

Moving To the Newcomb Hall Basement, 1992

By Lisa Guernsey, CLAS 93, GSAS 95

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Three-quarters of my Cavalier Daily life was spent walking up to the fifth floor. But the last quarter was the opposite: heading down to the basement. It was during my tenure on the managing board that the CD made its move from the top of Newcomb Hall to the bottom.

I was the Executive Editor of the paper at the time, as well as the summer editor-in-chief. It was during the month of August -- just before the rush of the Orientation Issue -- that we moved our staff, our computers, our files and our paste-up tables downstairs. Dan Restrepo, our true editor-in-chief, was busy with the logistical details of the move while I tried to keep the troops happy and keep us focused on getting our summer work done. It's strange -- I barely remember my office on the fifth floor, although I have very fond memories of the attic's back room, which smelled like glue and that glossy paper that Maggie, our trusty processing machine, spit out. The floors and walls were strewn with little black lines of tape, which we painstakingly applied to the borders of photos. (I also remember that one of the managing board offices had a window that opened onto the roof and that several of our previous managing board members would often crawl out there to have a smoke.)

We were forced to move from the fifth floor to the basement because the University suddenly decided to get serious about fire codes and disabled access. The fact that the CD was occupying an old attic (with no elevator access and god-knows-what kind of flammable materials) was not going to fly any longer. The basement, up until that point, was a dimly lit, echoing video arcade that was almost always empty. So we had the basement renovated to include offices. The thought of new offices, with more space, new bulletin boards, clean walls and good lighting was enough to convince our managing board that the move -- while a short-term hassle -- would be good for the CD in the long run.

What else do I remember about my CD days? The drug raids top the list. When I was a Life Editor (90-91), the federal Drug Enforcement Agency launched a sting operation at several UVA fraternities. Even though I wasn't on the news desk, I still remember rushing out to Rugby Road, seeing the flashing red lights from the cop cars and watching agents in black t-shirts and jackets start to wrap yellow tape around the perimeter of the properties. A few days later, Trey Hanbury (the other Life editor) and I visited the courthouse to get the documents surrounding the raid. I remember standing at the counter

leafing through the docs and trying to write down what I could, since we were not allowed to take them with us and we had not yet persuaded the receptionist that we had a right to copies. I remember writing down details about hallucinogenic mushroom incubators and marijuana-growing paraphernalia, things that sounded utterly exotic to me, a workaholic goodie-two-shoes. The news for the rest of the year centered on those fraternities and whether they would survive. I cannot remember the names at this moment, but if memory serves correctly, at least one of the fraternities had to close down for good.

It is the great people of those days that I remember best: I fondly remember Lora Stuart, my first editor, who ran the Life section in 89-90. In addition to Trey, Kim Ramsey became a good friend on the Life staff and followed me as Life editor. I had a blast working as Focus Editor in 91-92, getting smart ideas from Marcus Tonti (executive editor that year) and David Hallock (editor-in-chief that year). Matt Trott, our intrepid assistant managing editor, kept us all sane with his quiet humor. As executive editor in 92-93, I loved chatting about politics with Maria Doyle and Greg Epstein, our opinion editors. Steve Power (news editor in 92-93), Karen Loew (news editor 92-93) and Jeff Leeds (news associate in 92-93) kept us focused on hard-hitting stories. In addition to Dan Restrepo, my fellow managing board members were Dan Oakey, our business manager; Laura Conner, our managing editor, and Whitney Stengel, our operations manager. I'll never forget those energy-charged managing board meetings, sitting on a lumpy, battered green couch talking about stories, journalistic ethics and keeping our staff psyched about the newspaper, which in our humble opinion was getting better and better everyday.