Krishna monk spreads word of God in State College

By PAMELA MACLEOD
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

His orange robe and stockings and the long tiny braid of hair falling from his otherwise completely shaven head provide a sharp contrast to a typical college student's garb — and so do his ideas and way of life.

He was born 30 years ago as Steve McClain, but is now known only as Stambha Das — which means servant of God in Sanskrit. A member of the Hare Krishna movement, Das said he came to State College one and a half years ago to help spread the word of God. He does this primarily by talking with people and handing out Krishna pamphlets and magazines on the University campus andin State College. He also gives lectures and teaches a Free University vegetarian cooking course.

Das quit his job with a law firm in California in 1975 to join the movement. He graduated from Georgia State University and Mercer University school of law in Georgia.

"Something was obviously missing in my life," Das said. "I didn't want to graduate and just become a nine-to-five robot."

Das said he went to law school because he wanted to help people and he felt that to do so would require a certain amount of power and influence which he thought he could get through advanced schooling. He said he became interested in the Krishna movement while reading the Bhagavad-gita, or book of truth.

"I realized I should be considering more serious things," Das said, "I knew there must be something beyond the disco."

Das said he was never attracted by any of the cults, like Sun Myung Moon's movement, because he said they are obviously absurd. He said they exploit their followers and are not qualified spiritual leaders.

"The Moonies are completely bogus," Das said. "They are not following any standard scriptures. Religion is not created by man."

Becoming a Krishna brahmin, or monk, completely changed Das' life. He said he assumed a spiritual name and gave up meat eating, alcoholic beverages, illicit sex and gambling. Das now lives a very simple and quiet life with a fellow devotee in a house on East Hamilton Street.

Das rises at 4 every morning to pray, chant and meditate. He said he usually ends his day around 10 p.m., and he sleeps on the floor. He has very little furniture in the house except for a lamp and basic kitchen fixtures, which he and his roommate use to prepare simple vegetarian meals once or twice a day. He said they have a feast every Sunday that 35 or 40 people usually attend to discuss philosophy and Krishna ideology.

"We consider the home to be a temple so we use everything in it in service of God," Das said.

The Krishna church supports all monks, but Das said this is not very expensive because they eat little food, and the only clothes they own are two sets of robes. He said the church obtains its funds from the sale of books and revenue from various Krishna businesses. He also said many members of the movement work at traditional jobs.

"We have doctors and lawyers and Ph.D.'s in the movement," he said. "Not everyone walks around in robes distributing brochures."

Das spends his afternoons studying, or outside handing out Krishna literature and talking with interested passersby. He said he does not solicit donations, so most people are polite to him and store owners rarely complain when he stands outside their establishments.

"When I get abuse it's usually because people associate us with other cult groups like the Moonies," he said. "I don't listen to smart comments because they're made out of ignorance."

Das said he was sent to work in State College partly because it's a university town and students are not as conditioned in their thinking as older people are. Das said he thinks he can relate particularly well to students because he has gone through the college experience.

Photo by Andy Ratner

'Something was obviously missing in my life. I didn't want to graduate and just become a nine-to-five robot.'

—Stambha Das

"The greatest illusion on the Penn State campus is of freedom. Students think 'I'm free,' " Das said. "Students have to take a certain curriculum, and they are manipulated by the media and educational institutions. We're all dependent on God."

Das said he thinks most students are at Penn State and other schools for "social trips" or to look for marketable skills. He said they are not actually thinking and that their happiness is limited by money or how long they can stay high.

"Happiness of the soul is unlimited," he said. "Material factors aren't important." He also said, "Education can be used and can be good so long as you understand the ultimate connection with God."

Das said he feels sorry formost people because they accept second-class happiness, and he would like everyone to be conscious of God and to understand who they really are.

"If we attained a higher level of happiness," he said, "The only thing I've given up is death."Das said Krishna devotees believe when a person dies their soul survives and either enters into another material body or enters the spiritual world. He said the goal of life is to enter the kingdom of God.

Das said the Krishna movement is based on many fundamental beliefs, some that originate in the Vedas — or old books of knowledge.

"Modern civilization is based on a mistake," he said. "We don't understand our real spiritual identity." He said the real identity is the soul, which remains the same even though it passes through many bodies. He said people mistakenly think of themselves as men and women or Democrats and Republicans.

"We are not our bodies but we are in our bodies," Das said. "It's like a car. People ride in their cars, but they don't call themselves Mr. Volvo or Mr.Ford or Mr. Chevrolet."

Das said Krishna members believe that because people disregard the laws of nature and spend so much of their time trying to advance society, they create unnecessary problems.

"You can't eat nuts and bolts," Das said. "And people can't take more than their fair share of the father's property without repercussions. There's no overpopulation or food shortage, we just aren't functioning together."

Das said suffering is due to ignorance and humans should aim for simple living and high thinking. He said the world's leaders are fools, and should be replaced by those who understand the proper balance between material and spiritual activities and are guided by God.

In addition to his activities in State College, Das has traveled to India several times to study, and just returned recently from a five-week stay in a small town called Vrindavan, near Delhi. Das also goes to a self-sufficient Krishna farm in Port Royal, Pa., about twice a month to study and visit friends.

Das said the Hare Krishna following — consisting of men, women and children — is growing all the time and has at least 10,000 full-time members. He said there are also many part-time members, and millions of devotees in India.

"I wish I had joined the movement when I was three minutes old," he said. "I regret I wasted so much time chasing illusory goals that have no relation to the absolute truth."

The sisters of
Kappa Delta
would like to announce their new initiates
Megan Boyer *Dru Kenney*
Helayne Brodie *Diane Krystofoski*
Caroline Churchill *Jane Patchell*
JoAnn Gaughan *Karen Rosenmeier*
Christi Hess *Susan Tamburro*
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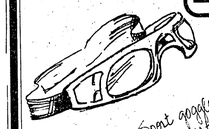

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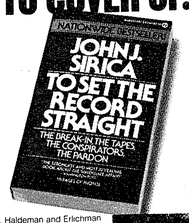
AT LAST, AN ACCOUNT OF WATERGATE BY SOMEONE WITH NOTHING TO COVER UP.



Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman have all told their tales. Now, Judge John Sirica in TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, has written his revealing no-holds barred, personal account of Watergate from a unique vantage point - behind the bench.
"What he couldn't stomach was hypocrisy, the smug assumption that justice was somehow different for the powerful. ...He wanted the truth and ultimately he got it"
- *Los Angeles Times*

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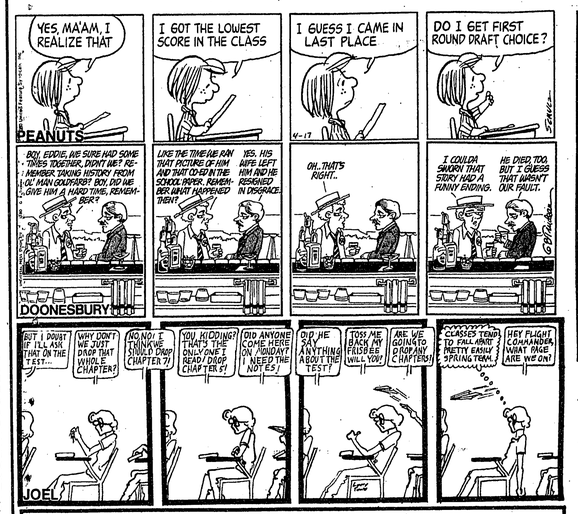


Crossword by Mike Shenk

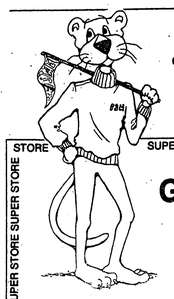
Answers in tomorrow's Collegian Classifieds

Across

1 Fir fluid
4 Dance and drawing
8 Alternative to an ecee
13 Black bird
15 "— yellow ribbon . . ."
16 Long for
17 Teen's bane
18 Hot spot
19 Gawked
20 Music branch
23 Weather word
24 Yield
25 Material
28 Appropriate beginning for "fix"
29 Clarke's "Rendezvous with —"
33 Drying rack
34 Mideast people
36 Youngster
37 Strauss opus
40 Aloha garland
41 Portents
42 Overact
43 Author Ferber
45 Victorious aviator
48 Idolizes
47 007's name
49 Corner
50 Gershwin composition
56 Mickey, for one
57 Bugler's tune
58 Halo
59 Actress Burstyn
60 Robert —
61 Minor argument
62 Conducts
63 Cesar and namesakes
64 Fool

Down

1 Cicatrix
2 Bridge feature
3 Word before express or tail
4 Type of bomb
5 Contender
6 Youth
7 Beach crawlers
8 Chide
9 Dubbler
10 Cotton bundle
11 Nights before
12 Cermine
14 "— Kings"
21 Coiffure
22 Journalist Lucius
25 Aesopian tale
26 Was under the weather
27 UCLA player
28 Trim the hedges
30 — nothing bet
31 Dull finish
32 Cutting tools
34 Lighthearted stories
35 Home of Born Bong
38 "— home is his castle"
39 One-celled creatures
44 Lowered oneself
46 Stands up
48 Some golf tourneys
49 Used "plenty"
50 Part to play
51 Waikiki dance
52 Painter Salvador
53 Moon goddess
54 "Topaz" author
55 Ingests
56 Brooks of the movies



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We don't get much repeat business at Kelty. Here's why.

Unless you drop it into a crevasse, one Kelty backpack is just about a lifetime supply. It's simply not built to wear out very fast.

Of course any business expert will tell you that's crazy. Planned obsolescence is the name of the game. Repeat sales. The latest bells and whistles to make you hate last year's model and wish you had the new one.

But when Dick Kelty made the first one in his garage in 1952, he wasn't thinking about business experts. He was thinking about a backpack like nobody had ever seen before: light, strong, contoured to the human body, a joy to carry. And built like a boulder.

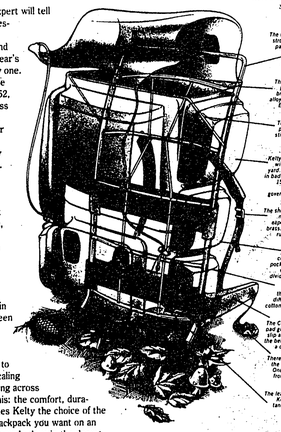
That's what he made.
That's what we still make.
Over the years changes have all been aimed at making a pack that's stronger, more functional, more fun to use.

And, as you can see from the drawing here, we're pretty serious about building the best pack money can buy. Read over some of the notes that go with the drawing and you'll begin to understand why Kelty has been the choice of just about every major expedition in the last 15 years or so.

But what does that mean to you, if you're not planning on scaling some exotic mountain or trekking across the Sahara? Well, think about this: the comfort, durability and convenience that makes Kelty the choice of the expeditions also makes it the backpack you want on an overnighter in a state forest, a couple days in the desert or a week above the snowline.

Kelty. Ten different external frame packs for everyone from the beginner to the pro, plus tour packs, soft packs, daypacks and a whole line of outdoor clothing and equipment. You'll find us in the best outdoor stores. And at the top.

Since all backpacks look pretty much alike at first glance, here's a closer look at what's so special about Kelty



The frame is all aluminum, light and strong. In fact the biggest, heaviest pack we make (the Teton II shown here) weighs six pounds, ten ounces, complete. And all the welds are tungsten inert gas (TIG) welds.

There's not a piece of metal on the pack that isn't solid nickle, solid brass, stainless steel or aluminum alloy. It's extremely corrosion-resistant. Even the wires that hold the pack to the frame are stainless steel.

The hickbone bar is firmly held in place by two rows - five rows! - of stitching. And there's a reinforcing strip of fabric underneath the stitching for extra durability.

Kelty packs are made of coated nylon with an ounce of waterproofing per yard. We still recommend a rain cover in bad weather, but our fabric, tested at 30 pounds per square inch hydrostatic pressure without leaking. Its 2 government clothing specs call 25 psi "waterproof".

The shoulder strap buckles aren't shiny nickel-plated steel, the way you'd expect. They're black-anodized solid brass. Why? Because solid brass won't rust and peel after a couple of wet seasons, that's why.

You can get single or double compartment packs. All have side pockets and most have back pockets with super access. Lots of room, divided just about any way you need.

Every stitch in the pack is nylon thread, even though it's a lot more difficult to work with than the usual cotton/dacron blend. Nylon is stronger, so that's what we use.

The Cordura fabric covering on our top end packs is a long grip on you. It won't rub around, making you want to pinch the belt too tight, and that makes quite a difference in comfort on the trail.

There's a unique cam-lock adjuster on the hip belt. It's patented, of course. One competitor wanted to buy some from us, then backed away when he found how much they cost.

The leather reinforcement patches on a Kelty pack are first-quality chrome tanned leather. Probably better than the leather in your hiking boots.

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