

What a party

BY SAMANTHA BRENNAN

It's quiet at Carleton University's Renfrew Residence at four a.m. Scattered pizza crusts, beer bottles and overflowing ashtrays are the only signs of last night's festivities. Three hours of rotten sleep on a lumpy mattress later, the peace is disturbed by dozens of women running screaming down the hall. Pounding on the doors the res-fellows (floor leaders) are calling out the names of the frosh. They order frosh to get up for a game of Frisbee-football with the young men on the floor above.

The pounding continues for one hour. Orientation week has begun.

Orientation week is a week of introduction to the university or college. A chance to meet people and participate in group activities before the day-to-day ritual of classes and studying begins.

That's one side of orientation week — full of information booths, helpful campus guides wearing easy-to-identify sweatshirts, open houses and campus tours.

The other side of orientation week activities begins at night, inside the residences. It's less publicized in official orientation literature, but talked about far more by students. For those students living on campus, orientation week is often a blur of drunken parties and initiation pranks. The beer flows freely and drinking competitions are commonplace.

For new students living away from home for the first time, the tradition of partying through orientation week can be an exciting experience.

It's also a tradition that can lead to tragedy.

An orientation week accident at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo Sept. 6 left one student dead and four other injured. Brigitte Bouckaet, a second year student and residence don, was crushed to death under the wheels of a bus while trying to control the crowd. Two other students also pushed under the bus ended up with broken legs. The bus was to take students from an annual orientation barbecue and party back to campus.

Accounts vary but student newspaper editor Fred Taylor said the students believed the bus that killed Bouckaet was the last one and students in a frantic rush pushed others under the bus.

Despite media reports to the contrary, the university denies that alcohol was a factor in the accident.

"It wasn't a drunken festive thing... I don't know what anyone could have done," said the Dean of Students, Fred Nichols.

A coroner's inquest is being held to look into the accident.

That same night, the Friday night at the end of orientation week, 22-year-old David Gilmour died after having his throat slit with a broken beer bottle, less than 50 yards away from a Concordia University beer bash.

The attack occurred shortly after midnight after Gilmour asked 22-year-old Glen McCall for a sip of a beer he was holding. According to witnesses, McCall responded by smashing the beer bottle and slashing it across Gilmour's throat. Gilmour died shortly after he was taken to hospital. Although neither McCall nor Gilmour were Concordia students, it is thought that they were headed to the beer bash at the Loyola campus.

On Monday morning, Sept. 9, the first day of

classes on most campuses, police discovered the body of Carleton University student Raymond MacLean in the Rideau canal. Police say the death of the 22-year-old MacLean was accidental. They have been unable to locate any witnesses or find out how MacLean fell into the canal.

With tragedies such as these receiving public attention, university administration and student councils are beginning to crack down on orientation week events. Their biggest enemy is tradition.

"It certainly had a dampening effect on the party," she added.

At Ryerson Polytechnical Institute students were forced to attend their annual orientation party alongside 18 members of the Toronto police. For the 26th year in a row some 3000 students headed by ferry across to the Toronto Islands for their orientation picnic. Police feared a repeat of last year's disaster when a drunken youth dove from the ferry as it neared the island and died when he hit his head on a submerged piece of timber.

Many students complained the police went too far when they began checking bags and pic-

nic coolers for alcohol.

"We concede the value in having some kind of police presence but we question the necessity of checking bags," said student president Kelle Dunlop.

"It certainly had a dampening effect on the party," she added.

In the United States, campus deaths as a result of orientation week activities are taken so seriously that 18 states now have legislation against having orientation rituals on university and college campuses. Seven other states have similar legislation pending that makes hazing a misdemeanor punishable by a jail term of up to one year or a fine of \$1000.

This legislation was the result of lobbying by a group called the Committee to Halt Useless Campus Killings. The group's acronym CHUCK stands for the son of the committee founders: Chuck Stevens. Chuck's mother Eileen Stevens has been lobbying universities and governments to end initiation rituals since 1978 when her son died as a result of a fraternity hazing.

Stevens died of exposure and alcohol poisoning after he was stuffed into the trunk of a car with two other students and a six-pack of beer, a bottle of Jack Daniels and a bottle of wine. The men were driven around in the trunk of the car until they consumed the alcohol. Chuck died of alco-

hol poisoning and exposure later that night after returning to the fraternity house. Two other fraternity pledges were taken to hospital in critical condition.

A total lack of response from Alfred University, where Chuck died, led the Stevens to form the committee and begin researching the number of students who died at university in initiation or hazing rituals.

"I began to realize that these were not isolated accidents. They were premeditated, planned activities based in tradition," she says.

Eileen Stevens is still active, speaking at universities and collecting information about students who die as a result of campus "traditions". She says that since the time of her son's death in 1978, 29 students have died in the United States in similar incidents.

However, Stevens does say she is optimistic that students are becoming aware of the dangers of drinking competitions that force students to consume large quantities of alcohol as part of initiation to residence or fraternity life.

Both the student council at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University say they are placing an emphasis on non-alcohol events during their orientation week programmes. At Carleton though breweries have returned to the campus after being banned by the administration in February. The Student Council lobbied successfully to have them sponsor events during orientation week.

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Gene Atkinson is a councillor with the New Brunswick Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Commission. She's upset with the amount of effort Moosehead Breweries puts into sponsoring events on the University of New Brunswick campus. Atkinson says that breweries are largely responsible for alcohol abuse on campus by equating alcohol with fun times.

"The breweries have a sophisticated type of advertising. They understand that most people develop a taste for a brand that sticks with them forever so if Moosehead can catch them in their first year, it's good for Moosehead," she says.

Atkinson is convinced that as long as it is good for business, students can count on breweries to sponsor orientation events.

Last year Moosehead sponsored a cap-collecting contest at the UNB residences, offering the house that collected the most caps a colour television and a free night at the campus bar.

Deaths on Canadian campuses aren't restricted to orientation week either. Last year a University of Saskatchewan student died after falling down a seven-storey chute. His body was found covered with fire extinguisher fluid and whipped cream.

It's easy to see that change is needed but as Eileen Stevens tells her audiences, "change has to come from the students themselves."

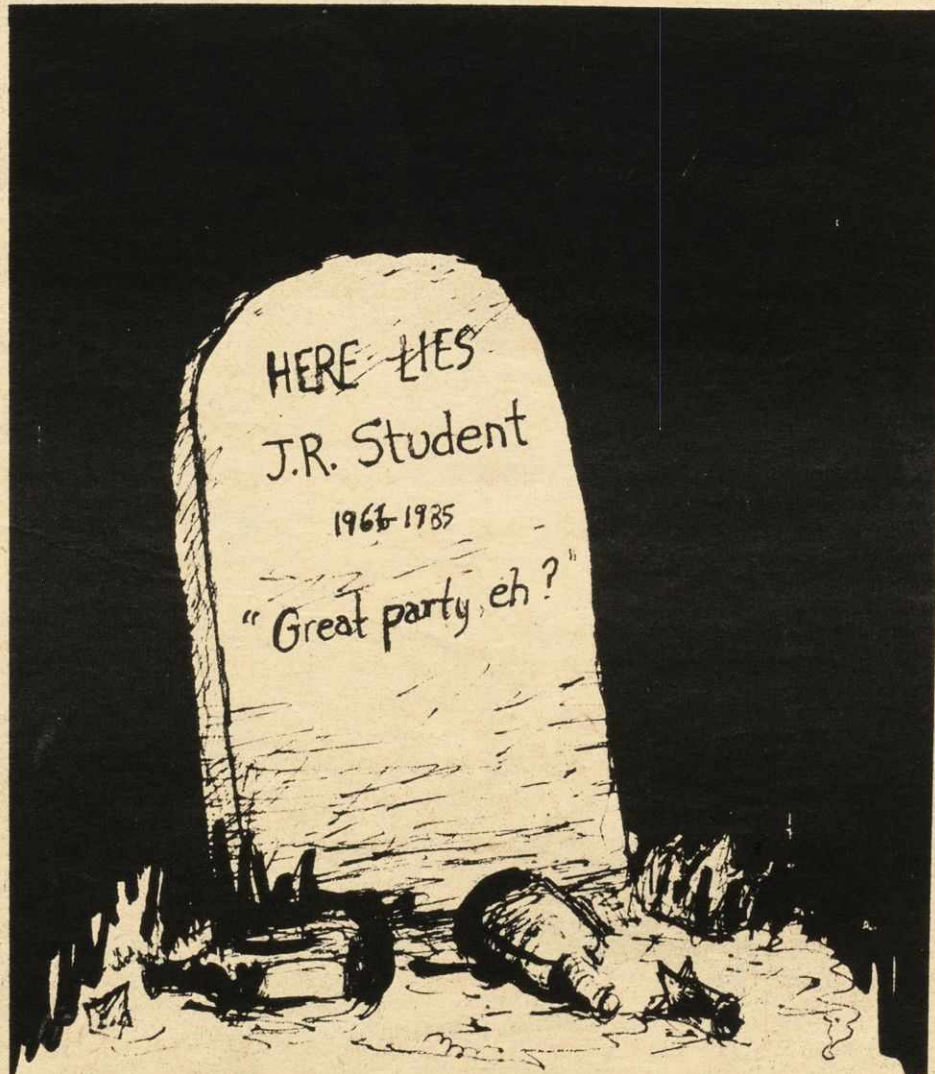


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