The Issues Explained: Smoke shouldn't cloud new building

A major issue on Rider's campus right now is whether smoking should be permitted in the new residence hall as well as the existing ones. In the next few weeks, a survey will be going out via E-mail to all of Rider's residents about the smoking policy. It will include questions such as whether or not smoking should be banned in all residence halls or just the new one. It will also ask those surveyed if they are a smoker or non-smoker.

There are a variety of reasons why smoking should be banned in the residence halls. Large universities such as Princeton and Penn State have already taken the necessary steps to ban smoking. However, since smoking has been permitted in dorms at Rider for so long, it is understandable there might be resistance to a policy change.

Currently, the residence hall rules permit smoking in individual dorm rooms at your roommate's consent. Although smoking is not allowed in the hallways, many residents say they still will smoke in the hallways because it leaks under the doors. For this reason alone, smoking should definitely be banned in the new dorm, without reservation.

While convenience appears to be the most common reason to allow smoking, health and safety concerns are the leading reasons to ban it. The effects of secondhand smoke and the risk of fire should outweigh personal preference. The common good should be favored over the benefit of individuals. There is overwhelming evidence to support this.

First, it is common knowledge that smoking is a fire hazard. Smoking is the cause of thousands of apartment and dormitory fires each year. About 1,000 people die annually from fires incited in dorms at Rider for so long, it is understandable there might be resistance to a policy change.

Secondly, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has classified secondhand smoke as a Group A carcinogen, which means there is sufficient evidence that suggests it causes cancer in humans. When that smoke leaks under the doors, out in the hallways and in other people's rooms, it is damaging their health. Statistics indicate secondhand smoke increases the number and severity of asthma attacks in about 200,000 to 1 million asthmatic children. Secondhand smoking causes diseases such as lung cancer in healthy non-smokers. It has been proven that separating smokers and non-smokers within the same air space may reduce, but does not eliminate, the exposure of non-smokers to secondhand smoke.

Researchers suggest one solution to the problems of secondhand smoke is to make your home smoke-free. Any family member can develop health problems related to secondhand smoke. A smoke-free home protects your family, your guests and even your pets. Therefore, smoke-free dorms place the health of all students at risk. Also, many students are allergic to smoke or have asthma.

Perhaps designating smoke-free dorms is a solution. For the most part, smoking should be banned in the residence halls, especially the new one. At the very least, the “freshness” of the new facility should be maintained as a smoke-free environment.

In the country today, there is a move to allow smoking in public places. I think the common sense solution is to support a smoke-free home. Since many students have asthma, a smoke-free dorm is necessary. For the most part, smoking should be banned in the residence halls, especially the new one. At the very least, the “freshness” of the new facility should be maintained as a smoke-free environment.

The planet Uranus is discovered.

Albert Einstein is born.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Letter to the Editor: A tribute to Dan Rather

After 24 years in the anchor chair of the CBS Evening News, Dan Rather will step down. Known by many as "the hardest working journalist," he will be sorely missed (CBSNews.com). Yet, the recent decade over the authenticity of the Bush National Guard memos seems to overshadow his legacy. Both loyal supporters and especially his critics should reexamine and reflect on his extraordinary career as one of America's top journalists.

Working for the Associated Press and local radio stations, he began his work with CBS in 1962. Rather entered the national spotlight with his coverage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 (CBSNews.com). Following that national tragedy, he covered numerous events of the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, he has also interviewed every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower. He covered President Nixon's trip to China and even the violent clash of pro-democracy Chinese in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (CBSNews.com).

Not only did Rather conduct the first post Gulf War interview with Saddam Hussein, but he interviewed Hussein again in February 2003, prior to the American-led invasion of Iraq (CBSNews.com). Heavily criticized by the media following the interview, Rather stood firm amongst the controversy of interviewing one of the world's most notorious dictators.

One of Rather's finest hours was on September 11, 2001, when he provided non-stop coverage of our national tragedy with our interruption for the next few days. At times he was moved to tears but maintained the utmost professionalism. Rather conducted the first post Gulf War interview with Saddam Hussein, but he interviewed Hussein again in February 2003, prior to the American-led invasion of Iraq (CBSNews.com). Heavily criticized by the media following the interview, Rather stood firm amongst the controversy of interviewing one of the world's most notorious dictators.

Announcing his decision to step down as anchor of the CBS News at the end of November 2004 did not stop Rather from maintaining his high-paced journalism track record. Since that time, Rather has covered the devastating East Asia tsunami. Within days, he traveled to the region and provided the most current information for his evening news viewers. He also reported from Baghdad during the January 30th Iraqi elections.

I am most proud of Rather for the way he handled the CBS News memo controversy. When he realized the documents were not legitimate, he took personal responsibility. Rather states, “We did use the documents. We made a mistake in judgment and for that I am sorry. It was an error that was made, however, in good faith and in the spirit of trying to carry on a CBS News tradition of investigative reporting without fear or favoritism” (CBSNews.com). How many other journalists do you know that have come forward and admitted their errors? I simply do not know any.

As a student looking to become a political journalist, I look to Dan Rather as an inspiration and the epitome of what every journalist should aspire to be. His motto is, “It’s not about how many times you get knocked down. It’s about how many times you get up fighting.” That’s the contentious spirit I will miss when I continue to tune into the CBS Evening News.