available to all residents that includes a furnished living room, pool tables, ping-pong tables, video games, snack bar, book

store, Xerox machine and post office. Almost a real-live city.

There are six women's "modular" dorms on campus — Hobby, Neeley, Haas, McFadden, Clements and Underwood. They have the biggest rooms on campus and feature private baths, wall-to-wall carpets, individual thermostats and sound-proofing.

The Corps-type dorms, found mostly on the Quad, come complete with community showers, decorator pipes to hang plants or laundry on, and screaming upperclassmen. Some of the rooms are even painted. And have beds.

Corps-style dorms on the northside of campus — Davis-Gary, Moses, Moore and Crocker — don't have the upperclassmen, but the rooms are similar.

The dorms you see that look like cheap hotels are McInnes, Schuhmacher, Keathley, Fowler and Hughes. They come with suite baths, built-in furniture, lots of storage space and with or without a view of the Dixie Chicken.

Puryear, Walton, Law and Hart have ramps. Each ramp has four floors with four rooms on each floor.

Probably the most unpleasant aspect of this type of dorm is the absence of air conditioning. But you can compensate for the heat by putting a box fan in the window. Oscillating fans are nice, but you'll probably find the air circulates better if you and your roommate both use box fans — one taking in the outside air and the other pulling the inside air out.

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