



By Michael Berry
Burton-Conner
Class of 2010
1st Edition

This paper is dedicated to the Housemasters of Burton-Conner. Their guidance and friendship has shaped Burton-Conner and continues to benefit the residents.

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Preface

My name is Michael Berry. I came to MIT in the fall of 2006 with plans to become an Engineer. After four years, I succeeded and walked across the stage to pick up my diploma. While taking my share of Course XVI (Aero/Astro) classes I also took a class about the History of MIT. During this class I became excited about MIT's history and about the upcoming celebrations to commemorate MIT's 150th Anniversary.

While in the class it became apparent that very little information existed about the history of the living groups and that the information that did exist was not easily accessible. Many students go through MIT leaving no record other than a set of numbers and letters indicating the classes they took and their corresponding grades. Having spent four years living at Burton-Conner (BC) I felt that this was unacceptable. So I set out to learn what I could about BC and its residents.

Two points of clarification before I continue, first, Burton-Conner has been known by different names to different groups of people. Officially, it is Burton House and Conner Hall. This name has been shortened to Burton House, Burton-Conner or BC. Second, currently at MIT, students have a good deal of choice about where they end up.

The process begins once a student gets accepted to MIT, when they begin to check out the different dormitories online. Then, before showing up at MIT students are given a handout and DVD that showcases the different dorms and the student chooses a dorm to live in. When the student shows up on campus in August, he or she moves into a dormitory temporarily and can visit the rest of the dormitories to determine which one he or she will be most comfortable in. Once at Burton-Conner, the student goes through a similar decision and visits the floors to determine which one he or she wants to live on.

I thought that I'd be able to write the history of Burton House in a purely chronological fashion because I expected that Burton-Conner has been dynamically changing over the years. After listening to the memories and opinions of over 60 alumni I realized that although Burton-Conner has a dynamic culture, it has successfully maintained its core identity.

The stories from earlier generations of Burtonites are nearly identical to stories from later generations because Burton's identity has been maintained throughout the years. It is my hope that this paper will bring alumni and current residents into contact and that through this they will be able to understand and appreciate each other as peers and friends. Enjoy the paper and the stories.

Acknowledgements

This project could have never gotten off the ground without the help of a few specific individuals, and I'd like to take the time to thank them. Professor Merritt Roe Smith has been guiding this project since it began and without his funding this project would have never started.

Katie Maloney, the Associate Director of Student/Alumni Relations, and Robert Ferrara, the Senior Director of Strategic Planning, Communications, and Alumni Relations, have been there to offer guidance and support as I contacted and interviewed Burton-Conner Alumni. I would like to thank Nora Murphy, Myles Crowley, and Stephen Skuce who provided me the books and manuscripts that I might need, without them I would have never found my way around the MIT Archives.

I would like to thank Jay Miller and Malcolm Jones for being there to answer any of my questions and to take me out for a beer when I've needed it. As well as my girlfriend, Kristyn Maiorca, who has listened through my interviews, offered her insights, and put up with me as I worked as well as designed the cover page. I would like to thank all of the alumni who have contributed their stories to my collection with special thanks to Lewis Cohen, Bonny Kellerman, Phil Kesten and Frank Wojtowikz. Good luck to Alex Penn the most recently elected Burton-Conner President, thanks for the help.

Facilities

By the end of World War II MIT suffered from major crowding problems, largely do to the influx of WW2 veterans funded by the GI Bill. The Institute consequently began searching for suitable places to house the increasing number of young men on campus. This initial housing expansion occurred in two consecutive steps. In 1949, Alvar Aalto designed and built Baker House¹. A year later, MIT purchased the Riverside Apartment Hotels on Memorial Drive². The two-part building was renovated before classes began in the fall of 1950 and was renamed Burton House and Conner Hall or Burton-Conner. The new residents were a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen that came from all over campus including the then defunct and now demolished Building 22. The residents spent their first year under the leadership of Faculty Resident and Professor John T. Rule and House Chairman Jay F. Koogler.

Burton-Conner is a single, six-story building that is separated into three sections Burton House, Conner Hall, and large common areas. Burton House consists of the three western-most wings of the House and was named after Alfred Edgar Burton a Professor of Topographical Engineering at MIT from 1882-1922 and the first Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education³. During his term student government was founded and MIT's current dormitory system was introduced. Conversely, Conner Hall consisted of the two eastern-most wings of the dorm and was named after Arthur

¹ "About Baker House." *Welcome / Baker House*. Web. 11 Jan. 2011.
<<https://baker.mit.edu/about/>>.

² "Baker and Burton Houses." *The Technology Review* June 1959: 411. Print.

³ *Dedication of the Alfred Edgar Burton House at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*. Cambridge, 1951. Pamphlet.

Jewett Conner class of 1888, a benefactor to the Institute⁴. The common areas of the dorm include the Porter Room, the library, several conference rooms and the main lobby floor.

1. Burton-Conner's changing atmosphere

Burton-Conner's current design is likely to shock many of the original residents. When it opened in 1950, the house had many walk-through doubles and no suites. Walk-through doubles were aptly named because you had to walk through the first



Figure 1: Entrance at 420 Memorial Drive

⁴ "Baker and Burton Houses." *The Technology Review* June 1959: 411. Print.

double to get to the second double. They were not good for privacy and generally went to freshmen. The original residents worked with the administration to renovate and furnish the lounge above the entrance at 420 Memorial Drive. That lounge is now part of Burton 1 and the 420-entrance to Burton-Conner no longer exists. Figure 1 shows the entrance at 420 Memorial Drive, as it was prior to the renovations of 1970.⁵ The entrance is now at 410 Memorial Drive with the main entrance off of Amherst Alley, what was once the back of the building, instead of Memorial Drive.

a. Porter Room Addition

In 1960, MIT expanded Burton-Conner with the addition of a dining hall, which jutted out into Amherst Alley. Figure 2 shows the dining hall from Amherst Alley.⁶ This



Figure 2: The Porter Room from the Athletic Fields

⁵ CC-W51-404 (420 Memorial Drive). Photograph. MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA.

⁶ CC-W51-240b (Dinning Hall). Photograph. MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA.

was eventually named The Porter Room, in honor of Professor and Mrs. William Porter, the Housemasters of Burton-Conner in the early 1990's. At the time of the renovation, Burton-Conner Residents were on a meal plan known as "Commons." For ten years prior to the dining hall, Burton-Conner residents had to walk to Baker House, Graduate Housing, or Walker Memorial to find breakfast, lunch and dinner. The addition provided a central location for the Dorm to meet and hold events, but also made it so that students no longer had to leave their dorm to get a warm meal. With the reorganization of the house into suites with their own kitchens in 1970, Burton-Conner no longer had a need for the dining hall or Commons as students often prepared their own meals.

Today the Porter Room is no longer a dining hall. It has been converted into a multi-purpose room that is the perfect complement to the myriad of interests for which the Burton-Conner residents are known. In its 50 years, the Porter Room can and has been used for nearly any activity the residents want and will likely continue its tradition of fulfilling the needs of the students. It is home to such events as student government elections and campaigning, the Burton-Conner Apple Bake and Pumpkin Carving, Dance Parties, the Burton Third DTYD party, impromptu soccer games, ultimate Frisbee tournaments and even an area for some of the best dancers in Cambridge to practice their moves. Figures 3 and 4 show the Porter Room as both a Dining Hall in the 1960's and a Dance Club in 2010, respectively.^{7,8}

⁷CC-W51-612b (*Dining Hall*). Photograph. MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA.

⁸ *Sugar High Rave*. Cambridge, MA. Personal photograph by Anne Shen. 2010.



Figure 3: Porter Room = Dining Hall, 1960's



Figure 4: Porter Room = Dance Club, 2010

b. 1970 Renovation: The Suite Life

In 1970, Burton-Conner underwent major renovations and residents had to find other places to live. MIT did its part during this time by providing places for the

residents to move to, including rooms in the recently built MacGregor House as well as rooms in two off-campus locations, The Hamilton House in Allston and an apartment house in Medford. MIT also leased a handful of rental cars to help the displaced students commute to campus⁹. Instead of living at MacGregor House and risk not living with each other, many residents instead opted to move farther away from campus and live with each other. They promptly named themselves "Burton-in-Exile."¹⁰ After their one-year of exile and isolation ended, they would come back home and provide the basis for the government at the new Burton-Conner.

As MIT reached the end of the 1970-spring semester, the fact that Burton-Conner would be closed for renovations was pretty common knowledge. By finals week, walls that were to be removed were already marked and Burton-Conner students were initially allowed to take out their frustration on these walls and jumpstart the renovation process. However, this privilege was quickly rescinded as the "do-it-yourself" demolition made the building uninhabitable and unsafe. The last day student in the old Burton-Conner was the Student Staff Captain, Dennis Hagerty, class of 1970. He recalls that on June 19, 1970 he had to, "turn out the lights and lock the door." He remembers the specific date because later that day he married his wife, Lynne, and moved to Ashdown¹¹.

⁹ Bloom, Dan. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 6 Apr. 2010. E-mail.

¹⁰ Sullivan, John. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 26 March 2010. E-mail.

¹¹ Haggerty, Dennis. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

Walking along the hallways today can be disorientating for former residents because the rooming arrangements and floor designs significantly changed during the 1970 renovation. Instead of a bunch of doubles and a few singles along the main hallways, the new designs made every room part of an apartment-styled suite. Each suite had a kitchen provided with a full-size refrigerator, an oven, and stove. Residents were expected to provide their own food, small appliances, cookware, and dinnerware, an arrangement that continues to this day. This is a sharp contrast to the 1950's when Kinley Herboldsheimer, the House Manager at the time, would check rooms for hotplates, which were prohibited, as was the preparation of any food in the dorm rooms.

Prior to the renovations, residents in Burton shared three large communal bathrooms with the entire floor, while the slightly smaller Conner floors only had two. With the suite layout an average of five or six students shared a single smaller bathroom. To say that the suites provide more for the students than just a private bathroom experience grossly understates the function of the suites in Burton-Conner. By connecting a set of rooms and providing them with their own kitchen and dinning/lounge areas, the suite provides a strong familial atmosphere, which encourages daily contact and plenty of fun social interactions.

Although discussed later, it is necessary to mention that, with the addition of suites, Burton-Conner became a coed dormitory. In the fall semester of 1971, it was a coed dormitory with single-sex floors, then the following year many floors became coed with single-sex suites. Finally, Burton-Conner became fully integrated with many coed

suites. To this day Burton-Conner still has coed suites along with a handful of all-female or all-male suites, depending on the preference of residents.

2. Burton-Conner's current state

a. Nomenclature

The floors in Burton-Conner are the pride of the house and the pride of the residents. Each one has its own peculiar culture and is named after the side of the house it is in and how many floors it is above the lobby. This causes some initial confusion, as the sixth floor of the building is, in actuality, the fifth floor of both Burton and Conner. In turn they are known as Burton 5 and Conner 5. Most floors follow this example and are called by the side of the building followed by their respective cardinal number, though this was not always the case. Originally each floor used their building-side and their ordinal number. During the 70's, residents gradually began to use the cardinal numbers instead. In order to maintain floor pride and tradition Burton Third kept the ordinal number, instead of calling themselves Burton 3, and to this day is the only floor that hasn't yet adopted the commonly accepted nomenclature¹².

Suites are given three numbers that distinguish them from the rest of the suites in Burton-Conner. The first number represents the floor, the second number represents the wing and the third number distinguishes between the suites in a given wing.

Accordingly, Burton consists of Wings 3, 4, and 5 and Conner consists of Wings 1 and 2,

¹² Haff, Gordon. "The Physical Structure of a Dormitory Shapes the Social Life of Its Residents." *The Tech* [Cambridge, MA] 15 Mar. 1977, Volume 97, Number 11 ed.: 7. *The Tech Online*. Web. 29 Nov. 2010. <<http://tech.mit.edu/V97/PDF/N11.pdf>>

which means that one must look at the first two numbers to determine what floor and side of the building each suite is on. When I say, “I lived in the 323 suite my freshmen year,” I am telling people that I lived on the third floor in one of the suites in the second wing of Burton-Conner, making me a Conner 3 alumnus.

Each floor has its own Floor Lounge and Graduate Resident Tutor (GRT) who lives in his or her own apartment. Figure 5 shows a typical floor plan of Burton-Conner with Burton in outlined in black and Conner outlined in red. The suites are marked with just their second and third number as the first number changes based on what floor this represents. The GRT apartments are marked as GRT; note there is one on each floor of Burton and one on each floor of Conner. Similarly, the Floor lounges are marked FL and there is also one on each floor of Burton and one each floor of Conner.

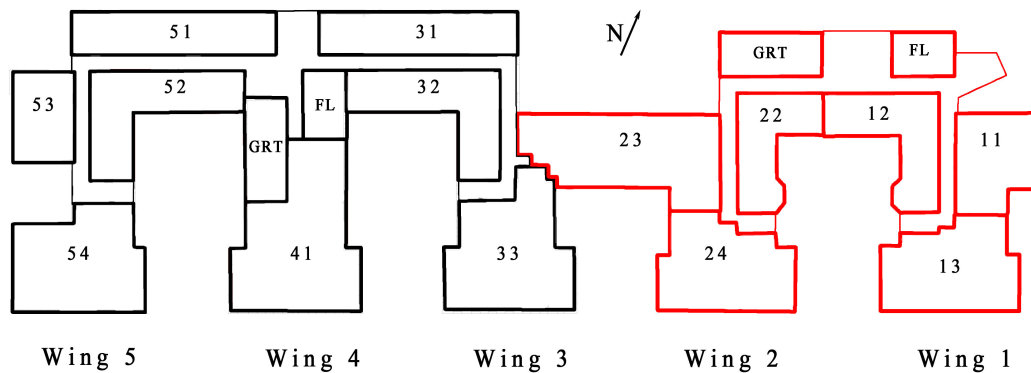


Figure 5: Burton-Conner floors after the 1970 Renovation. Note the location of the Suites and Lounges.

b. Burton Floors

Floors on the Burton side all follow a similar layout with minor exceptions. The east wing of Burton (Wing 3) is home to the 31, 32 and 33 suites. The kitchen in the 33 suite looks across a courtyard toward Conner Hall. A fire escape connects the Burton 33

suites with the Conner 23 suites and is affectionately known as “The Burton-Conner Express,” the fastest, although officially disapproved route between Burton and Conner.

Next is Wing 4, which includes the 41 suite as well as the Floor Lounge, the GRT’s apartment, and the Burton side elevator. This wing often becomes a central focus of the floor due in large part to the proximity of the floor lounge to the elevator. In the place of their floor lounge, Burton 1 has an extension of the 141 suite, and in order to provide a central meeting place, the usual GRT apartment has been replaced with a floor lounge. Still needing a place for the B1 GRTs, their apartment moved into the old Housemaster apartment located in Wing 5 of Burton 1. The new Housemaster apartment is located in Wing 1 on Conner 1. Burton 2 also underwent minor renovations in 2009 and now the dorm’s networking devices are housed in the Burton 2 floor lounge.

The final wing on Burton side has the 51, 52, 53 and 54 suites. Although the 53 suite is a special case and is in actuality only a half-suite. It is referred to as an “up-down suite” and connects the second and third floors, while another suite connects the fourth and fifth floors. The 53 suites are the only suites on Burton that connect two floors and serve to bridge the social gap between different floors.

c. Conner Floors

The first wing of Conner is directly above the main entrance and front desk. It is easily accessible through the Conner side elevator and houses the 11, 12 and 13 suites as well as the Floor Lounge. You can look at the above figure for more clarification.

Continuing down the main hallway, one comes to the second wing of Conner. Here we find the GRT's apartment and the 22, 23, and 24 suites. The 22 suites are up-down suites similar to Burton's 53 suites. They are the only suites on Conner that are up-down suites. The 23 suites are the only suites that have a clear view of the athletic fields to the North and the Charles River to the South. All of the Burton floors and the roof of the Porter room can be accessed from the 23 suite fire escapes. Although the fire escapes are, of course, to be used only during emergencies.

d. Conner 1

Conner 1 is often a favorite floor as it is the home of the Housemasters, the Residential Life Associate (RLA), the Conference Room, the Library and the Porter Room. The RLA serves as the go between for the Dormitory and the Institute and helps the Housemasters as well. Small meetings and gatherings are often held in the Conference Room, and the Library is used for studying when rooms and floor lounges are either crowded or too loud. The Porter Room is an all-purpose room and has its own section above.

e. Lobby Floor

In addition to being the official route between Burton and Conner, the ground floor is home to many of the residents' facilities such as the laundry, bike, game, dark, weight, and workout rooms as well as the snack bar and the front desk. Upon entering Burton-Conner from 410 Memorial Drive, visitors are checked in at the front desk, which is monitored by the dormitory's residents. Here residents can pick up letters, magazines, and packages. Residents are also welcome to check out a DVD from the

rather large movie collection, a board game from desk, or pool cues and balls to pass the time between psets and exams.

Across from the desk is the House Manager's office. Ken Donaghey, the current House Manager at Burton House, oversees almost every aspect of the building and makes sure those leaky faucets and broken lights get fixed. In a building as old as Burton-Conner with residents as active as Burton-Conner residents can be, this is no walk in the park. Directly next to the House Manager's office is the Dark Room, which can be used for developing photographs. The Dark Room has not been used in recent years, likely due to the rise of Digital Cameras.

In the second wing of the building there are a handful of music rooms, which are often used as practice spaces by individual musicians and by local bands with Burton-Conner members. A little further down is the Burton-Conner Laundry Room, which can be found completely empty on a Tuesday night, or overflowing with clothes and residents on a Sunday afternoon. Luckily for residents, they can check the status of the laundry room online before making the trek with their week's worth of dirty laundry.

For those who do not want to waste the energy it takes to walk back upstairs and down again 45 minutes later, the dorm's TV Lounge is in the room next-door, complete with massage chair and billiards tables. The duties of the Lounge Coordinator in 1978-79 included maintaining the two pool tables and the pinball-videogame contract¹³.

¹³ Wishart, James. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

Inside the TV Lounge is the Snack Room, which until recent years provided students with a quick bite to eat without the need to go outside or prepare it themselves. Now it is used as the headquarters from which events are staged, such as Campus Preview Weekend (CPW) or Resident EXploration (REX) events.

Across from the Burton Elevator and behind a wall that is covered with the emblems for each floor, is the Game Room, which keeps bikes dry and rust-free during the winter months as well as a ping-pong and air hockey table to keep the students study-free during every month. Figure 6, shows the wall that hosts paintings for each floor¹⁴. The residents update these paintings as they see fit.



Figure 6: Each Floor is allowed to paint an emblem of themselves on this wall

¹⁴ Wall of Floor Emblems, Burton-Conner, Cambridge, MA. Personal photograph by author. 2010.

Two rooms that are a bit off the beaten path and are often kept in obscurity are the Workout Rooms. But to the few who know where they are, nothing is better than taking a study break in the Weight Room or Cardio Room. Here residents can build up muscles, release endorphins and loose the “Freshmen 15,” all without leaving the dormitory.

Together these facilities make up the building known as Burton-Conner, but residents don’t live here just for the building. In the 1950’s and 1960’s Burton-Conner would explain itself to prospective students as a place full of masochists because they would be the only ones who would live in the farthest undergraduate dorm from campus, that was also crowded and in bad condition compared to its neighbor Baker. Then they begin to elaborate on the real reasons that students live there. First mentioned was the fact that with so many peers and fellow residents, everyone can find someone with similar interests and with the facilities provided, everyone has the means to fulfill their interests. Second, BC is a beehive of social activities thanks in large part to the common areas and lounges. Third, the residents are often engaged in sports and other outdoor activities. All of these add together to create a well-rounded set of students living in Burton-Conner. Lastly the floors are a strong draw, with each floor having its own dynamic culture¹⁵. Interestingly enough the reasons today are the same as they were 50 years ago, with the extra incentive of kitchens. Students choose to live

¹⁵ Rainier, John, Frank Verlot, and Bob Howie. *Residence and Orientation Booklet*, 1962. Cambridge, 1962. Print.

in Burton-Conner because they love the active familial atmosphere of the dorm and the independence it provides.

Faculty and Staff

Burton-Conner residents have always been extremely close to the staff members of the building. Today, nearly every student knows at least one of the staff members and can look to them for friendly advice. The Faculty Residents, now called Housemasters, have continuously opened their homes and made themselves available to students at any hour of the day. Housemasters enjoy being involved in the lives of their students, whether this was Professor Laurens Troost (1953-1956) watching his musically talented students in the All-Tech Sing, Professor Beinart (1977-1991) catching a film with his students, or Professor Roe Smith (2004-Present) tearing it up on the dance floor at the Burton-Conner Boat Cruise. The Housemasters are an integral part of the house's community and they know that their main purpose is to be student advocates.

3. House Managers and Daytime Staff

Students look to more than just the Housemasters for emotional support. Many find willing friends in the House Manager, Ken Donaghey, and his Housing Staff and will talk with them in between classes or while making lunch. Ken Donaghey has been the House Manager at Burton-Conner for nearly 20 years (1991-Present) and was the House Manager at Baker House (1983-1989) before coming over to Burton-Conner. Having been around the house for so long, Ken is able to deal with anything that the students

happen to throw his way. Although sometimes coming across as upset at students for breaking windows or knocking holes in the walls, Ken's tough exterior does not fool the students who know him well.

Michael Laird, class of 1969, told me about "Ritchie" a janitor who worked during Michael's stay at Burton-Conner. He became a close friend to hundreds of residents over a couple of decades and these residents wrote the Institute to urge them to award Ritchie with the Compton Award which he was awarded in the early 80's. Michael Laird said, "For a lot of guys, he (Ritchie) was the bright spot in the day for an understanding comment or a funny story. He was a unique and valued aspect of life in Burton."¹⁶ Many students have their own story about one of the janitors who was around to talk to for the residents.

4. Night Watchmen

For those of us who are up late every night, whether for classes or more nefarious purposes, the Night Watchmen are around and generally talkative. Twice during the night the watchman will take a quick tour of Burton-Conner checking all the kitchens and lounge areas to make sure that everyone is safe and stoves are turned off. During these rounds they will often chat with students who are up late and too tired to continue their work, but too dedicated to give up. Friendships inevitably begin to form between the students and the Night Watchmen. Phil Kesten, class of 1978, said, "I look back on it now and realize that the people who aren't fellow students but that you see

¹⁶ Laird, Michael. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

everyday in your ‘home’ make a big difference in terms of your experiences and also how you remember those experiences.” He recalls that Pasquale, or Patsy, was close to everyone and was “everyone’s favorite uncle.”¹⁷

For many years David Abrahamian has been the main Night Watchman at Burton-Conner. He often spends 4 nights a week working at Burton-Conner and he has developed a very strong affinity for the dormitory and its residents. Many of the residents know him as “Dave the Security Guard” or “Bones” and can recognize his laughter as he comes walking down the hallways. Dave is one of the strongest supporters of the students in the Night Watch. For example, when a student falls asleep in any of the lounges, the Night Watchman is supposed wake him/her up and send the tired student back to their room because we are not allowed to sleep in public lounges. Instead of accepting this he told the other Night Watchmen that if a resident is sleeping, alcohol isn’t involved, and they do not present a fire hazard, then they should be left alone. He feels that waking up the student is not fair to the student because they are not getting enough sleep already and the need to catch up on their sleep.

5. Masters of the House

A Faculty Resident is a member of the faculty at MIT who has chosen to live with students on campus. This is not an uncommon practice at colleges, but MIT has taken it a step beyond just simple residence. While MIT had Faculty Residents in place long

¹⁷ Kesten, Phillip. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 17 November 2010. E-mail.

before Burton-Conner was opened as a dormitory, the current Housemaster system had its initial debut at Burton-Conner.

Prior to 1958 the Faculty Resident at a dorm was a resident of the dormitory and was often around for the students to talk to and open up to. They had limited funds to spend on the dorm and their main purpose was solely to live at the dorm in case problems arose. In the years leading up to 1958 MIT began to wonder if the system could be improved upon and, if so, how this improvement would be implemented. In 1958, MIT created a new position to replace the Faculty Resident and used Burton-Conner as its guinea pig. That year Howard Bartlett was appointed as the first Housemaster of Burton-Conner and the first at MIT.¹⁸ The Housemaster was a new name for the Faculty Resident, but more importantly it came with specific, clearly designated duties as opposed to the vaguely specified duties of the Faculty Resident.

According to the Housemaster "Charter of Responsibilities," two of the Housemasters responsibilities were to contribute to and "share in the life and spirit of their living group", and to be there for the students and not the Institute. This is not to say that Faculty Residents did not contribute to dorm life, or care about the students. On the contrary, many of the ideas for what a Housemaster should be, came from earlier Faculty Residents. The reason for the change was to give the Housemaster a

¹⁸ Keeler, Stephanie. "Resident Experts." *Technology Review* Sept.-Oct. 2010. Web. 15 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.technologyreview.com/computing/26015/?a=f>>.

clearer idea of what his or her relationship should be to the students, as opposed to having them guess in each new circumstance.¹⁹

From my personal experience, the most important job of the Housemaster is to be there for the students. In the words of the Charter of Responsibilities, “In any given situation the Housemasters are expected to weigh the interests and the welfare of the students, both as individuals and as members of the MIT Community. Their allegiance to the students is seen as part of their responsibility to the Institute.” This is important for the students to know because it adds a personal element to the more impersonal “corporate” side of MIT.²⁰

I knew that Professor Roe Smith would be there to listen to my problems and, if needed, connect me with the right people so that I could deal with my problems with minimal effect on my grades. I knew that if I went to his wife, Bronwyn Mellquist, she would be quick to give me a hug and listen to what I had been going through. This was especially important my sophomore year, when my family back home was in the middle of a weeklong battle with wildfires. Roe and Bronwyn both stopped by to check on me and make sure I was holding up okay. Although incredibly worried and stressed, all I needed was an adult to talk to and tell me everything was going to be okay.

Housemasters are respected members of MIT’s faculty and are often tenured professors; as such they have a lot of experience to draw upon when offering advice to

^{19, 20} *MIT Housemasters: Charter of Responsibilities*. Revised 12 Apr. 1979. MIT Archives, Cambridge.

students. The Housemaster is also part of the dorm community and this puts them in the perfect position to offer advice and have that advice taken seriously. Based upon their experiences with Housemasters, many students find it easier to approach them than other faculty members.

a. John T. Rule (1950-1953)

In 1950, John T. Rule served as the first Faculty Resident of Burton-Conner. Two years later in the spring of 1953, he retired from this position. In 1950, he was appointed as the Chairman of the Course in General Science and Engineering and served until it was discontinued in 1957. He also served as the Administer of the Section of Graphics from 1938 until 1956; this position has also been discontinued. After serving at Burton-Conner, Professor Rule became the Dean of Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs at MIT. It was during his time as Dean that the current Housemaster system was implemented.

b. Laurens Troost (1953-1956)

Professor Laurens Troost replaced John Rule as the new Faculty Resident at Burton-Conner. Laurens Troost grew up in Rotterdam, Netherlands where he met his wife, Martha Christina Versluijs, through their mutual interest in music. Professor Troost started playing violin when he was seven years old and eventually took two years of professional training. He received his engineering degree from Delft Institute of Technology, in 1919. During World War 2, he left the town of Wageningen, and took refuge near Utrecht. In the summer of 1951, he accepted an opportunity to come to the

United States and spent a semester at MIT and another at Berkeley before coming back to MIT as a Professor and the Department head of Ocean Engineering²¹.

In 1953, Laurens Troost decided that he wasn't meeting as many students as he would like to be meeting. He hoped that by becoming a Housemaster he could become a better department head by better knowing the students. Troost and his wife brought their musical interests into Burton-Conner and were very supportive of the fine arts at Burton-Conner and around the rest of the Institute. Figure 7 shows the Troosts at the All Tech Sing supporting the Burton-Conner team led by Tom Kudzma, class of 1956²².



Figure 7: Professor and Mrs. Troost are seen here supporting the Burton-Conner team at the All-Tech Sing

²¹ French, Thayer. "Professor Troost Appointed New Burton Faculty Resident." *The Tech*[Cambridge] 23 Oct. 1953, Volume 73 Number 35 ed.: 1+. *The Tech Online*. Web. 22 May 2010. <<http://tech.mit.edu/V73/PDF/N35.pdf>>.

²² *BurtonHouse_Troost_TechSing_Apr56*. Cambridge, MA Personal photograph by Lewis Cohen, April 1956.

c. Neal Hartley (1956-1958)

Shortly after the Troost family moved out, Professor Neal Hartley moved in. Prior to joining the MIT History department as a Professor in 1946, Professor Hartley was an officer in the US Naval Reserve. Afterwards, he served as an Institute Archivist serving from 1966 to 1976.

Professor Hartley was well known by a few students at Burton-Conner, and he often invited them to his house. Figure 7 is a picture given to me by Lewis “Lew” Cohen class of 1958²³. The picture was taken at Professor and Mrs. Hartley’s house in Maine after a nice lobster dinner prior to the start of Lew’s senior year. According to Lew, “The pipe was a Prof. Hartley constant, removed only at ceremonial occasions and, presumably, for sleeping.”²⁴

²³ *BurtonHouse_Hartley_seasideMaine_Aug57*. Cambridge, MA. Personal photograph by Lewis Cohen, August 1957.

²⁴ Cohen, Lewis. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 3 July 2010. E-mail.



Figure 8: Mr. and Mrs. Hartley lounge at the table after hosting a lobster dinner for their students.

d. Howard Bartlett (1958-1963)

In the fall semester of 1958, Professor Howard Bartlett moved into Burton-Conner as the first Housemaster, replacing the old Faculty Resident system. Howard and Helen Bartlett were tasked with determining how the Housemaster would fulfill his role in the House. Bartlett felt that the dorm should be, “not just a place to sleep” and that this could be accomplished, “by fostering a pleasant social and intellectual life away from home.”²⁵ Professor Bartlett first met with the Burton House Committee to learn about Burton-Conner so that he could smoothly integrate himself into the house. The

²⁵ Keeler, Stephanie. "Resident Experts." *Technology Review* Sept.-Oct. 2010. Web. 15 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.technologyreview.com/computing/26015/?a=f>>.

figure below shows Professor Bartlett sitting in on a Burton-Conner House Meeting²⁶.



Figure 9: Howard Bartlett is sitting in on the Burton-Conner House Meeting.

The Bartletts stayed at Burton Conner for five years, longer than any of the previous Faculty Residents, but they ended up leaving to go to India to help with the setup of Birla Institute of Technology in 1963.²⁷

e. David C. White (1963-1968)

David C. White, a Professor of Electrical Engineering at MIT, stayed on as the Housemaster from 1963-1968. The Presidents Report of 1968 said that David C. white served as a, “dedicated and imaginative contributor to the Housemaster-tutor

²⁶ *Professor Howard Bartlett*. Photograph. MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA.

²⁷ Wadleigh, Kenneth R. Letter to Members of the Faculty. 11 Jan. 1963. MS. MIT Archives, Cambridge, MA.

system.”²⁸ After serving as the Housemaster for 5 years Professor White followed Professor Bartlett to India to help with the setup of the Birla Institute of Technology.²⁹

f. Herbert Woodson (1968-1972)

Professor Herbert Woodson, another Professor of Electrical Engineering, took over for Professor David C. White. Herbert Woodson was also an alumnus of MIT, graduating in 1952 and living on-campus at the Westgate housing. Herbert Woodson served from 1968-1972 including during the year of Burton-in-Exile.

g. James Bruce (1972-1977)

“Lifer” is a term used for someone at MIT who has or will spend all of his or her life at MIT. It is usually reserved for the Professor who started as an Undergraduate student, went on to become a Graduate student and after receiving his or her advanced degrees from MIT eventually decided that they wouldn’t be happy anywhere but MIT, and so they come back as a Professor.

While not a complete lifer, James Bruce comes pretty close. In 1964, after receiving his SM in 1960 in Course XVI and then his SCD in 1964, again in Course XVI, James Bruce joined the MIT Faculty. Four years later he became an Associate Professor and in 1973 was promoted to full professor. In 1971, before becoming a full professor

²⁸ *MIT Report of the President, 1968*. Rep. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1968. *MIT Online Archives*. Web. 5 July 2010. <<http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/mithistory/presidents-reports/1968.pdf>>.

²⁹ Leslie, Stuart W., and Robert Kargon. *Exporting MIT: Science, Technology, and Nation-Building in India and Iran*. Rep. Print.

he was the Associate Dean of the School of Engineering, and later served as its Dean from 78-79.

During Professor Bruce's time as Associate Dean of the School of Engineering he lived with his family at the newly renovated Burton-Conner as the Senior Housemaster. After his term as Housemaster he was awarded the Gordon Y Billard Award for, "untiring contributions to MIT in administration, engineering education and devotion to students."

After leaving Burton-Conner, James Bruce stayed at MIT and became the Director of Information Systems and later the Vice President for Information Systems. He maintained this for nearly 20 years before retiring and becoming an MIT Professor Emeritus. While Vice President of Information Systems Professor Bruce, led MIT as it expanded its network from non-existent to nearly 30,000 devices on MIT's network in 2002.³⁰

h. Julian Beinart (1977-1991)

Professor Julian Beinart lived with his family as the Housemaster for Burton-Conner from 1977 until 1991. Professor Beniart was originally from South Africa and students often remember his apartment as being decorated with a good deal of African

³⁰ "Information Systems VP Bruce to Retire in June." *MIT*. 11 Dec. 2002. Web. 28 Nov. 2010. <<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2002/bruce-1211.html>>.

art. The Beinarts raised their children while at Burton-Conner and alumni may recognize the then-young Peter Beinart as a political commentator and author.³¹

Julian Beinart's work focused on city design and he has done work on many international projects. In addition to architecture, he is interested in the arts and music. He has worked on recordings of African music and African art exhibitions in two museums in England.³²

Although no longer a Housemaster, Julian Beinart is still a professor of Architecture at MIT. Shawn Buckley the Assistant Housemaster living in Burton 1 remembers Professor Beinart as an insightful man and being able to see not only what was there, but also what was missing.³³

i. William Porter (1991-1995)

William and Lynn Porter took over for Julian and Doreen Beinart in 1991 and served for four years, leaving in 1995. While they were Housemasters, questions arose as to what the former Dining Hall would be used for. Burton-Conner wanted to keep it in under BC's control while the Institute wanted to use it for their own purposes, effectively taking away all control over the use of the room from the residents. The Porters helped Burton-Conner retain control of the Dining Hall so that it could be used

³¹ Kesten, Phillip. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 17 November 2010. E-mail.

³² "Julian Beinart Profile." *Faculty, Research Staff And Other Academic Staff*. Web. 23 Dec. 2010. <<http://architecture.mit.edu/people-details.php?type=faculty&id=40&detail=Works>>

³³ Buckley, Shawn. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 16 November 2010. E-mail.

for dorm purposes and other student-related uses. As a thanks for the efforts of William and Lynn Porter, the Dining Hall was renamed the Porter Room. Prior to living at Burton-Conner, William Porter was Dean of Architecture (1972-1981) and then Department Head of Architecture (1987-1991).

j. Halston Taylor (1995-2004)

Halston Taylor came to MIT in 1982 as an assistant with men's Track and Field. In 1990, he took over as the head coach. Halston Taylor is still at MIT and has served as the director of MIT's Track and Field programs. Coach Taylor has received many commendations for his coaching and for good reason; he has coached 135 All-Americans and 13 national champions³⁴.

While Housemaster at Burton-Conner, he put that same dedication that he had as a coach into being a part of BC. Matt Abernathy, class of 2006, recalls Halston as a very strong guy likely because he taught the weight training PE class. In addition to his being strong, Matt remembers him as a genuinely fun guy to be around³⁵.

k. Merritt Roe Smith (2004-Present)

After publishing his book *Harpers Ferry and the New Technology* in 1977 and having it nominated for a Pulitzer Award in History, Merritt Roe Smith came to teach history at MIT. In 2004, Merritt Smith and his wife, Bronwyn Mellquist, became the

³⁴ "Profile of Halston Taylor." *MIT Intercollegiate Athletics*. MIT Daper. Web. 22 Dec. 2010. <http://www.mitathletics.com/sports/m-track/coaches/taylor_halston00.html>.

³⁵ Miller, James, and Matthew Abernathy. "Interview with Jay Miller (2006) and Matt Abernathy (2006)." Personal interview. 31 Aug. 2010.

Housemasters at Burton-Conner. All of the students know Merritt Smith, as “Roe” and many never realize that his first name is Merritt.

Roe and Bronwyn offer many exciting events for students and are always there for students who are having a rough time. Every semester on the Tuesday of finals week a line begins to form outside of the Housemaster apartment as students take a study break to eat desserts with other sleep deprived students. This becomes quite a large event as the residents and the occasional alumni shuffle through the apartment picking up every conceivable type of dessert and either eating it there with their friends or going back to their room to continue studying. Bronwyn’s apple crisp is by far the main attraction in the dessert line and some students show up solely for it.

One thing that Roe is known for are his late night rounds about the dorm. While they don’t occur every night, they do occur almost every weekend. Unlike the night watchmen who go around checking to make sure the students are safe and ovens are off, Roe goes around checking in on the students. He talks to and hangs out with the students and has even been known dance at parties.

At the culmination of each year, Roe and Bronwyn invite all the residents to a dinner/dance cruise of Boston harbor. Roe is often found on the dance floor at this event and often squares off with some students in a friendly dance competition. The most recent of these dance-offs pitted him against Malcolm Jones, class of 2010, to the tunes of a Chuck Berry-Will Smith mash-up. Roe declares the winner, and shockingly has never lost a dance-off.

Student Life

Active students are the reality of Burton-Conner; any Housemaster who moves in has to be able to accept the fact that his life will be heavily influenced by this much younger generation. Not only must the Housemaster accept this, he must embrace it. The residents at Burton-Conner are a very independent set of individuals. This independence can be seen in the student government, personal study habits, and diverse social activities in BC.

One of the best graphical

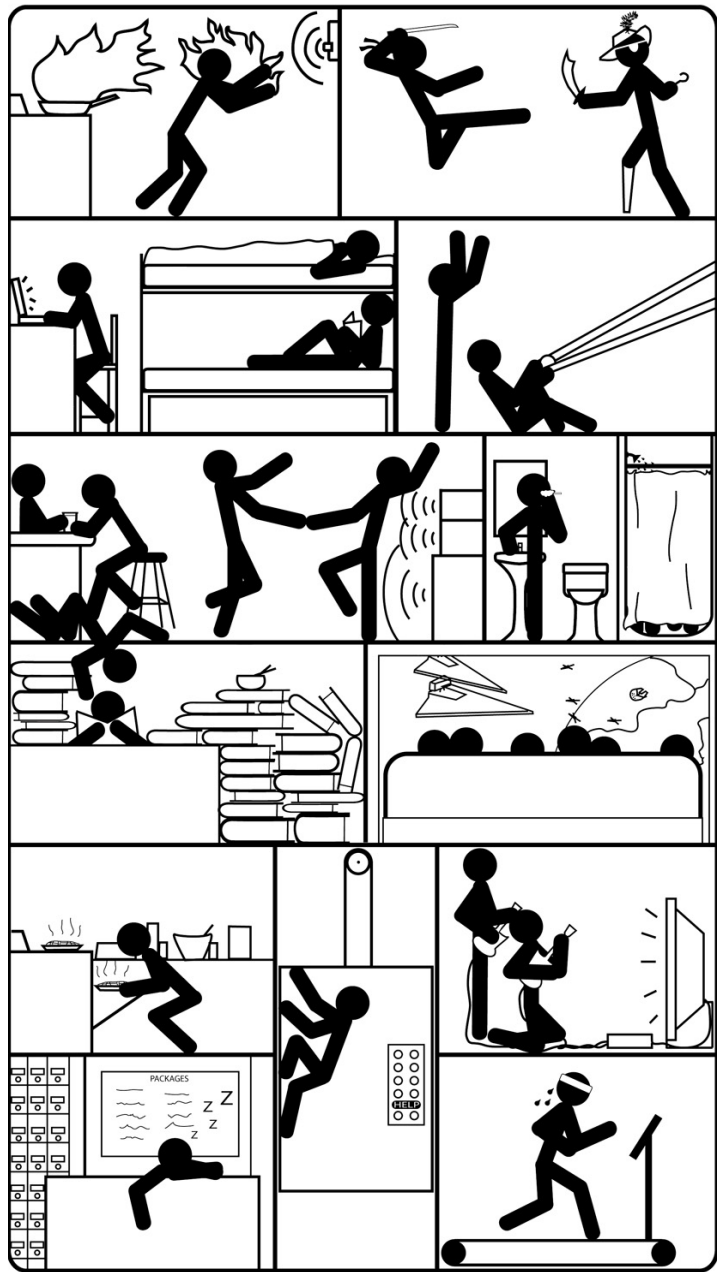


Figure 10: The Brief and Wondrous Life at Burton-Conner
By Clare Bayley, Class of 2010

descriptions of Burton-Conner was recently depicted on the back of Burton-Conner t-shirts and as the cover page for Burton-Conner's 2008 Dorm Culture Report. It was designed by Clare Bayley, class of 2010. Any member of Burton-Conner, past or present, should be able to look at the picture and find him or herself at least once. Most members will be able to recognize themselves in multiple frames. Throughout the next

couple of pages I will borrow frames from this graphic to help illustrate the different aspects of life at Burton-Conner.

6. Changes

Burton-Conner has been around for nearly 60 years and has been home to over 6000 alumni. With this many residents from different backgrounds and cultures living here for 4 years each, one would expect that Burton-Conner has drastically changed and that residents from 1950 wouldn't be able to recognize the dorm anymore.

This is not the case. Despite the many changes that Burton-Conner has undergone over the years, there have been very few significant changes. I believe that anyone who lived in Burton-Conner can come back to visit and still feel a sense of connection with its current residents and the dormitory itself despite a handful of changes.

Alumni prior to 1980 would note the new façade on Amherst Alley with a set of barbeque pits.

Alumni prior to 1970 would note that the main entrance has moved to 410 Memorial Drive and that the main entrance is now on Amherst Alley as opposed to Memorial Drive. They would also be shocked to find the new suite style living, which replaced the previous hallway style. Most importantly they would note the addition of females.

Alumni prior to 1960 would note the addition of the dining room on the back of the building. As well as everything else listed above. Once again despite all these changes, the personality of Burton-Conner remains much the same as it always was.

a. Burton-Conner becomes Coed

In 1873, Ellen Swallow Richards received her S.B. at MIT; she was the first female to be admitted to MIT and later helped setup and run the Women's Lab at MIT³⁶. In 1963 the first tower of McCormick Hall, MIT's all-female residence hall, was completed and MIT began to admit more women³⁷. In 1970, nearly 100 years after Ellen Swallow Richards graduated the previously all-male dormitories at MIT became coed. The dormitories became coed nearly simultaneously, although due to the renovations Burton-Conner's most pronounced change didn't occur until 1971, a year after the rest of campus.

In the fall of 1971, Conner 4 was set-aside to house only women, thus preserving the single-sex natures of the floors. If this setup worked, MIT planned to have women begin to live on coed floors with the male residents of the dorm. In true Burton-Conner style, the women were treated to a fire alarm soon after moving in and Burton-Conner had its first pajama party since the renovation as tired men and women stumbled out of their bedrooms at 3:00 in the morning.³⁸

The renovated Burton-Conner was initially intended to be what it was before, an all male dormitory. One part of the renovations was the previously mentioned bathrooms that were added to all the suites. Urinals were added to about half of the bathrooms. By the time the renovations were complete, women were moving in and

³⁶ "Ellen Swallow Richards." *Institute Archives & Special Collections: MIT*. Web. 23 Dec. 2010. <<http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/exhibits/esr>>.

³⁷ "McCormick History." *McCormick: MIT*. Web. 23 Dec. 2010. <<http://web.mit.edu/mccormick/www/history.html>>.

³⁸ "Burton-Conner." *Technique: 1972*. Cambridge: MIT, 1972. 218-21. Print.

had no need of the urinals in the 413, 423, and 424 suites. Bonny Kellerman had originally lived in McCormick and as a senior she moved onto Conner 4, she related the details of the following events.

In order to shield the women of Conner 4 from the “harmful effects” of seeing a urinal in their all-female suite, the Institute decided that there was no choice but to cover up the offensive urinals with large boxes. Contrary to the Institute’s belief, women didn’t find the urinals particularly offensive and instead were more bothered by the large oversized boxes in their bathrooms. They removed them and added them to their lounges as coffee tables. When custodians discovered that the bathrooms were missing their urinal covers and that the suites had new coffee tables, the covers were quickly replaced. It went back and forth a few times. With the students removing the covers and the Institute replacing them. Finally, the women of Conner 4 decided to undeniably prove that they were okay with seeing urinals and turned the urinals into vases by adding flowers to them. After this the Institute decided to just leave things as they were.³⁹

The year following the harmless addition of women to Conner 4, MIT began to add women to the other floors in Burton-Conner, first in single-sex suites. Gradually suites became coed. In 1975 Burton 1, the last all-male floor, became coed. Having lived in both an all-male Burton 1 and then a coed Burton 1, Phil Kesten felt he was

³⁹ Kellermann, Bonny. "Interview with Bonny Kellermann." Personal interview. 27 June 2010.

qualified to compare the two experiences. In his words, "It made a difference! The floor was much saner, and smelled better."⁴⁰

This can be contrasted to the Burton-Conner that was not merely a single-sex dorm, but a dorm with very strict parietal laws. Although the laws seemed strict to the students, they proved to be very liberal parietal laws when compared to the other colleges and universities around the Boston area at the time. For this the students had Dean of Residence Fredrick 'Freddy' Fassett to thank. Freddy Fassett was constantly defending the right of MIT males to have the coeds from their neighboring schools over past 11:00 pm in addition to being a strong supporter of improving student living areas.⁴¹

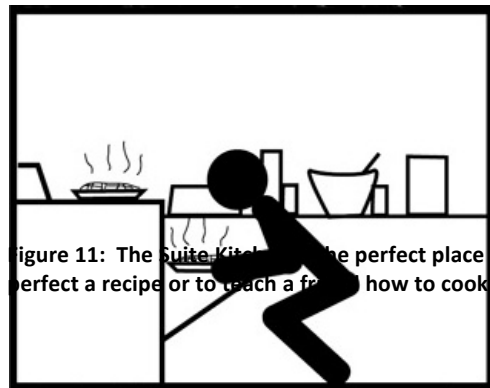


Figure 11: The Suite Kitchen is the perfect place to perfect a recipe or to teach a friend how to cook.

b. Suites

Starting in 1971, everything in Burton-Conner began to revolve around the suite. Karen Nilsson, the House Manager of Burton-Conner from 1985-1988, and later the Associate Dean for Residential Life, felt that the suite system was a nearly perfect connection between life with a family before and living independently after MIT. In effect, the suite becomes the family the students left behind, while providing them enough autonomy that it prepares them for when they are on their own or in an

⁴⁰ Kesten, Phillip. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 30 March 2010. E-mail.

⁴¹ Bufferd, Allan. "Interview with Allan Bufferd." Personal interview. 30 June 2010.

apartment with roommates.⁴² After living at Burton-Conner and then later with roommates I completely agree with her assessment.

Similar to an apartment, each suite is provided with its own kitchen, lounge, and bathroom. The suite experience can be one of the most rewarding and educational aspects of life at Burton-Conner. The suite is the perfect environment to learn cooking techniques and not worry about upsetting a landlord. Students often get together, teach each other cooking methods, share recipes and periodically prepare dinner for the entire suite. Other times, things do not go well in the kitchens and they become home to large messes, small oven fires, or just smoldering cookies that set off the fire alarms and send everyone outside.

I had a great time living in a suite at Burton-Conner and was able to try many different types of ethnic foods. Many residents take to customizing their kitchens to fulfill their wants and needs, either by adding more tables and seats, installing an entertainment system, or painting the walls. Wall paintings range from simple single color paintings in students rooms to very complex murals on the walls of the hallways. They are a great way for artistic students to find an outlet from the usual grind of MIT's culture.

Many students find outlets in cooking and art; every couple years someone takes up brewing as a way to relax. Eric Correll, class of 2010, did just that and spent his Junior and Senior years brewing a myriad of different beers. He even modified a

⁴² Karen, Nilsson. "Interview with Karen Nilsson." Personal interview. 25 June 2010.

refrigerator to have four taps on the outside so that his friends could enjoy his cold homemade brews on tap.

c. Floors

The suites come together as a floor and together form a social circle with a personality and culture independent of Burton-Conner. The floors, in turn, come together to form Burton-Conner. In a way Burton-Conner forms a nation of students, each floor represents a state and each suite a city within that state. Burton-Conner residents take pride in their suite, floor, and dormitory similar to the way in which people take pride in their city, state, and nation.

To capitalize on floor pride, many floors have created symbols for their floor and they are posted around the dorm. Many floors install a memento of their floor in the elevator button that heads to their floor.

7. Government

Burton-Conner's government resembles that of a country with a weak federal government and strong state governments. In this way Burton-Conner is able to function smoothly. So long as individual floors and suites don't break the house rules of Burton-Conner or the Institute, the floors are free to police themselves. Each floor elects its own chairpersons, follows its own rooming procedures, and balances its own budgets. This is not to say that the dormitory has no central government; on the contrary Burton-Conner's central government is very capable and involved. The central government just refrains from micromanaging the floors.

a. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (ExecCom) of Burton-Conner consists of the House Officers and Floor Representatives. The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are the major elected positions and they make up the House Officers. Each floor sends one or two of their elected representatives to the ExecCom Meetings, although each floor is only given one vote. This group of Officers and Floor Representatives make up the main part of Burton-Conner's central government.

The President of the Dorm is in charge of making sure things run smoothly. House Meetings and ExecCom Meetings are all run by the president. If an ExecCom Officer cannot complete his or her duties, it is the President's duty to take on that task. If the President cannot fulfill his job, the order of succession goes Vice President, Secretary, and lastly Treasurer. The President's most important job is to represent Burton-Conner's interests to the other dorms and the rest of the Institute. The President shows up to DormCon meetings, which is a collection of the Presidents from each dorm as well as other officers. The President is also expected to represent Burton-Conner on panels about the dorm. Prior to 1970 the President was referred to as the House Chairman.

The Vice President is around to insure that the President is able to complete his duties and to assist him in any way he can. Together with the President, the Vice President is in charge of managing and checking in on the elected positions around the dorm, such as the Movie Chair, Weight Room Chair and the Social Chairs. Burton-

Conner has at least one chair member for each of its facilities and for many of its different activities.

The Secretary is responsible for maintaining Burton-Conner records. The secretary is in charge of maintaining meeting minutes of all the meetings held at Burton-Conner as well as publishing those minutes to the House.

The Treasurer is in charge of Burton-Conner's financial interests. The treasurer accepts budget items from members of the dorm and then holds a budget meeting to insure the proper allocation of the funds available. The President and the Treasurer are cosignatories for Burton-Conner funds. If you want to get paid back for a purchase for the dorm, it needs to be approved by the Treasurer. The treasurer watches the funds closely as Burton-Conner's budget per semester is approximately \$30,000. The fund originates from a student "tax" taken at the beginning of each semester

b. Judicial Committee

With nearly 370 residents in Burton-Conner living in close quarters problems invariably arise. Individual residents tend to deal with many of these issues on their own. On the floors, they can be brought up to either the floor chairs or the Graduate Resident Tutor (GRT). The GRT system was implemented alongside the Housemaster system in order to alleviate some of the work for the Housemaster and to help the students cope with MIT and prepare for classes. On the occasion that a problem arises that cannot be handled by the floors, the problems are taken to the Judicial Committee (JudCom) or the Housemasters.

JudCom can review complaints between floors and individuals. The committee hears the complaints and after some investigating will determine the best course of action. JudCom can seek the guidance of uninvolved GRT's, the Housemasters, or the RLA, but in the end the decision is the JudCom's and is final. Bill Hecht, class of 1961, was JudCom chair while Allan Bufferd, class of 1959, was House President. They joked about their positions in the dorm, saying Bill Hecht, "found them guilty" and Allan Bufferd, "did the hangings."⁴³ JudCom's purpose extends beyond just moderating problems and meting out justice. JudCom is also in charge of overseeing the elections of the dorms.

8. Study and Work Habits

When Burton-Conner first opened, there were not nearly as many research opportunities as there are presently. The now famous and often-used Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) did not come into existence until 1969.⁴⁴ Therefore, many students needed to find other sources of income and were able to find various jobs around Burton-Conner as desk and snack-bar workers, student cleaning staff, laundry room chairmen and night watchmen.

a. Student Staff (1950-1970?)

When Burton-Conner first opened, the dorm did not have a cleaning service and instead was cleaned by Student Staff. Student Staff consisted of student residents, most

⁴³ Bufferd, Allan. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 30 March 2010. E-mail.

⁴⁴ "Timeline." *MIT150*. | Massachusetts Institute of Technology 150th Anniversary. Web. 11 Jan. 2011. <<http://mit150.mit.edu/timeline>>.

of whom were residents of Conner Hall. These students were in charge of keeping the common areas of the dorm clean and livable. They were compensated with reduced rent and paid \$0.90 an hour⁴⁵. Student Staff was often involved in many other housekeeping chores around the house. They were very connected in the newly founded government and are in large part responsible for the BURCON service group explained below. Due to the similarities between BURCON and Student Staff, a large number of initial BURCON members were residents from Conner Hall or part of the Student Staff.

Even after Student Staff was replaced with a non-student cleaning staff, students could still be found working around the dorm, replacing lights and cleaning toilets and such. Karen Nilsson, the house manager of Burton-Conner from 1985-1988, would often hire students to work for her. If a student knocked a hole in a wall, broke a window or caused some other sort of damage and then came to Karen Nilsson with an apology, she would offer them the choice to either work off the cost of repairs or have their student account charged. Enough students would rather save their money by doing a little manual labor so that Karen would have at least one student working under her. She would say that it was an “educational moment” for them and saw many of her students grow up a lot over those three years⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Dangel, Richard. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

⁴⁶ Karen, Nilsson. "Interview with Karen Nilsson." Personal interview. 25 June 2010.

b. BURCON (1954 - 19??)

BURCON was a service group started by Edward Gore, class of 1955. Edward Gore thought that Burton-Conner could be a better, more exciting place to live and that it could have a positive social impact on Cambridge. According to



Figure 12: Symbol for the BURCON Service Group

his friend and roommate Dean Zeilon, also class of 1955, Edward Gore, “created the idea, organized the group and lead as its president. He stepped forward at the Graduation Ceremonies in 1955 to accept the Karl Taylor Compton Prize awarded to the “BURCON” Service Club.”⁴⁷

c. Snack Bar also known as Joe’s Bar and Grill (195? - 200?)

The snack bar at Burton-Conner was located on the ground floor near a room set up with Billiards tables (currently known as the TV Lounge). Whether known as just the snack bar or Joe’s Bar and Grill, students have always enjoyed working there.

Jobs at the snack bar ranged from selling food to making food the food that was to be sold. The snack bar was more than a job for many of the workers; it was also one of the main places to socialize. The snack bar’s vicinity to the TV Lounge made it a great study break area where students could get a quick bite to eat while shooting pool, watching a game, or catching up on the latest shows.

⁴⁷ Zeilon, Den. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 27 March 2010. E-mail.

During finals week Joe's would stay open 24 hours for students wanting a study break and dinner. For a very cheap price students could buy a dinner consisting of a hamburger, milk shake, and chips. This was a great deal for busy students who didn't want to rush over to a dining hall or cook for themselves. With the stress of finals, many students could not find the time or motivation to cook for himself or herself and instead grabbed a late night dinner long after other places were closed for the night.

Phil Kesten, class of 1978, says that Joe's, "wasn't just soda and candy – real food got cooked...I thought it was just a great thing to go down at 4 am, in the middle of tooling your brains out and grab some food and hang with a bunch of other people who were doing the same thing." Phil Kesten, a Professor at Santa Clara University, was in charge of the ATOM residential communities at Santa Clara for six years. While there he had such fond memories of Burton-Conner and Joe's that he helped the students start the Up 'n Atom Café. When he was first suggesting the idea to the students he tried to convince them to name it Joe's.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the Joe's at Burton-Conner has been closed although there is talk of this tradition being revived.

d. Desk Workers (1950-Present)

Out of all of the jobs mentioned above working Burton-Conner's front desk is the only job I had. The front desk worker position is one of the most sought after positions at Burton-Conner for many reasons. Some people work desk because they find it a

⁴⁸ Kesten, Phillip. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 30 March 2010. E-mail.

quiet and relaxing job. Others like the fact that it's an easy way to make money while not working that hard. I ended up working desk because I thought it would be a great way for me to meet other Burton-Conner residents who would often walk by desk, as it is the main entrance to the building.

I ended up meeting many students and I made many friends all over the dorm because I worked shifts in the middle of the day and desk is generally busiest during the middle of the day as students are coming and going to class. A resident's identification card

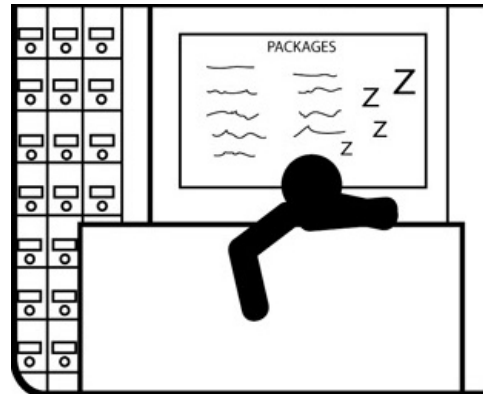


Figure 13: Working Desk is fun and easy

will unlock the front door of the dormitory. If someone forgets their ID, they will have to verify who they are at the front desk. Visitors have to check in and provide identification as well be on a resident's guest list. This helps the desk worker to meet many of students and their friends.

Next to the desk sits the dorm printer "Barbar." As a desk worker one of my jobs was to periodically check it to make sure Barbar was working, which it never was, and email out to the dorm if it wasn't. This was supposed to prevent a large queue building up and wasting paper when the printer was finally fixed. But on the rare occasions when Barbar was working properly, residents could be seen picking up a recently completed paper or soon to be started pset at, literally, any time of the day or night.

Other jobs at desk included checking out the packages that arrived at the desk and sorting the mail. Delivering packages to students often is a fun chore because many students with unusual or exotic packages like to talk to you about what they received.

Another social aspect of working desk is checking items out to residents. This could include DVDs, bike pumps, board games, ping-pong equipment and pool cues and balls. I found that as a desk worker asking them about their movie choice was a great conversation starter, and people would often ask me for my opinion on which movie they should watch. It was a great job and often my friends would visit me while I worked desk and I'd have company the entire time.

e. Resident Night Watchmen (1955, 1961⁴⁹, 1978⁵⁰)

Night watchmen are an extension of the desk staff and at times have been staffed by students, but MIT security guards usually fill the job. Marvin Bahnman, class of 1956 recalls making his rounds and visiting each floor in the late night.⁵¹

Although many of these jobs are no longer available to students, Burton-Conner's independent spirit comes from these past examples of residents having a more direct role to play in the dormitory.

⁴⁹ Wishart, James. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

⁵⁰ Morissey, Mike. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 22 June 2010. E-mail.

⁵¹ Bahnman, Marvin. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 7 April 2010. E-mail.

f. Tooling

A large percentage of the MIT engineer's life is spent psetting and studying, known as "tooling away." Burton-Conner is no exception to this rule. It is not uncommon to find people who have seen the sunrise and set from the same seat. Every student has his or her own preferred studying habits. Some prefer to work with as few distractions as possible and will lock themselves in their own room. This isn't always the quietest place to work, as suitemates can be loud. Other students like the quiet but don't really like the isolation that their room offers and can be found downstairs in study areas in and around the library. Suite lounges are another frequent used study area. Students use them when they need help or are working in groups. Usually students opt for a combination of studying in their own room while doing group work and psets in a more public space such as a lounge.

9. Social Life

Every student at MIT has heard the phrase, "Work hard, and play harder." This is the presiding attitude at Burton-Conner. Burton-Connerites social life can be split into four categories: parties, sports, dorm-life, and nightlife.

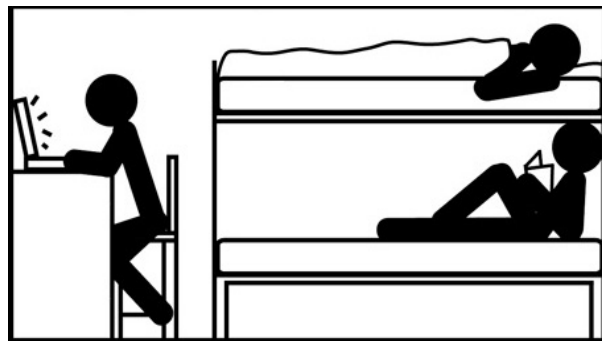


Figure 14: Studying, Sleeping, and Coding are all known to happen in the same room at MIT.

a. Parties

Burton-Conner has always been fond of its parties. Whether it is the Annual DTYD party hosted by the Burton Third Bombers or a small birthday get together, Burton-Conner residents will take whatever excuse they can to have a party.

Prior to Burton-Conner becoming coed, parties were very important because it was an excuse to bring in members of the opposite sex. Throughout the years Burton-Conner has been home to many themed parties, ranging from a Roman Toga party complete with student-made roman columns to a Prohibition-themed party with pretend gambling tables. Oliver Filippi and George Luedeke were both heavily involved in the Social Committee and recall putting on many outrageous parties. One such event was the “Bolshevik Bounce,” which had a prison camp theme complete with barbed-wire entrance and a uniformed guard.⁵²

Many parties occur as students wind down after a long week. What starts off as a small group

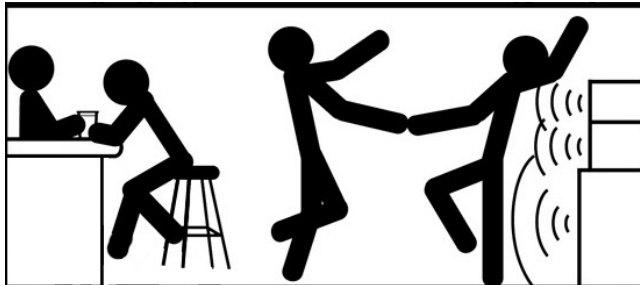


Figure 15: Party Time!

of friends listening to music and having a beer, can quickly turn into a dance party as more people show up and the music gets cranked up. Under the administrations current rules, all parties with alcohol must be registered with the Dean’s Office. This was not always the case. In 1979, Massachusetts changed the drinking age from 18 to

⁵² Filippi, Oliver"Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 20 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

20 years and changed the way in which parties were hosted at MIT. Until this time parties would serve alcohol without the need to check peoples age. When Massachusetts changed the drinking age MIT was not sure how to deal with the new law. Although alcohol wasn't explicitly banned, the change in view of alcohol caused a rift to form between the freshmen and sophomore classes and the junior and senior classes.⁵³

Bomber Parties

Many things can and have been said about the Burton Third Bombers, but no one can deny that the Bombers throw some of the largest parties around West Campus. The one they are best known for is their "Dance Till You Drop" or DTYD party. In 1997 the name was changed from "Drink Till You Drop" when MIT changed its policy to be strictly against a student drinking until he or she dropped.

In the spring term of 2010 the 41st iteration of DTYD was celebrated. The Bombers promoted the event by advertising live bands, alcoholic beverages (provided a positive ID was shown), BBQ, Bombers (the floor members, not the explosive kind), and booty shaking. Everything promised was provided and around 500 people attended the event. DTYD is also used by the Bombers to invite alumni back for a reunion.

In order to promote DTYD, the Bombers often participate in some sort of annual hack. In 2008, the silhouettes of the Bomber's traditional airplane and cartoon bomb

⁵³ Wojtowicz, Frank. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 19 November 2010. E-mail.

with the letters DTYD could be found around campus. In 2009, a 600 lb concrete cartoon bomb, also with the Letters DTYD was placed on the Kresge lawn in front of the Student Center. While a creative way to advertise the party, someone thought it as a real bomb threat and called the Fire Department, Police Department, and Police Bomb Squad. The Bombers later issued a formal apology, but the party continued as planned.

Birthday Celebrations

Many students in Burton-Conner are at college when their birthday rolls around and opt to celebrate it with their friends. Every floor celebrates birthdays differently, but a few traditions can be found on multiple floors. Many floors have a birthday chair who makes sure everyone's birthday is celebrated and that the person's choice of cake will be available. After the singing, a common practice is to have the birthday person's roommate or closest friend feed them a rather large and often unmanageable piece of cake. Then students linger around the lounge relaxing until some sort of unspoken sign is given and a bunch of students merge on the Birthday person and rush him or her into the shower, this is called "showering." Showering is a tradition that extends beyond birthdays and is generally frowned upon by MIT's administration.

b. Showering

Showering has a colored history at MIT and Burton-Conner specifically. Showering is a tradition, which began as a water fight between the freshmen and sophomore classes the night before the first freshmen exam. It then developed into upperclassmen dumping the freshmen into the showers before the first 8.01 exam.

Showering can be dangerous and cause a lot of property damage if not done correctly. Burton-Conner had major problems with showering and suffered obnoxious amounts of property damage when students took to “rivering” students who didn’t want to be showered. Rivering was the practice of bringing the shower to the student instead of the other way around.⁵⁴ Water would often leak from one floor to the next causing mildew and mold to accumulate and in some cases would leak into the elevator and lock the elevator up. While MIT began to take steps to get rid of this tradition all together, Burton-Conner took steps to tone it down in hopes of preserving it. The tradition still exists today, but is never done in a way to cause serious personal injury or massive property damage.

c. Sports

If you want to get up at 6:00 in the morning to go stand in line in order to watch the first round of the English Premiere League Soccer Championships, or stay up till 1:00 in the morning to play midnight football or some other sport, you are likely to find a couple other fans willing to do the same with you. Burton-Conner has always been full of people who like to get outside and play tennis or crowd around a television set to cheer their favorite sports team to victory. Intramural sports are great ways for stressed out students to get exercise and relax. This helps to create a sense of community, and has been doing so for Burton-Conner for its entire existence.

⁵⁴Campbell, Kevin. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 26 March 2010. E-mail.

Bill Hecht, class of 1961, talked about the house being an athletic power and winning the “All Sports Trophy” multiple years.⁵⁵ Bob Sullivan, class of 1967, said that for those living on Conner 2, intramural sports made a big difference to us and brought us together.⁵⁶ Kevin Campbell, class of 1980, says that the big thing to do on Saturday was to play sports and then head up to Father’s Fore for some hot dogs and beer.⁵⁷ Adam Helfant, class of 1985, recalls being very active in intramural sports. Recently, Adam Helfant left his position as the Vice President of NIKE to work as the President of the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP).⁵⁸ Sue Raisty, class of 1992, recalls that Conner Three was an incredibly athletic floor and fielded a team in nearly every intramural sport.⁵⁹ From my own experience I remember Conner 5 as a very athletic floor fielding multiple hockey teams. Intramural dodge ball and soccer were also very big on all of Connerside, and we would either get together to compete with or against each other. My senior year (2009-2010) we had quite a rivalry with Conner 2 and our floors went head-to-head playing dodge ball many times throughout the year.

Another hobby of residents has been to play sports while running around the halls. Unfortunately this has led to a handful of injuries, to both the residents and the

⁵⁵ Hecht, Bill. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 31 March 2010. E-mail.

⁵⁶ Sullivan, Bob. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 29 March 2010. E-mail.

⁵⁷ Campbell, Kevin. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 26 November 2010. E-mail.

⁵⁸ Helfant, Adam. "RE: General Comments." Message to the author. 19 October 2010. E-mail

⁵⁹ Raisty, Sue. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 24 June 2010. E-mail.

building itself. Bostwick Wyman, who lived on Burton Five or the Fine Fifth from 1958-1962, recalls how they threw Frisbees around the halls and occasionally knocked out lights.⁶⁰ Many other floors have their own stories about some sports going on down the halls whether just a simple game of catch or a rough game of hockey the hallway has always been the perfect place to practice. As Burton 1 played Unihoc, also known as indoor hockey, Rob,⁶¹ class of 1997, got a little too excited about the game. Rob went full speed after the ball and right into one of the fire doors in the main hallway. He smashed into the door and left glass all over the floor, Rob walked away in fine condition. As a joke someone drew his outline in chalk on the floor. This was not the first time something like this happened on Burton 1. Pat McElhatton, class of 1980, went all the way through the door with the help of Seth Lemler, also class of 1980, who closed the fire door as Pat chased him down the hall.⁶²

This excitement for sports is what makes Burton-Conner stand out in the Intramural leagues. While we aren't always the best players, we are always up for a game and for years have put more teams onto the fields than most living groups.

d. Dorm-Life

Life at a dormitory can be one of the best or worst experiences a student could hope for. Thanks to the personalized floors—each with their own particular culture and traditions—it is easy for students to find a floor where they are comfortable and will

⁶⁰ Wyman, Bostwick. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

⁶¹ Full name not provided.

⁶² Website no longer online (burton1.mit.edu)

spend four years in happy coexistence with their neighbors. Dorm-life is the time we spend at study breaks, talking around a table, sitting in the hallway playing cards, or in the lounge watching the newest television shows. What starts off as a person watching a movie by himself, can unexpectedly get turned into a movie marathon lasting until the last person falls asleep in the floor lounge. Many trips are proposed and members of the dorm go out white water rafting, camping, on dim sum and sushi outings, or bowling. Anything that sounds

fun is open terrain for the Burton-Conner resident. Life-long friendships are made on the floors and throughout the house, making residential life so central to the students MIT experience.

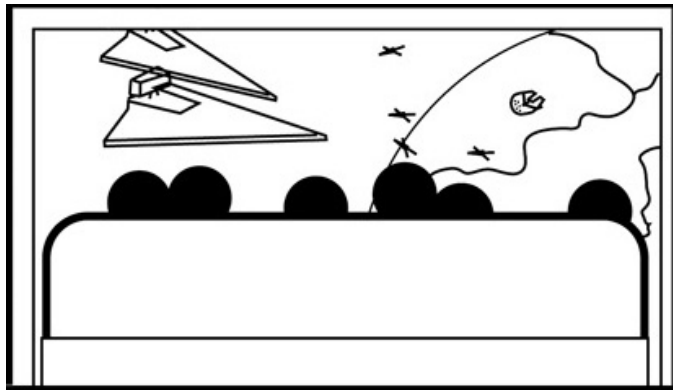


Figure 16: Students Love to use lounges to gather around and watch the latest Blockbuster hit.

Many alumni stay in contact with and have reunions with their Burton-Conner friends.

Apple Bake

Many events take place in Burton-Conner around the holiday seasons and are well attended and always enjoyed. Alumni often come back to visit during these events. Around Halloween Burton-Conner hosts a pumpkin carving contest where pumpkins and candy are provided to the students, while a classic Halloween movie runs for the residents to watch. Events like these populate the year, but the Burton-Conner Apple Bake is by far one of the most popular and well attended.

For many years Burton-Conner has hosted the Apple Bake where students spend all day preparing dishes that in some way involve apples. They are separated into different categories. This year there were eight categories: apple breakfast, apple drinks, “appetizer,” apple salad, apple entrée, apple pie, apple dessert and apple art. Three winners were chosen for each category and then a “Best Overall” and “Most Creative.” This event is more important to some floors than it is to other floors. Conner 2, for example, believes the Apple Bake to be a varsity event, and they consider themselves the best team around. Granted they usually do very well and this year had 13 winning entries. Recently, the competition has become much larger and more time goes into all of the entries. This year there were more than 190 entries about 50 more entries than the previous year. After the judging, the food disappears very quickly as students, alumni, and faculty members talk as they finish off the dishes.

Study Breaks

Burton-Conner students are often so busy studying they will forget to take breaks and mingle with their fellow students and friends. That is where “study breaks” come in. Floors have their own study breaks occurring every week where members of the floor cook for each other and take a break from studying.

At study breaks, students will eat anything prepared for them ranging from fried chicken and pasta to brownies and ice cream. Many floors have their study breaks on Thursday night—likely due to the fact that one of the main objectives of the Housemaster-Tutor system is to help students prepare for Friday morning tests. Most of the tutors sat down with their freshmen on Thursday night to help them with their

test preparation. The main purpose Housemaster-Tutor system is no longer helping students prepare for tests but helping them cope with life at MIT.

My junior year (2008-2009) Burton-Conner started having study breaks between floors. These inter-floor study breaks would occur every couple of weeks and we would invite another floor to come hang out and have dinner and dessert with us. These were great ways to meet members from other floors and have continued on after I left.

Another type of study break is the dorm-wide study break. These are usually thrown by the social chairs and are take place in the Porter Room with ice cream, pizza, wings, and other goodies.

Intra-Floor Activities Fund (IFAF)

In 2000, Minhaj Siddiqui and her Executive Committee started the Intra-Floor Activities Fund (IFAF, pronounced eye-faf). A portion of every semester's budget is set apart for the floors to spend on events or trips between two or more floors. Different types of events are organized around food, sports, or the outdoors. Food IFAFs tend to be a nice dinner or lunch where part of the meal is subsidized. Sport IFAFs include things like rock climbing, ice-skating, bowling and other athletic endeavors. Outdoor IFAFs can be either single day outings like apple picking or multiple day camping trips that occur over long weekends. IFAFs are enjoyable breaks from the hard work of MIT and allow floors to develop relationships with other floors.

FIRE!

An exciting yet problematic part of life at Burton-Conner is having to deal with fire alarms. As far as I can tell, no resident has been able to live four years at Burton-

Conner without suffering through at least one fire alarm. It was such a common occurrence that it was joked about in The Technique, MIT's yearbook, The Burton Reflector, Burton-Conner's newspaper, The Tech, MIT's main newspaper, and a few of the housing pamphlets. At one point Burton-Conner residents playfully ambushed the firemen with water balloons and buckets of water.

Of course these are fun examples of Burton-Conner fire alarms. More often than not the fire alarms happen at the worst possible time, such as 3:00 am, the moment a hardworking student decides that 4 hours of sleep is worth more than



Figure 17: Fires are a common part of life at Burton-Conner

figuring out the final problem of a pset. Then they are kept up just a little longer instead of getting the sleep they need or finishing the pset. These recently awakened students stumble out of the warm, cozy building into the frigid morning air, often in only their pajamas because their sleep-addled brains didn't think to grab their jackets.

Information Sharing

Before computers became commonplace around campus and emailing emerged as one of the main forms of communication between students, newsletters were how students shared information. Burton-Conner used to circulate its own newspaper, *The Burton Reflector*. Jonathan Gestetner was an editor of the newspaper and he started

publishing “special” versions, which he titled *The Distorter*.⁶³ *The Burton Reflector* was never circulated as often as the Tech, but it also was never intended to cover the events of the entire campus.

Cell Phones have begun to replace landlines in nearly every situation, including at Burton-Conner. Leslie Evenchick, class of 1962, recalls that they had payphones that they split between the entire floor. He says that one week the pay phones had an error and were allowing free calls. Everyone wanted to make phone calls, but the students gave priority to the foreign students calling home⁶⁴. After the 1970’s renovations, landlines were placed in the rooms. At the end of the 70’s, before Cell Phones were around, the MIT phone system was poorly implemented. It was nearly impossible to reach the person you wanted in their room. First the phone call had to go through MIT’s operator, but if the phone call wasn’t answered there was no way to leave a message. In response many suites would buy a phone and split the cost⁶⁵. In 2007, Burton-Conner removed the landlines from all of the rooms.

In recent years, Burton-Conner has mostly given up using hard copies and sends most of its announcements via email, although postering around the dorm is still an important source of event advertisement. Meeting minutes are emailed out to residents on the official Burton-Conner mailing list. This mailing list is moderated and

⁶³ Klein, Martin. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

⁶⁴ Evenchick, Leslie. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

⁶⁵ Wojtowicz, Frank. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 19 November 2010. E-mail.

used only for things such as house meeting announcements, meeting minutes, election results, and other “official” business of the house. Burton-Conner also has an unofficial emailing list that is used for party announcements, homework questions, and flame wars. Flame wars occur when students argue mindlessly through emails.

In order to keep students from having to sort through spam anyone emailing to the Burton-Conner unofficial list is required to include their underwear color below their name. This is not a form of harassment or hazing, but is a way to keep people who are unaware of the Burton-Conner traditions from spamming our lists. The tradition started in 2006 from a flame-war during finals week on the BC emailing list. The question was whether or not Burton-Conner would rent movies to residents over the summer. In the course of events, one resident asked another about his underwear color, to which he replied with “Blue. With penguins on it. And each penguin is wearing boxers.” After this more people started to include the color of their unmentionables under their signature, until it was uncommon and looked down upon to not include it.⁶⁶

Many nonBurton-Conner residents respect this and during the inevitable, campus-wide flame wars that occur prior to finals week every semester include a color with the note “for Burton-Conner.” Although a seemingly meaningless tradition, emails without this signature are ignored, and the resident who spams the dorm receives a good deal of grief.

⁶⁶ Dudley, Tim. "Re: Burton-Conner History." Message to the author. 14 December 2010. E-mail.

e. Nightlife and Shenanigans

The real fun at MIT begins once the sun goes down, and this is true for Burton-Conner as well. Whether it is a two o'clock study break to get the sugar and caffeine that are needed to finish the pset for tomorrow or a prolonged game of poker or bridge, whatever excuse a student has to stay up late is likely a good one. Other nightly escapades include hacking around campus, playing with flaming tennis balls, or participating in hacks on the dome. The Mamma Maxima Scientiae hack on MIT's dome was almost exclusively a Burton One endeavor.

Mamma Maxima Scientiae

In 1979, an idea that had become a project finally became a reality. After a student commented on the similarities between the Great Dome at MIT and a woman's breast, the Burton One Outdoor Breast Society (B.O.O.B.S.) was founded with the goal of hacking the large dome and placing a nipple on top of it. After nine months and multiple iterations, the group finally got onto the dome and set up the nipple. They celebrated with champagne and steak at Phil Kesten's, class of 1978, place in Boston. The full-length story of this famous hack has been written about by Phil Kesten and can be found online.⁶⁷

Miscellaneous Shenanigans

A good deal of life at Burton-Conner is difficult to label and categorize. These "miscellaneous shenanigans" are a large part of life at the dormitory. Residents have been doing things for a long time that "seemed like a good idea, at the time." In

⁶⁷ <http://web.mit.edu/burton1/Old2/www/Old/burton%201/www/stories/breast.html>

retrospect they may not have been the best ideas, but they left us with great stories to pass on. In 1978, some alumni from Conner 3 “borrowed” a street sign from one of the Boston Freeways. Today, a little over 30 years later Conner Three’s floor lounge is home to a number of street signs that have found their way to the dorm. In 1986 MIT was celebrating its 125th anniversary. Part of the celebration was a party where a giant Styrofoam “125” was put up. This ended up in the Burton 2 floor lounge and stayed there for a couple of years.⁶⁸

Burton One residents in the late seventies decided that jumping from Burton One into the snowdrifts that accumulated outside of the dorm during the Great Blizzard of 1979 was a safe fun way to get in a study break. What started off as a minor commotion, turned into jumping from Burton One into the snow below naked. Joan Solomon, one of the first females on Burton One, recalled being a spectator while noting that, “Actually it was more fun to watch the guys get back into the dorm only to realize that they now had to run naked up the stairs and through the halls to get back to their suites! Of course, given the cold, there wasn’t much to see.”⁶⁹

The river along Memorial Drive used to be a nice place for gentlemen to take their dates and make out. Living right next to the river and being engineers that were too busy working on

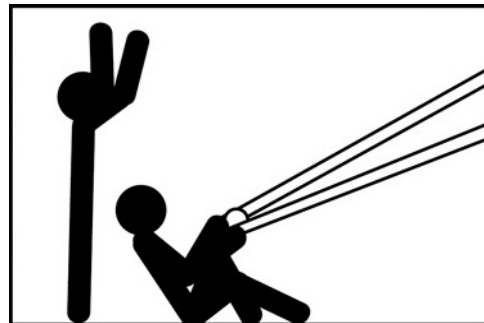


Figure 18: Shenanigans as they leave the dorm

⁶⁸ Goldstone, David "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

⁶⁹ Solomon, Joan. *Burton 1 Guest Book*. Website no longer available.

physics and trajectories to be one of those couples down there; they would frequently launch water balloons into the cars and such. They were aware of a successful hit solely because of shocked yells and tires peeling out. I recall “some friends” throwing snowballs at the frat brothers as they rushed to class. Of course they had the decency to throw them from a different floor so that our floor never got blamed.

Friendly Pranks

An inevitable outcome of living with a group of college students is a handful of friendly pranks done to relieve the stress. The pranks can be either simple or elaborate, but are usually done in good clean fun and never meant to harm anyone. For example, I remember one student my year switching the locks on two of the other students doors, and they had to use the other person’s key to get inside their own rooms. While, Matt Abernathy, class of 2006, single-handedly switched two of his classmates’ rooms entirely including all of the furniture inside and the clothes before filling up the rooms chest high with crumbled newspaper.

In 1968 MIT built the Julie Fassett Memorial Garden in front of Baker House. Julie Fassett was the wife of former MIT associate Dean of Residence Frederick Fassett. One Friday afternoon as a couple of Burton 5 residents returned from campus they passed near the future site of



Figure 19: The Julie Fassett Memorial Garden Hack.

the garden and borrowed a couple pieces of the construction equipment and shrubbery. After a couple of hours Michael Laird, class of 1969, and his friends had cleared out one of their friends room, rolled out the sod, put up a couple bushes around the room and a park bench. They even took off the door to the room so that the floor had a nice park for the weekend. On that Sunday they returned everything back to the construction site⁷⁰. The photo shows the “park” and you can notice the grass in the room.

Where are they now?

“I am humbled even today by having served such a great group of men who have undoubtedly made countless noteworthy contributions to society during their lives.”

Marvin Bahnman, told me this is how he felt about his term as House Chairman of

⁷⁰ Laird, Michael. "Re: [Mit_burton] Burton-Conner Reunion." Message to the author. 19 Nov. 2010. E-mail.

Burton House and went on to ask if I felt similarly about my time as President of Burton-Conner. The answer is a resounding yes. There are a lot of things around BC to be proud about, but none as much as our fellow residents.

Burton-Conner Alumni can be found in 49 states in the US, as well over 60 foreign countries. Alumni's jobs range from Presidents and CEOs of companies to stay-at-home moms and middle school teachers. For the students who never got their fill of student life, they can follow the footsteps of over 20% of alumni who are professors, teachers, or still students. Nearly 30% of the alumni are Engineers ranging from senior to starting engineers. Another 25% are Presidents, VPs or CEOs of the company for which they work at.

Conclusion

This is what I have been able to dig up about the history of Burton-Conner over the last few months. Burton-Conner was an amazing four years for me as a resident, Floor Representative, and eventually as President. After hearing stories from Alumni from every era of Burton-Conner, I can honestly say that had I been at MIT any other year, I would have wanted to live in Burton-Conner.

This is by no means a complete history of Burton-Conner. Burton-Conner is a dynamic House and it would be impossible to report on every aspect of life here. If you believe that I have left out an important part of life at Burton-Conner I would love to hear your comments, memories, stories, and criticisms.