Interview

Judith Schwartz is professor of Engineering Science and Education at MIT. The Tech interviewed him and his wife Ellen about Bexley Hall’s activities during Residence/Orientation week and about life as house masters of an MIT dormitory.

Q: Do you believe there was an anti-rush at Bexley Hall this year?

Judith Schwartz: No.

Q: Do you believe Bexley was made to feel open for all new students?

JS: No. But you are perfectly capable of inventing a problem between two. Bexley’s position on Rush is that of presenting itself as it is and allowing students to see it as it is. It made no overt effort at presenting a misleading picture of life in the dormitory. So there are no lobster dinners, there are no ice cream parties—but there is also no shaving. Just Bexley sits there, and that’s the character of Bexley’s Rush.

Q: Are there crowded rooms at Bexley this year?

Ellen Schwartz: Yes. We have 124 students and 122 places. We may have 125. I’m not sure.

JS: The difficulty with crowding Bexley is that Bexley has no public space. There are no lounges to crowd. And the rooms that are crowded are really very small.

Q: This year there were a number of people who were antagonized to Bexley who wanted to come. Do you think that has affected Bexley’s morals?

JS: Happens every year. They never leave.

ES: Our biggest problem is getting them to leave. The fact that there are more people trying to get into Bexley than they want to leave by a factor of ten or more.

Q: Have you ever tried to make the Bexley Hall head of the Bexley Hall dormitory list, a breakdown by dormitory of students transferring out and into other dormitories before? Everybody’s saying how terrible Bexley is. I have been unable to get the list.

JS: One can raise over and over again on instances of students who were assigned here against their will and who somehow manage to leave.

Q: Are you concerned that the administration has treated——?

JS: I have a very good notion of why that is. Because there are no ice cream parties, no lobster dinners, there are no ice cream parties, no lobster dinners, there are no ice cream parties, no lobster dinners, there are no ice cream parties...

Q: Do you feel that the administration has treated——?

JS: We do not believe that the situation is in any way parallel. The Dean’s Office and the Bexley Dormitory have to present a face to the world, which is not going to be as open as the face that you can present to your family. So it’s a different kind of problem.

ES: Our dog has been elected president—on a regular basis.

JS: That’s why a thing of one’s note at the larger dormitories.

Q: Do you believe Bexley was made to feel open for all new students?

JS: Never underestimate the importance in a social institution of having a noninstitutionalbage. Bexley is not the institutionalized type who makes the mistake of an institutionalized grape. Let me make an observation. There may be a certain number of freshmen who come and requested tours of Bexley was about 90. Now you do what you imagine accounts for the other 1000 freshmen not coming to look at Bexley.

Q: Do you have any further comments?

JS: There’s always been an issue about Bexley’s form of government. . .[but] when it works it is superb. When we have a problem, the kids are great.

ES: The fact in Bexley’s government follows an old New England tradition, and it’s actually workable.

Q: Could you explain your government system?

JS: Yes. What you have to do is read an American history book. Something called “town meeting.”

ES: Anybody can put up a sign saying “town meeting.”

Q: The governance mechanism is the meeting of the whole body.

ES: So there are no regularly scheduled meetings?

JS: No. You meet when there’s an issue, when anybody who’s concerned about an issue is moved to call a meeting about the issue.

Q: And they can go from, “Let’s get a keg and have a party” because we haven’t got a student in that most serious thing.

ES: Of course Bexley has elected as its president a bag of popcorn?

JS: [Our] dog has been elected president—on a regular basis.

ES: That’s why a thing of one’s note at the larger dormitories.

Q: The other interesting thing that you might want to know is that members of the committee that is sitting with the dean now will not, by house custom, participate in any other committee in the dormitory.

JS: That is, there is a strong effort to avoid the localization of power in any one individual. There is a clear agreement that the people involved in this discussion will not be involved in any other representation of the house in any other situation.

ES: Bexley is also not a member of Dormcon.

JS: It [Bexley Dormcon age]

ES: About 25 years ago.

JS: And since then, Bexley has never felt the urge to avail itself of the political advantages of that membership.

Q: Of the advantages of the way the place functions when someone is interested in something, people has to take responsibility for it. House presidents in other dorms, house judges in other dorms, get away with a lot of things. Here, if you do, you’re responsible and the whole thing you can get away with. It’s a lot of freedom.

ES: Never underestimate the importance in a social institution of having a noninstitutionalized grape. Bexley is not the institutionalized type who makes the mistake of a noninstitutionalized grape. Let me make an observation. There may be a certain number of freshmen who come and requested tours of Bexley was about 90. Now you do what you imagine accounts for the other 1000 freshmen not coming to look at Bexley.

JS: Bexley is not every other dormitory is visited by roughly half the freshmen class.

“Bexley ‘houseparents’ discuss dorm reputation” by Irene E. Skorki

PAGE 2 The Tech FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1985

“I wouldn’t be in any other dormitory. I love this place and I love the students. Bexley has never felt the urge to avail itself of the political advantages of being a member of the Dormitory Council.”

JS: I am waiting for them to do it. In the case of Rush, which includes alumni telling in-