

# Folklore legends create sense of community

By Michele Haley

"When a virgin walks by at the University of Nebraska, Greek columns crumble, at Indiana University a clock tower rings, and at Capitol Campus, the Nittany Lion crumbles."

This is but one in a collection of outrageous legends, that echo the corridors of universities across the country, compiled by our local folklorist, Dr. Simon Bronner.

Bronner, who has assumed a double identity as a professor and "wandering folklorist," feels that Capitol Campus students possess their own grab-bag of jargon words, parodies and antics.

Included in this miscellany of zany college customs are thoughts on grading, sex and relations, establishing a sense of community among peers, test taking and cheating and the possession of material folklore, which includes paraphernalia in on campus housing ranging

from beer bottles in windows to posters on walls.

While Bronner believes that college life itself is a rite of passage, he recognizes the corny humor of fraternity songs, the tradition of college pranks and the subliminal life of living

**"All the buildings in the world could never represent the true experience of campus life."**

**Dr. Simon Bronner  
Assistant Prof. Folklore  
and Am. Studies**

in the dorms, as a common element of "college folklore."

"College Folklore includes stories such as knocking three times before walking in on your roommate, telephone pranks on peoples' birthdays and the tradition of singing fraternity songs," said Bronner.

Bronner, who has been Assistant Professor of Folklore and

American Studies at Capitol Campus for two years, has served as curator to Folklore Museums as well as contributor and editor to several folklore publications, is a man concerned with tradition.

In a room filled with folklore posters, mobiles, comic strip clips, artifacts, and shelves overflowing with books and country music tapes, Bronner revealed a few of the most humorous beliefs and practices of college students.

"Students are fascinated with how a letter grade mysteriously appears on their paper a few days after it's been turned in," he said.

For example, "There's the story of the professor who threw his papers down the steps and whichever ones landed on the first step got 'A's,' those on the second step got 'B's' and so on."

He added, "There's also the story of the professor who had a cat, dipped his paws in paint, and had him walk across the papers, leaving one paw print for 'A's,' two for 'B's,' and three for 'C's.'"

When asked about his own grading techniques, Bronner added that his were to remain a well-kept secret.

As a professor, Bronner grinned while he spoke of tardy professors, who are an intimate part of "College Folklore," a

and it glows, at Capitol Campus it takes one person to screw it in and two to kick the ladder out from under him," he said, adding: "Students describe easy courses as guts, cake, breeze and hard courses are known as bitches and ball-breakers."

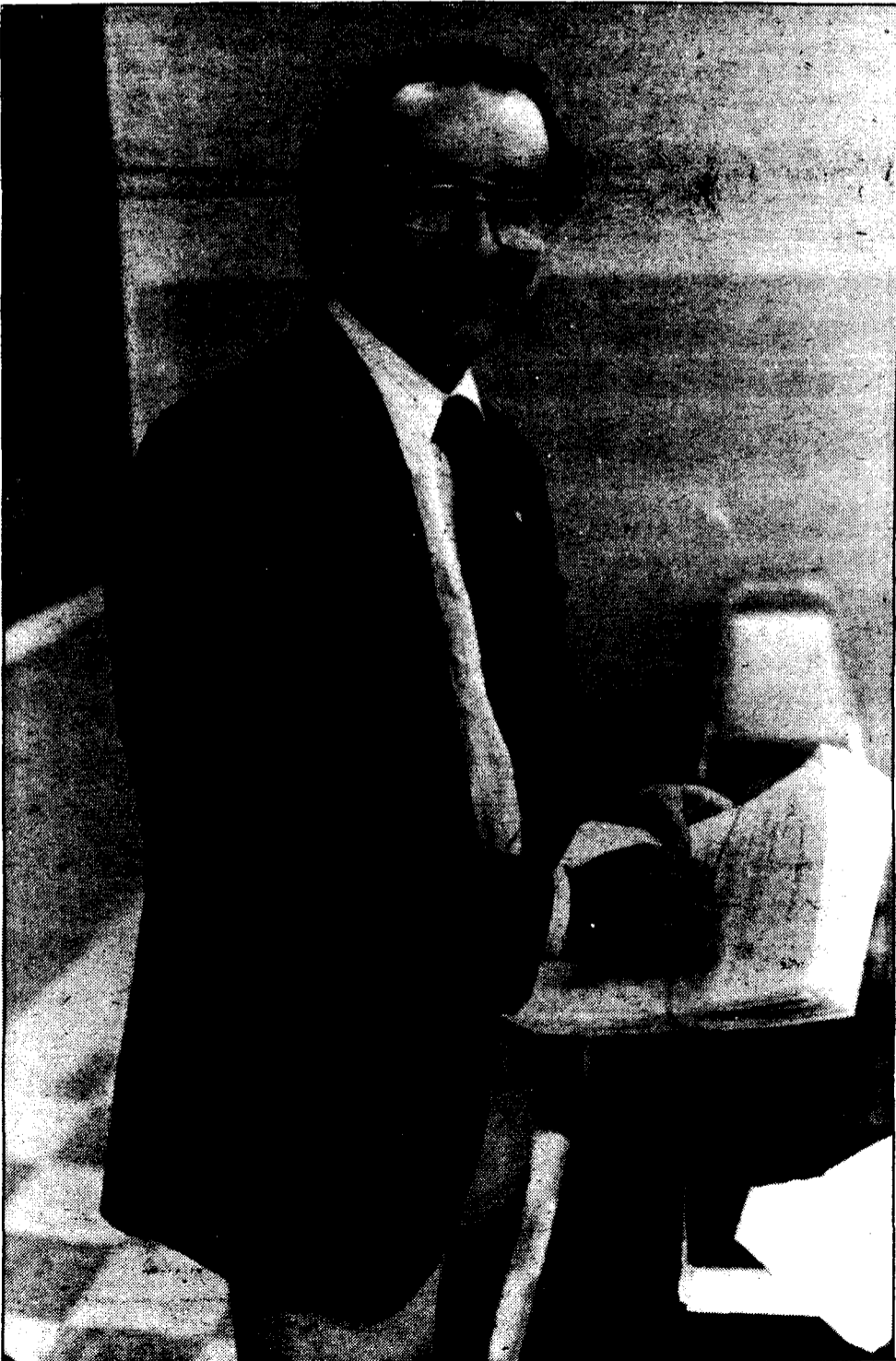
Other words in the general vocabulary include cram, flunk, hit the books and "to get a dog," which means to get a "D."

As an adviser to the Graduate Student Association as well as PI SIGMA CHI, Bronner sees a decline in the absurdity of college customs from the past, and acknowledges the need for folklore as a means of getting in touch with hidden concerns.

"We no longer have freshmen beenies, dress codes have changed, hazing has almost disappeared and colleges have become deficient in the production of desk top graffiti and yearbook signatures," said Bronner as he leafed through disheveled binders of folklore data.

"Colleges are not in as much of a turmoil as they used to be, nor are college campuses as concerned with philosophy and protest as they were in the past," he added.

While College Folklore is a tool Bronner uses to introduce to students their own culture, he feels that Capitol Campus



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subject dating back to the collegiate rituals of the Greeks.

"Students generally wait 15 minutes for a professor, 10 minutes for an assistant professor, five minutes for an associate professor, and they never wait for an instructor," he said.

Through his love for humor, Bronner has discovered that two of the most innate characteristics of P.S.U. students is the telling of what he claims are "sick jokes," and their profound use of vocabulary.

"Besides dead baby and Helen Keller jokes, there are also jokes about how long it takes to screw in a light bulb," said Bronner.

"At Three-Mile Island, (some say in Pennsylvania), it takes no one, a person just holds it up

falls short of representing what college life is all about.

"It is vital to achieve a sense of community, and a two-year campus is an anti-establishment of the feeling of campus life," he said adding, "All the buildings in the world could never represent the true experience of a campus life."

Bronner believes that time will bring students back to the playfulness of exchanging dormitory stories, cheerleading yells and college pranks, to express our frustrations and goals.

"With time there will be a stronger sense of community established through folklore," he said positively, while relaxing in corduroys and cowboy boots, in a style that creates a folklore of his own.