

# INTER-

## The Issue of

### By Betsey Barnette

This year's attempt to expand social privileges at University residence halls and Greek houses — better known as the "intervisitation controversy" — has confronted the University community with an involved and frustratingly confused issue. Those expressing support for intervisitation in some form range from Curators to campus leftists.

The issue developed after the Board of Curators vetoed an intervisitation proposal, and student organizations, beginning with the Interfraternity Council, moved to protest the Board's decision by holding pre-arranged intervisitation sessions. Subsequent demonstrations for "student rights" and several abortive attempts to occupy Read Hall and the Memorial Union by more radical groups have complicated the controversy. In fact, these demonstrations appeared to have little or nothing to do with intervisitation and by mid-March had ceased.

Further entangling the issue is the variety of definitions and connotations attributed to the term "intervisitation." To intervisit means to visit a student of the opposite sex in his or her private room, yet all the intervisitation proposals discussed limited such open houses to periods during the time women's dorms are regularly open and required 60 per cent of a house or governing unit to approve the time period.

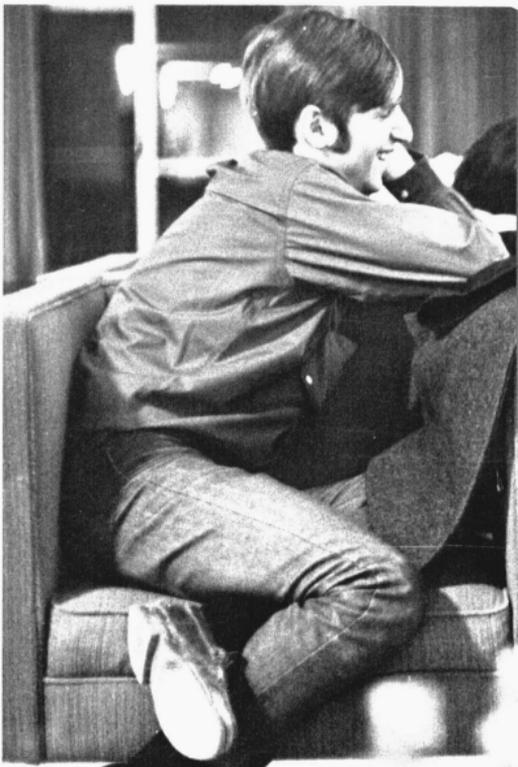
Intervisitation, initially proposed by student residence hall organizations and IFC, gained the approval of the student-faculty Committee on Single Student Housing in the spring of 1969. The committee recommendation, its proposals extensively limited by Chancellor John Schwada, went to President John Weaver and then to the Board of Curators last May. The administration proposal called for two-hour visiting periods Saturday and Sunday afternoons and from 8-11 p.m. on Friday or Saturday nights. Curator William Myers' amendment limited the evening period to four times per semester.

Schwada explains the proposal taken to the Board as "the extension of social privileges under University supervision and with the approval of parents. Certain decisions about the private lives of students are properly a matter between a student and his parent. No university can or should assume this parental responsibility, but there would have been

none of the closed-door, unsupervised visiting that sometimes is envisaged.

"We must remember, too," he adds, "that a student's room is his home. It's where he studies and relaxes with his friends; it's where he lives as well as sleeps. The public lounge simply isn't 'home.' The limited proposal would have provided an opportunity for responsible students to gain in maturity and understanding — and the overwhelming share of our students are responsible."

However, some citizens have expressed their belief, through letters to newspapers and University administrators, that intervisitation is an invitation



# VISITATION

Keith Kaplan, a freshman from University City, and Marianne Lemp, of St. Louis, also a freshman, visit during regular dormitory hours in the Schurz Hall lounge.



to immorality and drug abuse. In turn, others argue that the University cannot regulate morality or teach personal responsibility with "rigid" rules.

Missouri Students Association President Jim Heeter, a senior from Jefferson City, sees intervisitation as a "laboratory experience in making decisions." Heeter charges that "at the present time, restrictive housing regulations deny the student freedom of choice and deprive him of this valuable experience in the governing of his own life."

Presently students in University-supervised housing may hold four open houses each year for no more than two hours on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. The intent of the proposal was to gain expansion of this existing privilege. But since the Board of Curators vetoed a proposal which had wide support not only from students, but also from faculty and the administration, the issue has broadened.

Dr. Richard Caple, assistant director of housing (whose office approved the proposal), says now "more students are concerned with the right to decide."

The controversy might never have ensued if the

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**Boys say goodnight to their dates at the door of Schurz Hall.**



curators had not decided last April to change a 10-year old ruling and take over the responsibility to approve changes in housing rules. Previously, the chancellors, with the approval of the president, had made such decisions (for example, on this campus, the gradual extension of key privileges to women and the elimination of rules governing occupants and visitors to non-supervised off-campus housing).

The Board of Curators' Academic Affairs Committee kept the revised plan in committee during the summer and early fall. In October the committee held a 5½-hour hearing on housing rule changes with members of the Committee on Single Student Housing, administrators, and student leaders. Despite the hearing, students and some administrators continued to feel the Board was not familiar enough with the day-to-day situation on campus to make decisions in the area of housing rules.

At the November Board meeting the Academic Affairs Committee introduced an amended version of the administration's proposal along with two other housing rule changes. However, the proposal was tabled. The Board had kept it for the last six months and the request itself had been in student-faculty-administration channels for about one year.

Believing there was a need for more student comment on the proposal, and with the support of the MSA Senate, IFC and the Association of Women

Students, MSA President Jim Heeter wrote to the Board president requesting permission for student representatives to meet with the entire Board prior to their final decision. The Board president, Judge William Billings, sent copies of the letter to the other curators, but did not respond to Heeter.

In December the Board voted down the Academic Affairs Committee proposal submitted by Myers 5-3 and the administration's recommendation, unamended 8-1. In a February article in the *Columbia Tribune*, Curator Myers indicated that opposition to the proposal didn't cause the 8-1 margin as much as "procedural confusion" with the other two proposals.

Although the Board had voted decisively, Heeter and some other student leaders and administrators were hopeful the Board would reconsider. Heeter formally requested them to do so.

Other students, however, were more upset. A week before the January Board meeting, IFC voted to hold an illegal intervisitation during the weekend of January 9. Randy Hendricks, IFC president at the time, said, "we were more concerned to show symbolically how we felt. . . . It (the illegal intervisitation) was not a practical action toward achieving our aim. We had high hopes of accomplishing a legitimate aim . . . but the way it was seen — as a confrontation — hurt the intervisitation cause." (Heeter, out of town during the IFC action, was

"There would be none of the closed-door, unsupervised visiting sometimes envisaged."



unable to voice his opposition to the IFC decision.)

But despite the fraternity action, the Board took the issue "under advisement" at its January 16 meeting.

The subsequent charges of sex and drug abuse during the fraternities' intervisiting and the placement of the 20 chapters on disciplinary probation added confrontation and open disregard for University regulations to the issue.

With the intermission of final exams and semester break, student anger and frustration grew. Bill Cox, 1970 *Maneater* editor, sees the January Board meeting as a turning point, where, he says, it became "obvious that the normal way of institution change (through channels) wouldn't work." Cox, who editorially in January praised the attempt to hold off action until the Board reconsidered, in February urged students to join the Independent Residence Hall Association protest — intervisiting one evening in University dorms.

Over Heeter's objection, but with the active support of Rick Goodman, MSA legislative vice president, the Senate voted to support IRHA's protest. Sixty-two of 90 dorm houses voted to participate, but warnings from University officials of

possible disciplinary action deterred many students, Beth Jarboe, IRHA secretary, says. The intervisitation protest, itself, was orderly. One house invited friends and faculty to a seminar. About 300 students' names were submitted for disciplinary action.

Another stage in the controversy began after the IRHA protest when the campus leftist group, Committee of Concerned Students, began sponsoring intervisitation rallies. At one occasion, goaded by several former student activists, students gathered outside Read Hall. Three students, who entered the building against the orders of Dean of Students Jack Matthews, were temporarily suspended by Chancellor Schwada until formal disciplinary proceedings could be completed.

Such direct student action coupled with confrontation and the minor beatings of several protestors has in Editor Cox's opinion "hurt the cause to some extent." He feels "the moderate student is not willing to become radical over this issue."

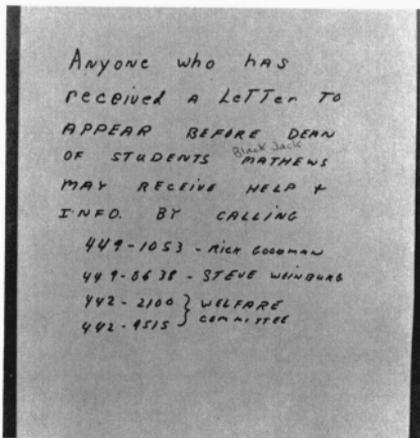
Several subsequent CCS sit-ins at the Memorial Union, involving from 150 to 300 students, centered on student rights. In the later sit-ins, these students scarcely mentioned intervisitation.

The Curators now have said they will reconsider intervisitation when the administration resubmits a proposal. Although there is official silence on this possibility, Heeter believes the Chancellor won't recommend housing rule changes for at least six months.

Schwada says he will ask the faculty-student committee that originally submitted the proposal to reassess it after a review of responses by parents to a survey conducted by the Association of Women Students.

The letter from Sara Jane Graves, AWS president, accompanying the questionnaire states that the "major question . . . raised by the students is whether the Board of Curators' decision represents the opinion of the parents. . . . The purpose of the enclosed questionnaire is to learn your reactions as parents to the open house proposal."

IRHA Secretary Beth Jarboe feels "all we can do is try to impress on the Board we are mature people who can make our own decisions," while former IFC President Randy Hendricks says the issue has "become a matter of principle. We think we have the right to set minimal rules where we go to college and to have a minimal amount of self government."



During the height of the intervisitation controversy, this notice appeared on the bulletin board of one dormitory.