

C.C. reader

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All that glitters is not gold...

by Joan H. Klein

Yes, Virginia, there really is a Golden Key National Honor Society (GK).

Students at Capitol Campus, whose cumulative grade point average is 3.4 or above, received a letter in recent weeks from this society, whose national headquarters is in Atlanta, Georgia. The letter advised them they had "been selected for membership" as a result of "outstanding scholastic achievement."

The letter, addressed to "Dear Student," asked that a membership data sheet be completed and returned along with an initiation and life membership fee of 35 dollars. A gold Society Pin was made available for an additional 12 dollars and 50 cents. Students were asked to include a two dollar late fee if it was anticipated that the data sheet would be late in arriving at national headquarters.

Students here have been less than enthusiastic with the commercial aspect of the honor. The C.C. Reader is involved in an on-going investigation to establish whether or not GK is a bona fide organization. There has been a maze of contradictory evidence. In the final analysis, each student must decide for himself/herself, aided by the results of this inquiry to date.

Adding an aura of legitimacy to the offer was a covering letter from Dr. David E. Butt, an associate professor of speech communication at University Park. In a telephone interview, Butt said he had been approached by students about eight months ago about Golden Key. He said the first question was: "Why another honor society?"

Butt said he felt there was a need for "some special recognition" of students who may not have maintained an average high enough to make them eligible for existent honor societies, but who are "contributors" to campus activities. (It should be noted that involvement in extracurricular activities is not a requirement for eligibility in GK.) Butt agreed to be the faculty advisor for the society.

The matter was then referred to the Undergraduate Student Government. That body was charged with examining the credentials of GK and deciding whether a local chapter could be registered. Butt said this had been done and the charter was approved in the Fall 1979 term (facts not borne out by later investigation).

Jim Prior, chief justice of the Supreme Court of the Undergraduate Student Government, was reached by telephone Wednesday afternoon. According to Prior, Golden Key is currently provisionally registered at University Park. All new organizations wanting registration are given a ten-week period in which to develop interest, membership, and activities.

The ten-week period is flexible and, in the interest of fairness to the organization, GK will not be scheduled for review until after the January 31 reception.

Prior said the investigation of GK's credentials was assigned to one justice; and consisted primarily of reading the society's literature and making sure there was no conflict between it and the pertinent bylaws of Penn State University.

The justice also spoke to temporary officers of the club and the regional director of the society.

The C.C. Reader has learned that the 35 dollar fee is to go to the national headquarters in Atlanta. A return of five dollars per student will be made to University Park for local chapter activities. One dollar per student will be given to the chapter to pay for the reception planned for January 31 in the H.U.B. Ballroom. An additional two dollars per student is returned to the chapter to be awarded annually as scholarships to the outstanding junior and senior.

Interested students spoke to the advisor about using the five dollar fees to recruit merit scholarship winners (freshmen), and bringing speakers to campus (University Park).

Asked how students of Capitol Campus might benefit from these projects, Butt said they wouldn't, unless an active chapter formed at this campus and activities emanated from here.

Butt was asked if students could be assured that GK is a legitimate organization because it had been given mailing labels of students whose GPAs met the criterion. He was not certain, and suggested our questions be put to Steve Pracht of GK.

Dr. John Joseph, assistant to the provost at Capitol Campus, called the registrar's office at University Park. He learned that not everyone can purchase this information; GK had been permitted to buy mailing labels because they were a registered organization on campus, sanctioned by the Undergraduate Student Government after careful scrutiny.

Pracht visited Capitol Campus on Tuesday, January 22, after he learned questions were being raised here concerning the society. He said he was not surprised that students at a Capitol Campus were unenthusiastic about the letters they had received.

Pracht explained GK had understood that the institution of a chapter at Penn State meant University Park only. He had been surprised to learn commonwealth

campuses had been included in the computer readout.

"Our request form specified University Park students," he said.

As a result of the mix-up, no contact had been made with Capitol Campus to explain the society and its goals. At University Park, there had been an "extensive campus awareness program," he said. Pracht had been on campus to talk with students, ads and an article were placed in the newspaper, and posters were strategically placed throughout the campus.

Pracht, a founding member of the organization, is a 1976 graduate of Penn State - University Park with an undergraduate degree in Management. In addition to his position as northeast regional director (he is, in fact, the only regional director), Pracht is also national vice president of GK.

He said GK is three years old and was begun by James W. Lewis, a Georgia State University graduate. Lewis, national president of GK, earned his undergraduate degree in Marketing. The society has a seven-member national board of directors. It

consists of James Lewis and three other founding members as well as Dr. Henry Stanford, president of the University of Miami, and Dr. W. Harry Sharp of the University of Houston. The eventual plan is to have an all-academic board.

Pracht echoed the faculty advisor's sentiments that there is a need for an honor society with less stringent qualifications than those that now exist. In addition, he feels the society gives its members an opportunity for leadership and involvement. He mentioned, for example, the possibility of a voluntary tutoring program being established by members.

The deadline for responding to the invitation is past. Pracht said, "We could extend the deadline until Spring."

He said if there is sufficient student interest, he could have an awareness program on this campus followed by a local reception.

But he added that: "We don't have anything for Capitol Campus at this point."



Cloggers Come To Capitol Campus

The Green Grass Cloggers from North Carolina are going to present a program on Old Time Country and American Clogging at 7:30 p.m., February 5, 1980 in the auditorium.

